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**Roses, Poppies and Narcissi: Plant Iconography at Tillya-tepe and Connected
Cultures across the Ancient World**



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Abstract

The Tillya-tepe burial site was located in Bactria (Afghanistan) at a nodal point on major trade and communication routes between Rome and China, the northern steppes and India, in a period which represented a high point in trans-Eurasian connectivity. Six 1st century CE elite graves were excavated, producing thousands of objects whose admixture of artistic styles and motifs reflected Tillya-tepe's pivotal position between different cultures.

Many of the gold artefacts, including jewellery, costume appliqués and even some weaponry, featured plant imagery. This research concerns the three most prolific floral motifs. Scholars generally refer to them as 'rosettes', but they represent real species: roses, poppies and narcissi, and are depicted in a manner derived from Graeco-Roman conventions. In this thesis these flowers are first studied on artefacts from Tillya-tepe, and then on objects from Hellenistic, Roman, Bactrian, Sarmatian-Alan and Parthian cultures. Tracing a motif in this degree of detail provides specific information about artistic transmission between various peoples.

Because these flowers are identified, it is possible to enhance the visual evidence with information from relevant texts, demonstrating that they had wider cultural values in Graeco-Roman and Iranian society. Plant iconography is an under-investigated area of research, and a methodology for its study is provided. I assemble a corpus of evidence which firstly shows how plant imagery can be used to track the transmission of artistic influences. Then, I demonstrate that plant images were not only used for decorative purposes, but were also sometimes applied in a systematic and meaningful manner in the centuries around the Common Era, including at Tillya-tepe.

I argue that the concentrated study of floral images is a valuable tool to help understand both the objects they decorate, and the societies which produced them. In this way, plant iconography is used to position the artistic productions of Tillya-tepe within the wider history of art, bringing with it a greater understanding of the status and roles of these enigmatic people.

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0 INTRODUCTORY SECTIONS

0.1 Introduction

In 1978, the Russian archaeologist Viktor Sarianidi (1929-2013) unearthed a 1st century CE burial site at Tillya-tepe in the Sheberghan oasis, northern Afghanistan. This is a part of the world and an era in which the history is not yet fully understood and therefore the importance of archaeological evidence is paramount. Sarianidi excavated six richly-provisioned graves whose mode of deposition reflected a steppe nomadic heritage. One grave was occupied by a male and the other five by females, **Fig. 0 – 1**. The only evidence for these people is their burials, and all knowledge of their culture must be derived from their mode of deposition and their possessions, since there is no information from a settlement and they left no texts. This research is an art historical study, focussing on the prolific plant ornamentation present on many artefacts, and investigating it in detail in order to learn more about the Tillya-tepe folk.

Although they are widely accepted to have had a nomadic heritage, turning the pages of Sarianidi's catalogue, *The golden hoard of Bactria: from the Tillya-tepe excavations in northern Afghanistan*, it is apparent that the diverse forms and artistic styles of Tillya-tepe artefacts indicate influences from Graeco-Roman, Graeco-Bactrian, Iranian and other cultures, and this may be seen as a reflection of its significant geographical position. Tillya-tepe was situated in ancient Bactria, near Bactra (modern Balkh) which was at the confluence of several long-distance communication routes crossing Eurasia, including those linking: China and the nomadic empires in Mongolia and Siberia; the northern steppelands spreading across the Urals to the Pontic region; the Roman Empire and Parthian territories in the west; and the Indian sub-continent to the south.

Tillya-tepe's importance lies not only in the exceptional quality and quantity of the objects, but also because these graves were found largely intact and had not suffered looting or environmental degradation. Therefore most pieces were still in the positions in which they were placed at the time of burial. Among the excavated items were personal adornments, weapons, a small range of vessels and some imported objects such as Chinese mirrors.

This research entails an investigation of three dominant floral motifs from among the substantial quantity of plant ornament, mostly found on gold jewellery including two gold headdresses, appliqués, and at least one item of weaponry. Of the 240 catalogued

items at Tillya-tepe, around 20% have plant motifs and these often dominate the design of the pieces. If we consider this list more selectively and consider only *decorated* artefacts, then around a third of all artefacts have vegetal ornament. Many of these pieces have flowers created in the form of distinctive, free-standing, ‘cut-out’ designs. The abundance of these floral motifs is eye-catching, and the unprecedented quantity of such ornaments suggests that the Tillya-Tepe folk with their steppe nomadic heritage, were particularly drawn towards floral imagery which reflected a different artistic tradition.

The study will evaluate whether the Tillya-tepe folk deployed these floral motifs with any degree of consistency. If it is established that flowers did indeed have a particular significance at Tillya-tepe, it is then possible that contextual information will generate suggestions about why these people chose the three flowers to decorate their possessions. This period was one of increasing communication between different cultures and regions, involving an exchange of objects with the demonstrable transmission of artistic influences. Therefore the trio of Tillya-tepe flowers are reviewed against comparable floral images from geographical areas which exhibited commonalities with Tillya-tepe, including the Parthian territories and the north Pontic area. The transmission of specific flowers across different groups of people is thus used as evidence of cultural interactions.

In summary, this research uses plants as specific indicators of cultural influences at Tillya-tepe. It aims to provide a clearer view of interactions between Tillya-tepe and the other groups of people with whom it shared certain common characteristics in the era around the 1st century CE. This detailed study of plant imagery will also help position Tillya-tepe within the artistic framework of the period. During this process, it is anticipated that floral imagery will also generate information about objects from sites beyond Tillya-tepe. At present there is no research on plant iconography at Tillya-tepe or at any of the related sites under discussion. Therefore these areas of study represent unique contributions of this research to our knowledge of Tillya-tepe and beyond.

Before proceeding, we need to consider the research provided by experts on other aspects relating to Tillya-tepe, as well as the relatively small corpus of studies on plant iconography in the ancient world.

0.2 Literature review

0.2.1 Introduction

The following account is divided into two sections. Part one outlines the principal themes regarding Tillya-tepe itself and it should be read in conjunction with the more detailed account of the Tillya-tepe site and grave-goods provided in 0.4 TILLYA-TEPE BURIALS. The second part concerns the most relevant publications on plant imagery, which collectively provide a historically-based corpus of information about plants in art.

0.2.2 Tillya-tepe

The foundation of all research into Tillya-tepe is *The golden hoard of Bactria*, written by its excavator Viktor Sarianidi.¹ It includes an account of the archaeological context with a commentary on the finds, reflecting Sarianidi's experience as a seasoned archaeologist, albeit with a particular expertise in Bronze Age Bactria. The many large colour plates have a magnification which belies the tiny scale of the artefacts themselves, and these are followed by a catalogue of around 250 items covering 20,000 objects. This book, the most comprehensive of Sarianidi's publications, was followed by a Russian volume with further details on the excavations, and several articles.²

In the following politically tumultuous years which followed Sarianidi's excavation, the spectacular finds were widely feared to be lost, only to be recovered from safe storage in 2003. Since 2008, objects from Tillya-tepe have been part of a travelling exhibition *Afghanistan, hidden treasures from the National Museum, Kabul* which was accompanied by a well-illustrated catalogue reflecting more recent research.³ This exposure stimulated greater interest in the site, prompting further articles.

0.2.2.1 Burial circumstances

The name Tillya-tepe means 'golden mound' in the local language,⁴ implying that some gold objects had surfaced from the site long before Sarianidi's arrival. Sarianidi uncovered seven graves, but only six were excavated before his departure in February

¹ SARIANIDI 1985.

² SARIANIDI 1989, 1990-92, 1998a and 2008.

³ HIEBERT and CAMBON 2008.

⁴ SARIANIDI 1985, p.7; SCHILTZ 2008, p.221.

1979. The wealth of the Tillya-tepe folk is immediately apparent from the high quality and prolific quantity of their possessions. But the simplicity of their burials – discussed further in 0.4 TILLYA-TEPE BURIALS - contrasts sharply with the character of the grave-goods. The graves were cut into the walls and ramparts of an earlier building. In the 2008 exhibition catalogue, Véronique Schiltz noted that ‘the nomadic tradition required that the dead be buried within some kind of mound’,⁵ suggesting that at the time of inhumation, the social and political infrastructure and manpower required to create a kurgan were lacking.⁶ John Boardman has suggested that they were reburials from elsewhere,⁷ while Sarianidi considered that the Tillya-tepe folk were buried in haste and that it was a covert operation,⁸ which might provide an explanation for the anonymity and modesty of the graves.

Therefore the burials are often evaluated in terms of this contrast between the grave-goods and the actual burial structures, that the latter were a compromise based on more elaborate practices. The considerable resources available to the Tillya-tepe folk to furnish themselves with rich personal adornments were, for an unknown reason, lacking when it came to the construction of their simple pit-graves. It is feasible that the Tillya-tepe burials and others at Koktepe, Kosika and Porogi (further details in 0.4 TILLYA-TEPE BURIALS), all dated to around the 1st century CE and all involving the re-use of earlier mounds, were constructed in adverse conditions.

It is not possible to compare the Tillya-tepe graves with others in this area because of the absence of examples. As Francfort remarks: ‘The missing element, as always, is the local Bactrian, but we must remember that a large part of this population was Zoroastrian and left no burials and no funerary goods’.⁹

0.2.2.2 Questions of ethnicity and inter-relations between cultures¹⁰

The ethnic identity of the Tillya-tepe people remains a subject of debate. Henri-Paul Francfort, in his comprehensive article ‘La sépulture d’un roi anonyme de la Bactriane du I^{er} siècle p.C’ represents the common view of their origins when he relates them to earlier steppe nomadic cultures, discussing them in terms of connectivity across the

⁵ SCHILTZ 2008, p.223.

⁶ SCHILTZ 2008, p.224.

⁷ BOARDMAN 2003a, pp.370-371, 2012, p.104.

⁸ SARIANIDI 1990-1992, p.105.

⁹ FRANCFORT 2012a, p.99.

¹⁰ See Appendix III: DEFINITION OF TERMS, discussing the use of ‘Sarmatian’, ‘Sarmatian-Alan’ and ‘Kushan’ in this thesis.

Eurasian steppes.¹¹ Although Greek, Roman and Chinese writings provide some evidence for the location and movement of different groups of people in this part of Central Asia,¹² it has proved difficult to correlate these sources with evidence on the ground. Sarianidi consistently described Tillya-tepe as a Yuezhi or Kushan site.¹³ His opinion was supported by Sergey Yatsenko in his detailed discussion of the Tillya-tepe costumes, identifying them as Yuezhi from early in Kujula Kadphises's reign.¹⁴ However, this view is not necessarily borne out by the evidence since the finds have limited characteristics in common with typical Yuezhi-Kushan artefacts, in terms of object type, artistic style, decorative motifs or techniques.¹⁵

An alternative proposal was initiated by Paul Bernard who evaluated Tillya-tepe in relation to sites in the north Pontic region, asserting that the Tillya-tepe folk were more closely affiliated to Sarmatian or Saka peoples.¹⁶ This proposal was endorsed by Schiltz in her article 'Les Sarmates entre Rome et Chine', discussing inlaid quadrilobe dagger scabbards from Tillya-tepe and from Sarmatian-Alan sites of Dachi, Kosika, Porogi, Gorgippia and Armazishkevi.¹⁷ These burials, occupied by people with a non-Greek, steppe nomadic heritage, are in the north Pontic area – that is, in the localities around the Sea of Azov, particularly the Crimea, the Straits of Kerch which link to the Taman Peninsular, and east thereafter into the Kuban region; also including the Lower Don (see Appendix I: Map). The term 'north Pontic' is preferred since it encompasses other sites which are discussed directly in relation to Tillya-tepe. The areas around the Crimea and Taman Peninsular were often within the boundaries of the Bosporan kingdom, whose border shifted frequently between the 4th centuries BCE and 1st century CE.¹⁸ They are referenced throughout this thesis because they share a number of common features with Tillya-tepe. Importantly, such dagger cases were unknown among the Yuezhi.¹⁹ Francfort hypothesised, on the basis of his investigation of the man's possessions in

¹¹ FRANCFORT 2011, pp.278-279.

¹² ABDULLAEV 2007; HILL 2009; RAPIN 2007.

¹³ SARIANIDI 1980, 1985, 1989, 1990-92, 1998a, 2008.

¹⁴ YATSENKO 2001, p.86.

¹⁵ ABDULLAEV 2007, pp.79-82 on Kushan sites in northern Bactria. FRYE 1984, pp.251-256 for a summary of the critical coin evidence, pp.251-256.

¹⁶ BERNARD 1987.

¹⁷ SCHILTZ 2002. BROSEDER 2015, pp.292-293 provides the definitive list.

¹⁸ For remarks on the Bosporan kingdom: http://www.pontos.dk/research/ra_7 and http://www.pontos.dk/research/ra_7/ra-7a-the-bosporan-kingdom-and-rome (both accessed July 2015).

¹⁹ BERNARD 1987; SCHILTZ 2002.

grave IV and coins dating to this period, that he was a local 'Scytho-Bactrian king', perhaps a Pugalid king of western Bactria.²⁰

Claude Rapin related Tillya-tepe to a female burial at Koktepe, near Samarkand in Sogdiana. Specifically, he considered that the Tillya-tepe male was 'among the earliest 'Scythian' representatives of Sarmatian and Alan aristocracies who originated in Siberia and the Altai and were encountered later along the western steppe routes into Central Europe'.²¹

In part, Rapin views the diffusion of turquoise-inlaid objects as indicative of these migrations,²² and an understanding of the gold-turquoise style is important for research on Tillya-tepe. Yatsenko and Mikhail Treister analysed the dissemination of artefacts in this style in eight different regions, including Iran, Bactria, the lower Jaxartes basin (Syr Darya which flows into the Aral Sea) and 'Sarmatia'.²³ In her article 'Tillya-tepe jewellery and its relation to the Sarmatian animal style of the northern Black Sea area', Valentina Mordvintseva, reviewed both burial practices and grave-goods, concluding that this style and technique might be associated with migrations from Central Asia to the Sarmatian Volga-Don area, naming sites such as Dachi, but stated that this was not the universal explanation for their distribution. In contrast, she believes that the 'Tillya-tepe style' on objects in the Kuban region were luxury imports, denoting 'mutual social relations between elites of different peoples'.²⁴

Indeed, there is an evolving approach to the analysis of archaeological evidence with respect to tribal groups. This centres around the question of whether the presence of similar objects, motifs or techniques at different sites actually denotes migration, shared ethnicity and cultural heritage of a group of people, or results from contact and exchange along the so-called Silk routes. In her recent article, 'A study on the complexity and dynamics of interchange in late Iron Age Eurasia', Ursula Brosseder reflected this latter assessment, evaluating a broad range of grave-goods in terms of shared status symbols among elite classes across vast areas rather than migration.²⁵

Arguably this latter, nuanced evaluation of the material evidence, relating some objects to shared elite taste, seems the more credible, particularly in relation to specific object-

²⁰ FRANCFORT 2011, pp.283-287; 2012, p.100.

²¹ RAPIN 2007, p.62.

²² RAPIN 2007, pp.56-58.

²³ TREISTER AND YATSENKO 1997-1998.

²⁴ MORDVINTSEVA 2010, p.204.

²⁵ BROSEDER 2015.

types. Having said this, there are a significant number of commonalities between grave-goods and types of burial practices at Tillya-tepe and those of the Sarmatian or Sarmatian-Alan peoples in the north Pontic area (as per Mordintseva's observations above). It is anticipated that the detailed research on plant imagery in this thesis will provide information towards the possible relationships between different cultures.

0.2.2.3 Nomadic or semi-sedentarised people?

Another area of deliberation is whether the Tillya-tepe folk were nomads or part of a semi-sedentarised community. Their nomadic heritage is unquestionable, not only because of the nature of the pit burials,²⁶ but also in view of the man's possessions decorated with characteristic steppe animal imagery. However, as Francfort notes, there were various types of settlements and the practice of seasonal migrations was deeply-engrained,²⁷ so even people living in cities might incorporate this seasonal mobility into their life-style. Sarianidi considered that the Tillya-tepe people were settled nomads who inhabited the circular urban settlement at nearby Emshi-tepe since the burials were clearly visible from the city²⁸ and similar pottery was found at both sites.²⁹ Emshi-tepe was a naturally fortified mound, covering an area of 18 hectares which was occupied from the Hellenistic era until its destruction in the Sasanian period.³⁰ The supposed connection with Emshi-tepe has persisted and is widely supported.³¹ However, there is no definitive evidence that the Tillya-tepe folk had any real connection with the site.

Sarianidi's view that the Tillya-tepe folk were no longer nomads was re-iterated during the recent exhibition. In the context of prestige items owned by man who retained only symbolic contact with his nomadic roots,³² Schiltz wrote: 'All this points to a horseman who passed from cavalry to chivalry, and one who felt it important to emphasise his high position through the emblems of settled kingship, without renouncing his pride in his nomadic origins'.³³ In similar vein, Francfort characterised the man as a sedentarised

²⁶ Discussed in 0.4 TILLYA-TEPE BURIALS.

²⁷ FRANCFORT 2012a, p.88. ABDULLAEV 2007 discusses fortified 'cities' with space for yurt-type structures.

²⁸ SARIANIDI 1985, p.18; YATSENKO 2001, p.75, suggested by him in 1984.

²⁹ SARIANIDI 1980, p.125.

³⁰ BALL 1982, vol.I, p.96. FRANCFORT 2012a, pp.89-91 discusses contemporary sites.

³¹ BERNARD 1987, p.763; BOARDMAN 2003a, p.348; FRANCFORT 2011, p.328;

PUGACHENKOVA AND REMPEL 1991, p.14; YATSENKO 2001, p.75.

³² Discussed here 0.4 TILLYA-TEPE BURIALS.

³³ SCHILTZ 2008, p.265; also SCHILTZ 2009, p.114.

nomad, a king, horseman and archer.³⁴ Rapin also regarded the incumbents of Tillya-tepe, like the Koktepe woman, to be semi-sedentarised nomads.³⁵

It is acknowledged that all assertions of semi-sedentarised status remain hypothetical since no definitive proof is available. The burial practices reflect a strong nomadic character and the Tillya-tepe folk had few possessions beyond personal adornment, weaponry and sundry items. There were two folding objects, the man's *sella curulis* (campaign stool) and the collapsible crown belonging to the woman in grave VI which might be related to mobility and these will be analysed further. And yet the quantity and lavishness of their possessions is well beyond that of finds from any other Bactrian site. A closer study of the specific grave-goods, with a consideration of the diversity and complexity of design and artistic influences, will make this clearer.

0.2.2.4 Parthian contacts

The Tillya-tepe folk should also be considered in the light of their geographical position in the fluctuating borderlands between the Parthian Empire and Bactria, with access across the plains to the steppe nomadic world. Some sort of relationship with the Parthians seems likely³⁶ in light of the Parthian coins found in graves III and VI.³⁷ Eduard Rtveladze considered the west Bactrian area, perhaps extending to the Sheberghan oasis (i.e. Tillya-tepe), as being either within Parthian control or 'strongly influenced by the Arsacid state'.³⁸ The presence of countermarked Parthian coins in grave VI may imply a shared commercial environment.³⁹

As further confirmation of the interaction of cultures, Marek Olbrycht demonstrated via literary sources and numerous Parthian coins found at Sarmatian sites that there is evidence for trade and political activity between the Parthians and the Sarmatians.⁴⁰ The Sarmatians were geographically separated from the Parthians by the Caucasus mountains, and 'The whole Transcaucasian region (Iberia, Armenia and Albania) was politically and economically connected with the Parthian kingdom'.⁴¹ The writings of Strabo, Tacitus and Josephus around the 1st century CE all record contact between the

³⁴ FRANCFORT 2011, p.328; see also PUGACHENKOVA and REMPEL 1991, p.14.

³⁵ RAPIN 2007, pp.53-55.

³⁶ BERNARD 1987, p.767; FRANCFORT 2011, p.278.

³⁷ SARIANIDI 1985, cat.3.48, p.242 ; cats 6.32, 6.33, p.258.

³⁸ RTVELADZE 1985, p.187.

³⁹ ZEYMAL 1999.

⁴⁰ OLBRYCHT 2009, pp.548-549; 2000, p.124; 1998, p.134.

⁴¹ OLBRYCHT 2009, p.547.

two groups, both peaceful exchanges and Sarmatian and Alan raids via the Caucasus into Parthian territory in 72 and 75 CE.⁴² There is archaeological evidence in addition to the coin finds. Treister has analysed an ivory-handled knife decorated with an enthroned Parthian king, identified as Vologases I, dating to around 60-80 CE, which was excavated from a Sarmatian cemetery at Krasnogorovka in the Lower Don basin.⁴³ A wreath of gold leaves from Kerch in the Taman peninsular has a centrepiece decorated with the imprint of a Parthian coin, attributed to Phraates III (1st century BCE).⁴⁴

0.2.2.5 Artistic influences

Articles by John Boardman focus on the Tillya-tepe artefacts and his insights arise from his expertise not only in Greece itself, but also his extensive knowledge of the interactions between the Graeco-Roman world and other cultures.⁴⁵ Like Sarianidi, Boardman contended that many of the gold objects were manufactured in the same Bactrian workshop, despite the diversity of influences and styles.⁴⁶ This viewpoint has been proven to some considerable degree by Jane Hickman's technical investigation of the finds which also suggests the same source.⁴⁷

Boardman noted that the Dionysos and Ariadne clasps in grave VI encapsulated the way in which the Graeco-Roman imagery was appropriated by these local craftsmen: 'the whole is a novel composition by an artist who, though fully conversant with Greek style and iconography, had his own ideas about composition and detail.'⁴⁸ He discusses this imagery in terms of 'Hellenic' or 'Hellenising' influences, evaluating Bactria in terms of earlier centuries - its former status within the Hellenistic world when it was part of Alexander the Great's empire, and many Macedonians were settled there. Then, in 250 BCE, Bactria became an independent state and its culture continued to be subject to the 'lingering effects locally of Greek Bactria and Indo-Greek enclaves'.⁴⁹

By the 1st century CE, the Romans were busily trading along the routes to the East, and they too offered the potential for interaction. Rachel Mairs, in her discussion of the

⁴² OLBRYCHT 2009, pp.548-549; TREISTER 2001, p.44

⁴³ TREISTER 2001.

⁴⁴ TREISTER 2001, p.47.

⁴⁵ Particularly BOARDMAN 1994.

⁴⁶ BOARDMAN 2003a, pp.367; 2012, p.104; SARIANIDI 1985, p.53-54; SCHILTZ 2008, p.229.

⁴⁷ HICKMAN 2012.

⁴⁸ BOARDMAN 2012, p.106.

⁴⁹ BOARDMAN 2003a, p.349; 2007, p.12.

Begram plaster casts, mentioned that they might have been imported from the Roman Empire.⁵⁰ Francfort framed the discussion in terms of Hellenised forms ‘inserted within a specific and intentional steppe artistic scheme’.⁵¹

As well as examining the Graeco-Roman connections at Tillya-tepe in his article ‘Die Gräber von Tillya-tepe’, Michael Pfrommer also reviewed Achaemenid-style artefacts at Tillya-tepe,⁵² exploring a broad range of stylistic and typological influences. This latter subject was considered more recently by Paola Piacentini.⁵³

Boardman was one of the earliest academics to discuss influences from further east, analysing what he considered to be Chinese-style dragons on items from the man’s grave.⁵⁴ An examination of eastern influences on Tillya-tepe dominated the discourse at the Metropolitan Museum of Art symposium in 2009, in part arising from the increased archaeological activity of Xiongnu burial sites in Mongolia, eliciting research contributions on the subject from Boardman, Francfort, and Denise Leidy who dealt with eastern steppe influences in the greatest detail.⁵⁵

The subject of artistic influences is critical to this thesis since the nature of the research is art historical. Questions concerning the transmission of motifs, and any consistencies of their contextual deployment will be central to the process of study in the forthcoming case studies. This should result in a closer understanding of cultural interactions.

In summary, although there is no consensus on the ethnicity or tribal affiliations of the Tillya-tepe folk, their probable semi-sedentarised or even settled status is widely agreed. In this regard, Tillya-tepe is, in effect, discussed as an extra-mural burial site for the settlement at Emshi-tepe. Much of the analysis of the grave-goods has been discussed in terms of artistic influences from other cultures, contact with whom is related – directly or indirectly - to Tillya-tepe’s position on a network of communication routes. These themes will be addressed further throughout this thesis.

⁵⁰ MAIRS 2014b, p.183. Begram is generally dated to 1st – early 2nd century CE.

⁵¹ FRANCFORT 2012a, p.98.

⁵² PFROMMER 1996.

⁵³ PIACENTINI 2009.

⁵⁴ BOARDMAN 2003a, pp.365-366; 2003b.

⁵⁵ BOARDMAN 2012; FRANCFORT 2012a; LEIDY 2012.

0.2.3 Plant iconography

0.2.3.1 Plant iconography at Tillya-tepe

Despite the fact that there is copious plant ornament on the Tillya-tepe grave-goods, there is just one study devoted to this subject, Schiltz's article 'Le Coeur et le Lierre, une expression du pouvoir à Tillya Tepe'.⁵⁶ Although Schiltz discusses the cordiform motifs in detail, she does not treat them as constituents of flowers but evaluates them exclusively as single leaves. This contrasts sharply with the methodology applied throughout this thesis, wherein the many hearts which are configured as two floral shapes are considered to represent different species.

Notwithstanding this difference in approach, Schiltz's discourse is relevant to the *single* hearts from Tillya-tepe. She noted that unlike other repeated shapes, such as roundels, commas, 'almonds' and volutes, these hearts did not feature in earlier steppe nomadic art.⁵⁷ The explanation for this absence arises specifically because the heart was *not* a motif of the kind found in steppe contexts, but likely derived from Graeco-Roman sources, as will be discussed. Schiltz identified all these hearts as ivy-leaves, associating them with Dionysos since ivy was a well-known attribute of the god.⁵⁸ She pursued an interpretative approach in her evaluation of this cordiform imagery, relating their use to the victorious Alexander the Great wearing a crown of ivy. From this she concluded that ivy generally represented notions of power and triumph.⁵⁹ She further related Dionysos's importance to his association with ritualised wine consumption used to celebrate fraternity and the accession to power among the Graeco-Scythians.⁶⁰ Her further contention that hearts might equate with the role of tamga⁶¹ is a complex subject which is hard to support without more compelling evidence.

Although Schiltz did not frame her researches within a broader study of plant motifs in art, it is useful to consider how plant imagery has been treated in certain key works.

⁵⁶ SCHILTZ 2012; discussed briefly in 0.7 TILLYA-TEPE CORDIFORM MOTIFS. Note also remarks on acanthus and rosettes, MORDVINTSEVA 2010, p.186.

⁵⁷ SCHILTZ 2012, p.337.

⁵⁸ SCHILTZ 2012, p.338-339.

⁵⁹ SCHILTZ 2012, p.338-341.

⁶⁰ SCHILTZ 2012, p.340.

⁶¹ SCHILTZ 2012, p.347.

0.2.3.2 Sources on plant iconography

Plant iconography is a relatively neglected area of study. As Robert Bagley wrote in his seminal article, 'Meaning and Interpretation': 'Plant derived ornament is all around us and we tend to ignore it'⁶² The study of plant imagery does not offer a continuous narrative and the following literature is but a brief digest of some of the most important publications. These are largely considered in chronological order because of the diversity of cultures which they embrace.

The earliest definitive work on plant imagery is Alois Riegl's seminal study of vegetal ornament in *Stilfragen*, 'Questions of style', 1893.⁶³ This systematic study of plant decoration in art traced the migration of motifs from 2nd millennium Egypt and west Asia, through the Graeco-Roman period to the early Islamic era. He evaluated the 'decorative arts' with an intellectual rigour usually applied exclusively to painting and architecture. Many designs consisted of scrolling tendrils and pattern-making, and his sections on the Graeco-Roman period were largely devoted to the ornamental forms of acanthus and palmettes. Riegl was much concerned with surface ornament, and although to some degree he looked at plants in relation to the objects they decorated, he was not concerned with the concept of plants as iconography. He framed his analysis in terms of *Kunstwollen*, the design of a work of art dictated by artists' or craftsmen's ideas and objectives.

Riegl's observations on the migration of plant ornament across cultures were pursued further by Helene Kantor in her comprehensive study: *Plant Ornament: its origin and development in the Ancient Near East*,⁶⁴ which explored the transmission and interaction of certain plant motifs across Egypt and Mesopotamia, Syria and Phoenicia, and then their westward journey to Greece.⁶⁵ Her primary objective was to illustrate the cultural relations and exchanges among various civilisations from the 2nd millennium to the 8th century BCE. Like Riegl, Kantor emphasised the manipulation of plant imagery into patterns in visual contexts which were seemingly decorative rather than emblematic, although she concedes that she may have neglected some symbolic

⁶² BAGLEY 1993, p.35.

⁶³ A translation and commentary are provided in CASTRIOTA 1992. For a summary of Riegl's publication, viewpoints and references, see: <https://dictionaryofarthistorians.org/riegla.htm> (accessed August 2015).

⁶⁴ KANTOR 1945/1999.

⁶⁵ <http://oi.uchicago.edu/research/library/dissertation/kantor.html> (accessed August 2015).

facets.⁶⁶ Her over-riding achievement was to show that: 'Plant ornament is a thread by whose aid we can find our way through the cultural labyrinth of the ancient Near East'.⁶⁷

In line with both Riegl and Kantor, the methodology in this thesis also treats plant imagery as an indication of communication across different cultures, but the possibility of meaning attached to these floral motifs is also explored since the plant images are closely studied within the context of the objects they decorate.

The first chapter in Jessica Rawson's *Chinese ornament: the lotus and the dragon* is devoted to several plant motifs: acanthus, half-palmettes, scrolling foliage.⁶⁸ She traces their journey from Greece eastwards into west Asia, and then beyond into the Buddhist art of Gandhara, thereafter into east Central Asia, and finally to the Yungang temple grottoes in China. The chapter is clear, concise and insightful but is restricted by the fact that the evidence is largely restricted to architectural decoration. This neglects the substantial contribution of other media with vegetal ornament, such as metalwork, textiles and seals, precious and portable items from the Graeco-Roman and Iranian worlds which were traded along the communication routes. In respect of Tillya-tepe, the emphasis in this current thesis is on this latter type of material, not least because this is where most of the comparanda are found.

Most other publications on plant imagery are devoted to narrower geographies. There is well-developed research on Egyptian flowers, largely deriving from wall-paintings and archaeobotanical evidence from tombs, and Ancient Egyptian and Coptic texts.⁶⁹ Articles about plants on artefacts from the Bronze Age Mesopotamian sites Ur and Uruk by archaeobotanist Naomi Miller make use of her archaeological and botanical knowledge, combined with an interpretative assessment of the visual evidence, which in the broadest terms she associates with abundance and fertility.⁷⁰ There are also publications with detailed research on plants from the 'Holy Land', citing both imagery and religious texts, with an emphasis on ritual and symbolic roles.⁷¹

⁶⁶ KANTOR 1945/1999, Chapter 1: Introduction, p.3-4

⁶⁷ KANTOR 1945/1999, Chapter 1: Introduction, p.4.

⁶⁸ RAWSON 1984.

⁶⁹ GERMER 2001; 1989; HEPPPER 1990; MANNICHE 1999; TÄCKHOLM 1974 on botany.

Specialised articles: BAUMANN 1960; BISSET *et al.* 1994; EMBODEN 1989; GABRA 1956.

⁷⁰ MILLER 2013, 2000; MILLER *et al* 2015; PITTMAN AND MILLER 2014.

⁷¹ GOODENOUGH 1965, RAHMANI 1994 on specific symbols and artefacts; GOOR AND NUROCK 1998 on the important cultural status of fruit. ZOHARY 1982.

In the Graeco-Roman world the visual material is sometimes correlated with literary sources. Hellmut Baumann's *Greek wild flowers* presents a thematic account of the cultural status of plants from artworks and literature, for example with chapters entitled 'Cult and myths', 'Medicinal and magic plants', all the while retaining a botanical perspective.⁷² His book represents an essential overview of Mediterranean flora, which continued to be relevant into Roman imperial times. Annette Giesecke's *The Mythology of plants*, provides a rather generalised summary of plants in relation to the major Graeco-Roman deities.⁷³

It is apparent from Latin literature that plants, particularly flowers, were very important to the Romans and these sources form the backdrop to Wilhemina Jashemski's contribution to the study of Roman plant imagery from a horticultural perspective.⁷⁴ Although she was not particularly concerned with ornament, she possessed a sharp eye for botanical detail and context, and she discusses the art historical, archaeological and archaeobotanical evidence at Pompeii in terms of genus and species. Her concentration on the botanical identity of the visual material is central to the research approach in this thesis.

David Castriota and Gilles Sauron, both writers on plants in Roman art, interpret the visual material in terms of complex allegories related to imperial rule.⁷⁵ The methodology used by Castriota in his extensive account of Emperor Augustus's Ara Pacis monument in Rome involves an exploration of other sites which takes him far away from the Ara Pacis for several chapters before returning to the monument in his conclusion. A similar process is observable in the comparanda sections in this present thesis, where objects from culturally relevant sources are compared with Tillya-tepe.

Plant ornament plays a dominant role in Pfrommer's painstaking and thorough catalogue of late Hellenistic and Seleucid metalwork in the Getty Museum, *Metalwork from the Hellenized East*.⁷⁶ Pfrommer methodically analysed silver vessels, gold buckles and other items, although his conclusions are circumscribed by the fact that they were unprovenanced objects. On the basis of plant ornament, he attributed many of silver objects at the Getty Museum to Parthian and Bactrian workshops, with their

⁷² BAUMANN 1993.

⁷³ GIESECKE 2014.

⁷⁴ JASHEMSKI 2012, 1993, 1979.

⁷⁵ CASTRIOTA 1995; SAURON 2000.

⁷⁶ PFROMMER 1993.

decoration ultimately derived from Hellenistic forebears. His work is discussed here in relation to the five-petalled flower in Case Study II.

There is one important typological study devoted to a single flower, Katsumi Tanabe's exploration of the tulip image which appears on coins of Demetrios I (*ca.* 200 BCE) and subsequent Graeco-Bactrian kings.⁷⁷ He traces the flower through early versions from the Bronze Age Bactria-Margiana archaeological culture of Central Asia (*ca.* 2300-1700 BCE) around the Oxus River and Merv, and Iran, all the way through to the Sasanian period. It is well-illustrated but exists only in its original Japanese version, albeit with a useful introductory summary. It is a reminder that any study of plant imagery should take into account diverse sources.⁷⁸

Finally, anthropologist Jack Goody produced *The culture of flowers*, a book with a vast chronological and geographical scope.⁷⁹ His compact but well-structured chapter entitled 'In the beginning: gardens and paradise, garlands and sacrifice' is devoted to the central role of flowers in gardens and horticulture, the luxury goods trade, and rituals, from 3000 BCE to the fall of Rome in the 5th century CE.⁸⁰ His approach, addressing the wider value of plants in society under headings such as 'The use of crowns and garlands' and 'Perfumes from flowers' has influenced the way in which cultural aspects of flowers are explored within this thesis.⁸¹

Thus it is apparent that research into plant imagery has largely been devoted to material from the Ancient Near East, Egypt and the Levant, and the Graeco-Roman world. There are only limited references to plant imagery on objects from Bactria and the neighbouring areas, and there is only one current article on plant imagery at Tillya-tepe, despite the fact that there are so many flowers present. Therefore it is hoped that this research will address this deficit.

⁷⁷ TANABE 1999.

⁷⁸ SARIANIDI 1998b.

⁷⁹ GOODY 1993.

⁸⁰ GOODY 1993, pp.28-72.

⁸¹ A summary of floral crowns is provided in 3.4.2 THE FOLDING CROWN.

0.3 Methodology

0.3.1 Introduction

This research investigates plant imagery on artefacts from Tillya-tepe. It focuses on three floral motifs, chosen on the basis that they occur most frequently and on important objects. Although, as can be seen from the illustrations in this thesis, these floral motifs fulfil a decorative role it is possible that they have an additional symbolic purpose beyond this simple function. To discover whether this suggestion is viable, the flowers on the objects are closely observed and studied in detail, their presence is isolated on the Tillya-tepe artefacts and then analysed.

A major aspect of the analysis of these floral motifs involves the review of each of these three floral types in the art of other relevant cultures, those which may have had an influence on, or maybe even interacted with, the Tillya-tepe folk, based on the evidence of other comparable objects within the Tillya-tepe graves. In this way the scope of the study is extended into societies which, unlike the Tillya-tepe folk, expressed themselves in writing, including Hellenistic and Roman authors, but also, where available, Iranian texts.

Each of the three Tillya-tepe flowers will be evaluated within its own case study. The three case studies are divided into four sections, which are now discussed in detail.

0.3.2 Visual evidence at Tillya-tepe

The first section of each case study entails a typological study of one of the three floral motifs.⁸²

Case Study I examines flowers with four cordiform petals interleaved with pointed sepals, **Fig. a.**⁸³

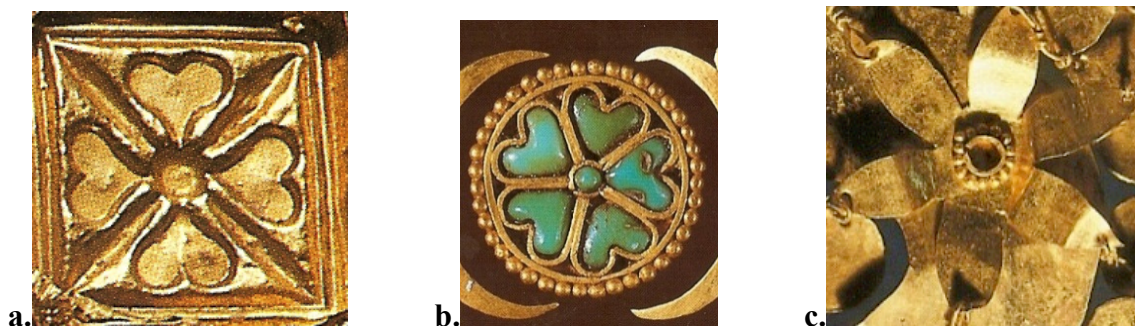
Case Study II considers flowers with five cordiform petals, which feature on more objects than any other plant motif at Tillya-tepe, **Fig. b.**⁸⁴

Case Study III investigates flowers with six pointed petals, **Fig. c.**⁸⁵

⁸² No case study is devoted to the single cordiform motif because, as discussed, Schiltz recently provided a detailed article (SCHILTZ 2012). Her methodology differs from the present analysis since she treats all heart-shapes as denoting ivy, no matter what configuration they appear in.

⁸³ Costume appliqué, grave IV, Tillya-tepe. SARIANIDI 1985, pl.6.

⁸⁴ Composite jewellery, grave II, Tillya-tepe. SARIANIDI 1985, pl.60.



All three plants consist of flowerheads with radiating petals around a circular centre. They have conventionalised forms, with the petals presented in a consistent and simplified manner with only limited peripheral botanical details. Like much of the decoration at Tillya-tepe, many of these flowers are mass-produced forms whose shapes are, in part, dictated by their materials and technique – cast gold, shaped turquoise stones and stamped gold - as will be discussed. Two of these chosen flower types are constructed from heart-shaped motifs, and these hearts stand out within the ornamental repertoire at Tillya-tepe. At a glance these numerous cordiforms, which occur in many variations, might be mistaken for simple geometric motifs, one among the many kinds of discs, tubes and other shapes which constituted the thousands of appliquéés in the graves. These hearts sometimes feature as single turquoise inlays but seldom appear in bands of ornament of the type generally consisting of purely decorative oves, triangles and comma-shaped forms.⁸⁶ Since these cordiforms are regularly configured into the two radiating designs shown above, they are interpreted as flowers.

Each of these three flowers is studied in detail, commencing with a short catalogue of artefacts on which it appears. This is intended to establish whether there are any consistencies in the depiction of the flowers in terms of their precise shape, and in relation to the objects they decorate, whether weaponry, crowns, brooches, hairpins or costume appliquéés. This process will also ascertain whether there is a concentration of specific flowers in a particular grave or group of graves. This stage is critical and great attention will be paid to these observations since there is often an assumption that plant ornament is purely decorative, an aesthetic enhancement to an artefact. If any of these particular flower types is shown to be applied consistently or distinctively in any specific way, then it may be construed that it had a particular significance for the Tillya-tepe folk and may have been deliberately selected for purposes beyond mere decoration.

⁸⁵ Six-petalled flower on the folding headdress, grave VI, Tillya-tepe. SARIANIDI 1985, pl.12.

⁸⁶ An exceptional circumstance on the bi-lobed knife case is mentioned in Case Study I.

Although these Tillya-tepe flowers are relatively stylised, it is believed that each of the three motifs represents real species or genera, and the veracity of this proposal is explored within each case study. There then follows a detailed attempt to identify each flower in a systematic manner. A credible identification offers a crucial dimension to this research since it provides the opportunity to consult textual sources and consider archaeobotanical evidence relating to the named plant. However, the exercise is complex, as expressed by botanist Arthur Tucker: ‘Identification of pre-Linnaean illustrations is vexing, particularly so when their original purposes were not botanical but rather magico-religious, pharmacological, or decorative. At best, only tentative identifications can be offered, but we must still choose the best possible species from the best available evidence.’⁸⁷

The process is obviously more straightforward when the artistic style under consideration is naturalistic. But the stylisation of the Tillya-tepe plant imagery means it is necessary to compare the flowers with imagery from other sites which feature more realistic flowers, while also scrutinising the plant morphology – flowers, leaves and seed-heads. This will enable us to understand the conventions which developed in the depiction of a specific plant type and to see beyond what Paul Jacobsthal has aptly called ‘the ornamental disguise’.⁸⁸ With sufficient evidence in place from this detailed study, an identification can be proposed for each flower.

This approach challenges a common assumption that images of plants were often generic, merely ‘rosettes’ or ‘palmettes,’ rather than representing real types. This tendency is more prevalent when flowers have a conventionalised form, as at Tillya-tepe; or where they are organised in repeat-patterns such as the lattice and trellis configurations commonly found on textiles, whereby the individual floral motifs sometimes appear subordinated to the overall design. This is discussed further in Case Study I. Such generalisations in discussing flowers⁸⁹ contrasts with a willingness to identify the most familiar fruit, such as pomegranates or grapes. In those circumstances where architectural detailing or reliefs feature recognisable vegetal motifs such as grape-vines, then the accompanying flowers too are deserving of attention. They may not be mere decorative rosettes but possibly represent real species. This oversight or

⁸⁷ TUCKER 2004, p.733. Linnaeus provided a systematic binomial classification of plants in the 18th century.

⁸⁸ JACOBSTHAL 1956, p.37.

⁸⁹ Among the exceptions are studies of Egyptian flowers, GERMER 2001; the Indian lotus, KINTAERT 2012 and 2010; and floral imagery at Pompeii, JASHEMSKI 1993.

neglect perhaps demonstrates an unfamiliarity with the importance of flowers in earlier societies, in which they played a fundamental role in religious rituals and pharmacology,⁹⁰ and where they sometimes embodied symbolic values, all in addition to functions such as food and perfumery.

Once each flower is identified, we will then briefly revisit its presence on several of the more important Tillya-tepe objects in order to consider its ornamental purpose and enquire what further clues it offers to our understanding of Tillya-tepe. If, as discussed, any of these flowers is determined to have been used systematically at Tillya-tepe then this would suggest that they were present as the result of deliberate choices and had special significance for these buried people. At this stage it should be possible to assess whether the specific plant motif offers any evidence for social differentiation – by gender, by rank - among the Tillya-tepe folk. This section should provide the first stepping stone towards an exploration of *why* they might have used the flowers in the way in which they did.

0.3.3 Visual evidence from beyond Tillya-tepe: the comparanda

There is then a review of objects with images of these specific flowers from elsewhere, to discover whether there are any commonalities with Tillya-tepe in their application and context. This stage is necessary because the Tillya-tepe artefacts should not be evaluated simply within their own assemblage or against one other group of people, since the Tillya-tepe folk do not have an established and fully-understood cultural heritage. Embedded within this analytical approach is a belief that these three floral motifs were not an autochthonous creation at Tillya-tepe but were borrowed from elsewhere, resulting from the transmission of artistic influences. The very fact that these flowers occurred in cultures which shared other common artistic characteristics with Tillya-tepe offers plausible evidence of motif transfer.

Thus, images of plants at Tillya-tepe may be used to demonstrate contact between one culture and another, and it may even be possible to propose potential ‘stepping stones’ for the journey of these floral motifs from their origins to their destination at Tillya-tepe. The study of floral imagery is also a means to navigate a way through the multiple artistic influences apparent at Tillya-tepe. This close focus, drilling down into the detail of particular motifs and tracking their transmission across cultures, is a process which

⁹⁰ Discussed further in 0.5 PLANT CULTURE.

moves us away from generalisations about transmission, thereby grounding them ‘in the local and the specific’.⁹¹

The greatest concentration of examples are chosen from relevant geographical regions, including Bactria itself. Tillya-tepe presents such a varied range of influences and the artistic milieux which are considered pertinent for comparison are those which exhibit, to a greater or lesser extent, sufficient elements of a shared visual language, and/or have commonalities in the ways motifs are used, such as on similar types of objects. The net is cast widely in that interconnected world, including sites in the more-or-less contemporary Parthian and Roman empires; the Sarmatian-Alan territories northwest of Tillya-tepe; the Altaic cultures; and the lands of the Xiongnu and other confederations within Inner Asia. Examples from earlier periods will be noted only briefly where relevant. A table listing key sites with dates and location is supplied in Appendix II: INDEX OF KEY SITES.

The Tillya-tepe burials are dated to a period when networks and traffic across Eurasia were increasing. The 1st century CE was a high point of cultural and social interaction, when fine goods were traded, exchanged, and given as gifts or tribute between elite classes of people living or moving along the communication routes.⁹² The review of the comparanda is a lengthy but purposeful peregrination, mostly spanning the 4th century BCE – 3rd century CE, with an emphasis on the decades around the Common Era. Occasionally the chronological scope is extended beyond this framework in order to demonstrate the enduring aspect of floral motifs.

The study of comparanda from elsewhere inevitably represents a substantial digression from Tillya-tepe, but the information generated enables us to contextualise the use of plant imagery at Tillya-tepe. Although there are attendant risks in looking at Tillya-tepe through the prism of these other cultures, i.e. a risk of distorting the view of the Tillya-tepe folk, without this process it is impossible to understand the full range of influences and interconnections which may be pertinent to the Tillya-tepe objects.

However it should be emphasised that plant imagery was not omnipresent in art; in fact was absent from the artistic productions of many societies. This circumstance is especially useful, since if these flowers were absolutely everywhere then it would be difficult to isolate their potential source(s). In the period contemporary with Tillya-tepe

⁹¹ MAIRSb 2014b, p.177.

⁹² BROSEDER 2015, pp.260-267; BUNKER 2004; CAMBON 2008; LAING 1995.

naturalistic floral decoration played a major part in the ornamental repertoire of the Roman empire, much of which was based on earlier Greek precedents, particularly Hellenistic art in which floral motifs proliferated. Section 0.6 PLANT ICONOGRAPHY discusses this further, providing an overview of floral ornament from steppe nomadic, Hellenistic and Roman and Bactrian contexts.

It is likely that the artists who created the Tillya-tepe artefacts had encountered a range of motifs on relatively high-value and portable objects, such as metalware, seals and inscribed gems, coins, textiles, glassware and fine ceramics, which were exported from the West. The 1st or early 2nd century CE storehouse at Begram in northeastern Afghanistan with its cache of glassware, metalwork and ivories is proof of the presence of luxury objects in Bactria.⁹³ However, the survival of both metalware vessels (easily melted down) and textiles (prone to decomposition in all but the most favourable environments) is relatively sparse and they are often absent from the archaeological record. When metalwork, especially silverware, does surface from that part of the world, it is often without provenance. Since Graeco-Roman plant ornament appears across many different media, a wider range of sources is considered beyond portable objects, including mosaics, wall-paintings and sculptural decoration on monuments. Indeed, the decoration on mosaics can provide clues about designs on missing textiles since they often displayed a similar repertoire of decoration.⁹⁴ Wall-paintings and mosaics sometime provide colour which is an additional aid to identifying floral types.

Furthermore, the presence of plaster medallion moulds for the mass production of silverware at Begram, and mould-made vessels at Ai Khanoum, are both reminders that moulds could themselves travel and were an additional vector for the spread of designs and motifs.⁹⁵ Finally, itinerant craftsmen sometimes may have been responsible for the dissemination of ornamental motifs.⁹⁶

It is crucial to consider the artistic context of each flower type, and the resulting information will be discussed both in relation to Tillya-tepe and across the comparanda. It is anticipated that one contribution of this section of the study will be to generate a clearer picture of which cultures were most influential for Tillya-tepe, thereby positioning Tillya-tepe more clearly within the wider history of art. It is further hoped

⁹³ CAMBON 2008, cats.158-189, pp.168-185; cats.210, pp.197-227, pp.197-208.

⁹⁴ The similarity of plant imagery across these media is discussed in Case Study I.

⁹⁵ MAIRS 2014b.

⁹⁶ MAIRS 2014b, p.187.

that the isolation of these particular floral motifs on artefacts from other territories between Central Asia and Europe – whether in Iranian, north Pontic or other contexts - will provide a wider idea of the movement of imagery across the wider geography of interlinked cultures.

0.3.4 Textual evidence

In addition to the study of material evidence, each plant is assessed for its cultural significance based on written sources. This is an essential stage since much of the information is not readily available in current research. Inevitably Greek and Roman authors are central to this analysis since they survive in the greatest number, particularly in the years around the Common Era. This approach is considered justifiable not only because Tillya-tepe exhibits extensive influences from Graeco-Roman art but also since we are exploring the notion that plant iconography crossed geographical and political boundaries in this era.

The sources are divided into several categories, the first of which are medical and pharmacological texts. There is occasional recourse to earlier texts: Mesopotamian sources, and the mid-16th century BCE *Ebers Papyrus*, a list of eight hundred diseases and remedies from Egypt.⁹⁷ There are passing references to Theophrastus (ca. 370 – 287) whose *Historia Plantarum* (*Enquiry into Plants*) was the first surviving, systematic description and classification of plants based on typological criteria.⁹⁸ One of the two principle sources used is Pliny the Elder (23 – 79 CE) since he discussed around one thousand plants⁹⁹ in his encyclopaedic work, *Naturalis Historia*, in which Books XX-XXV were effectively an Herbal. Dioscorides (ca. 40 – 90 CE) is also a central figure, whose *Materia Medica* categorised around 500 plants by their uses,¹⁰⁰ and which ‘superseded all earlier literature and became the standard work of later centuries’.¹⁰¹

Plants also had an important status in ritual, religion and mythology and this was captured early in Graeco-Roman literature, from the 8th – 7th centuries in Homer’s *Iliad* and *Odyssey* and in the *Homeric Hymns* attributed to Hesiod, and thereafter throughout the centuries. The bucolic poets Theocritus and Bion (3rd and 1st centuries BCE respectively) and the lyrical poetry of the *Anacreontea* (Hellenistic or later) are helpful

⁹⁷ THORWALD 1962, p.61.

⁹⁸ AMIGUES 2012, 2015. HARDY AND TOTELIN 2015, pp.75-80. SCARBOROUGH 2006.

⁹⁹ SINGER 1927, p.34.

¹⁰⁰ SINGER 1927, p.21.

¹⁰¹ HAMMOND and SCULLARD 1970, p.354.

sources, as is Ovid, whose *Metamorphoses* (ca. 2 CE), derived from earlier Near Eastern and Greek tales¹⁰² in which some stories were concerned with the transformation of humans into plants.

By making use of all these resources it should be possible to assess whether there was any correspondence between visual images of plants and textual sources relating to them. Whether there is a correlation or not, it is hoped that the resulting information can be used to build an ‘iconographic profile’ for each flower – i.e. noting when the flower appeared consistently in specific circumstances, such as royal, military or funerary contexts, for example; or in relation to the material evidence, whether a specific flower recurred on particular object types. This is an area of research which has not received much attention hitherto and therefore the information accrued should contribute to a wider understanding of the use of plant imagery in the art of the periods under consideration, especially 1st century BCE – 3rd century CE.

0.3.5 Tillya-tepe and plant iconography

In the fourth and final section of each case study we return to Tillya-tepe with more detailed analyses of specific artefacts. If it has been established in the 0.3.2 VISUAL EVIDENCE AT TILLYA-TEPE that the flower images were used in a systematic manner, thereby implying that they were purposefully selected by the Tillya-tepe folk, then, in addition to considerations of internal social differentiation noted above, it is possible that plant iconography might provide further information about the wider social function of the Tillya-tepe folk. If floral imagery can make a contribution to this important area of investigation then it would show that plant iconography is a more worthwhile and credible area of research than hitherto recognised.

Furthermore, the Tillya-tepe floral motifs are evaluated in the light of the information accrued from the study of relevant material and textual evidence for each flower. This contextualised approach ensures that Tillya-tepe, a site which exhibits so many visual connections with other cultures, is not viewed in isolation. By this comparative process one can search for explanations as to why specific floral motifs might have been taken from the art of another culture to Tillya-tepe. Since each floral motif has been studied in context in the comparanda, then we may ask whether the Tillya-tepe deployment corresponds to the application of these motifs elsewhere.

¹⁰² HAMMOND and SCULLARD 1970, p.764.

On this basis, this section aims to unravel the various layers of influences on complex objects in order to provide hypotheses about the specific significance and functions of Tillya-tepe objects in the light of their plant imagery – that is to say, the concept of plant iconography is treated as a means by which we can evaluate the Tillya-tepe artefacts. Thus it is hoped that this focussed approach will provide some understanding of why each flower was chosen at Tillya-tepe and elsewhere, and thereby yield information which is not readily available from other sources.

As part of this plant-centered approach, the chapter will also address the difficult subject of whether the floral images at Tillya-tepe played any emblematic role; whether they embodied meaningful content in addition to providing decoration. The interpretation of iconic forms is not always straightforward, potential symbolic values are often ambiguous, and there is generally a degree of hypothesis in any such undertakings. Even if it is established that there was meaning attached to the ‘host’ motif, there is only a case to suggest that any such cultural association travelled with the image if there is some degree of contextual corroboration at the recipients’ end. Cultural associations may be either transformed or lost in the very process of transmission. Therefore, images of flowers at both Tillya-tepe and other sites under discussion will be viewed in terms of the objects on which they feature and the graves in which those artefacts were found.

The cumulative body of information about each plant thus makes it possible to deal more directly with this question of floral symbolism at Tillya-tepe. This issue is made even more complex by the fact that material remains do not generally correlate neatly with ideas and ideologies. Bagley has addressed the issue of extracting meaning from imagery in circumstances where interpretations cannot be supported by texts (i.e. where texts did not exist).¹⁰³ He rejected the notion that ornament on Shang bronzes (mostly 14th – 12th century BCE) encoded the religion of the Shang people, and indeed doubted that they embodied any symbolic meanings at all, based on his comparative analysis of the decoration on the Lindisfarne Gospels and the Book of Kells (*ca.* late 7th – 9th century CE). The ornament in all these cases was dominated by abstracted, geometricised patterns.

This might seem to be a deterrent against all iconographic studies of art of non-literate cultures. However, the situation at Tillya-tepe is different since, as discussed, there were

¹⁰³ BAGLEY 1993.

many points of contact with better understood, literate cultures, as demonstrated by the deployment of shared motifs. In this thesis careful attention is paid to the context of such common imagery both at Tillya-tepe and among the comparanda, and any suggestions for possible encoded meanings will be anchored within evidence arising from both contextual and textual material. Therefore, although the choice of floral ornament at Tillya-tepe doubtless involved aesthetic considerations, this thesis will address the possibility that an understanding of the values and significance of specific flowers in these other cultures – as reflected in both their art and literature - may shed some light on the significance of these plants at Tillya-tepe.

There are precedents for emblematic plants in certain societies. It is widely accepted that certain plants in Greece and Rome sometimes embodied symbolism, demonstrable through a study of both images and texts,¹⁰⁴ but the verdict in other periods where textual evidence is absent is less clear-cut. Naomi Miller's work has already been noted in 0.2 LITERATURE REVIEW, and her approach is encapsulated in her statement: 'Multivalent cultural meanings...can be extracted through close analysis of iconography, style and context',¹⁰⁵ which viewpoint underpins aspects of the research here. At the other end of the Pre-Islamic chronological spectrum, Jens Kröger, in his remarks on Sasanian stucco decoration, mused: 'Plant motifs were probably not only decorative, but also iconographically meaningful'.¹⁰⁶ Although it is not possible to provide definitive, uncontestable iconographical interpretations of plant emblems among communities like Tillya-tepe since they did not record their beliefs in any texts, it is hoped that close analyses of the material evidence from Tillya-tepe and from other relevant sites will reveal clues which enable the credible reconstruction of their potential emblematic functions.

Based on the methodology in this thesis, any analysis is dependent on the identification of the plants – a core part of this research. In one of the definitive books on iconography, *Meaning in the Visual Arts*, the art historian Erwin Panofsky stated: 'It is obvious that a correct *iconographical analysis* presupposes a correct identification of the *motifs*.'¹⁰⁷ Panofsky's words emphasise the importance of knowing precisely *what* an image represents, before undertaking any interpretation of possible emblematic

¹⁰⁴ BAUMANN 1993; GIESECKE 2014.

¹⁰⁵ MILLER *et al.* 2015, p.3.

¹⁰⁶ KRÖGER 1978, p.102.

¹⁰⁷ PANOFSKY 1974, p.55, using Panofsky's italicisation.

values. The concept of plant symbolism is briefly discussed below in 0.5 PLANT CULTURE.

0.3.6 Summary

Floral imagery has a dominant presence in the ornamental repertoire at Tillya-tepe and this research revolves around three different flowers which are depicted repeatedly, including on some important objects. Each of these plants is considered within its own case study, which commences with the observation and comparison of the flower on Tillya-tepe objects. This stage is intended to establish whether specific plants were used consistently and were apparently significant to the Tillya-tepe folk.

Following the botanical identification of the flowers, the images are then compared with typologically similar examples on objects from relevant sites. This process is intended to serve several purposes. Firstly, to discover whether the floral imagery on objects from Tillya-tepe was transmitted from elsewhere, and if so then to determine from whence the motif may have originated and perhaps even how it reached Tillya-tepe. In this way the transfer of plant motifs may be used to illustrate interactions along the communication routes, thereby amplifying our knowledge of the exchanges of influences between different cultures. A further benefit of this research is that the knowledge emerging from the analysis of the Tillya-tepe imagery may contribute new insights into items with these three flower from other sites along the communications routes.

The identification of the flowers in question enables the considered use of texts to augment data from the material sources, providing an evaluation of their social and cultural importance in this period. The combined use of these resources – visual and textual - makes it possible to contemplate difficult questions concerning iconography. In those instances where these two sources of evidence coincide, then the case for a particular emblematic status, described as an iconographic profile, is strengthened.

The final stage is analytical, an investigation of what plant imagery might tell us about the lives and circumstances of the Tillya-tepe folk.

Thus, it is anticipated that a close study of plant ornament will provide insights into various artefacts found at Tillya-tepe, as well as developing an understanding of the wider potential of plant iconography. Above all, the objective is to provide new

perspectives on the Tillya-tepe folk themselves so that we may better understand the people who were buried amid such splendid possessions almost two thousand years ago.

However, before embarking on the art historical study which forms the core of this thesis, it is first necessary to summarise the principal points concerning the burials.

0.4 Tillya-tepe burials

0.4.1 Introduction

The six unlooted Tillya-tepe burials are a rich source of material evidence and scholars are dependent on this archaeological information since no supportive data have been produced from the possibly-related settlement at Emshi-tepe, five-hundred metres away. Nor are there any texts from the people themselves. The mode of deposition, the types of grave-goods, and the decoration used in their ornament all contribute to a body of information. The following account of the burial arrangements and some of the more important possessions is intended to provide a broader perspective on Tillya-tepe. Since later chapters focus on floral imagery, flowers are not discussed here.

0.4.2 Location

Tillya-tepe and the settlement at Emshi-tepe were located in the Sheberghan oasis, modern Jowzjan Province, Afghanistan, near the base of the Hindu Kush mountains. In the plains to the east lies the city of Bactra (Balkh) the former Graeco-Bactrian capital and hub of routes passing both east-west and north-south. To the north is the Oxus river (Amu-Darya), recorded in both Graeco-Roman and Chinese sources as a busy commercial waterway,¹⁰⁸ providing access to Chorasmia with its supplies of turquoise, and connecting thereafter to the Aral sea.

Tillya-tepe and Emshi-tepe were specifically positioned within the delta of the Darya-i Siah River which travels south into the Hindu Kush mountains to the town of Sar-i Pul, recorded in early Islamic literature as Amber, 'residence of merchants and the markets of Balkh'.¹⁰⁹ From there the river flows further south along tributaries into the mountains. Consequently the sites were on the threshold of nomadic settlements in higher pastures and agriculturally marginal areas.

Thus, the Tillya-tepe burials were well-placed on both road and river routes, and this fortuitous location is generally considered to explain the wide range of influences in the art in its graves.

¹⁰⁸ GORIN 2010, p.126 and fn.18.

¹⁰⁹ The 10th century Persian work, *Hudūd al-‘Ālam*, SIMS-WILLIAMS 2012, p.6, discussing 7th century legal documents from Amber.

0.4.3 Burial structures

These burials were not placed within their own kurgan but were cut into a mound three metres high and one hundred metres in diameter, which comprised the ruins of a building constructed in the Achaemenid and Bronze Age eras.¹¹⁰ This re-use of a pre-existing mound compares with other 1st century CE burials, such as the rich burial of a woman at Koktepe described as a semi-sedentarised nomad,¹¹¹ whose grave was cut into the ruins of an earlier building near Samarkand.¹¹² At Kosika in the Astrakhan region close to the Caspian Sea, a simply-constructed but richly-provisioned male burial, identified as Sarmatian or Alan,¹¹³ was dug into a natural hill. Furthermore, a male burial at Porogi on the Middle Dneister was dug into a Bronze Age mound.¹¹⁴ Similarly, there was a custom of burials within isolated hillocks at Tilla Bulak (Bishkent, Uzbekistan) in north Bactria and other nearby sites from the late 1st millennium BCE onwards.¹¹⁵ This style of inhumation may be seen as a reduced version of traditional nomadic burials from earlier centuries which typically consisted of a man-made tumulus raised over a log-lined tomb chamber, exemplified by sites such as Pazyryk in the Siberian Altai.

Sarianidi uncovered simple burial structures at Tillya-tepe consisting of ‘pits with rectangular floors sunk vertically into the mound’¹¹⁶ and roofed over with wooden planks, **Fig. 0 – 1** (top left), which were piled with animal hides. Five of the Tillya-tepe bodies lay supine in wooden plank coffins within these pits, **Figs. 0 – 2, 0 – 3, 0 – 4, 0 – 5, 0 – 6a**. Grave V, **Fig. 0 – 6b**, contained a simple, hollowed-out tree trunk coffin, another apparent throw-back to Altaic traditions in Siberia.¹¹⁷ All the Tillya-tepe coffins appear to have been lidless: the man’s coffin was inserted into leather casing while the others were wrapped in coverings spangled with gold and silver ornaments,¹¹⁸ including

¹¹⁰ SARIANIDI 1985, p.18.

¹¹¹ RAPIN 2007, p.56; also discussed in relation to Tillya-tepe.

¹¹² RAPIN 2007, p.53. Her grave was, however, far more elaborate than Tillya-tepe, a vaulted catacomb with two small niches, all approached by a dromos.

¹¹³ SCHILTZ 2008, p.223. See MORDVINTSEVA 2015, p.192 for site summary.

¹¹⁴ SCHILTZ 2003, p.862; also BONORA 2007. See below for discussion of quadrilobe scabbards at Tillya-tepe, Porogi and Kosika. Both sites also had examples of gold-turquoise items and steppe nomadic-style objects. See also TREISTER 1997, pp.37-38 for other analogies with Tillya-tepe.

¹¹⁵ GRUBER *et al.* 2012, p.342.

¹¹⁶ SARIANIDI 1985, p.19.

¹¹⁷ Pazyryk, Shibe and Berel, RUDENKO 1970, pp.28-29; Bashadar, RUDENKO 1970, pp.268-271;

Tuekta, JACOBSON 1993, p.58.

¹¹⁸ SARIANIDI 1985, p.18.

the log coffin with a textile decorated with a proliferation of silver discs and large-scale, realistic vine-leaves.¹¹⁹

Despite the simplicity of their structures, these discreet Tillya-tepe burials were enacted with considerable respect to the interred: the bodies were deposited with care and dressed in their finery. The selection of an unmarked, re-used site meant that the graves were never robbed which may have been the original intention of this anonymous setting.

0.4.4 Burial hierarchy

The burials are universally considered to be synchronous, in part due to the arrangement of the female burials in various orientations around the man's grave,¹²⁰ **Fig. 0 – 1** (lower half), a convention with a wide distribution across the steppes from Mongolia, Siberia to the trans-Ural region.¹²¹ Since this male was the dominant person, placed at the centre of the group, we may hypothesise that the northward orientation of his burial was intentional and therefore the most significant.

Although the six interments at Tillya-tepe constitute a small sample, an internal hierarchy is observable in the arrangement of the graves, **Fig. 0 – 1** (lower half). The man's grave IV and female burials III and VI all lay within the actual walls of the temple and their graves contained the most prestigious artefacts. Burials I, II and V lay in peripheral and inferior, extramural locations at the base of the mound, and their secondary status is indicated by the absence of certain possessions, discussed below.

0.4.5 General deposition of bodies

Five of the six graves were undisturbed¹²² and since they were not robbed we have the rare advantage of a closed archaeological assemblage.¹²³ The burial coverings, gold jewellery, weaponry and clothing appliqués were still lying more-or-less in their original positions. This fortunate circumstance has enabled comprehensive reconstructions of clothing even though the main bulk of the textiles themselves were not extant. They all wore trousers, over which the women wore knee-length dresses and

¹¹⁹ SARIANIDI 1989, pl.38, p.111.

¹²⁰ Also because of similarities of deposition, and commonalities among the grave-goods.

¹²¹ FRANCFORT 2011, pp.325-327.

¹²² Grave III probably suffered rodent damage, SARIANIDI 1985, p.27.

¹²³ This assemblage obviously excludes the destroyed 7th grave.

the man a cross-jacket typical of Iranian horse-riding peoples.¹²⁴ The gold embroidery thread and numerous fragmented pearls in grave I¹²⁵ and traces of gold brocade covering the man¹²⁶ suggest that the textiles were likely as sumptuous as the appliqués attached to them. Even the red-coloured covering wrapped around the man's coffin was embellished, painted with white floral designs and sewn with discs and hemispherical appliqués.¹²⁷

Some of the burial practices suggest an association with ritual functions, for example the inclusion of the sheep bones in the male's grave, and the placement of precious metal vessels below the heads of the incumbents of the three best-provisioned graves, III, IV and VI. The Tillya-tepe man's head rested on a gold dish which was inscribed in Greek, and this dish lay on a silk pillow filled with 'fine chopped grass',¹²⁸ while the two womens' heads rested on silver dishes. Comparable circumstances are rare. There is an example from a cemetery at Isakovka in southwestern Siberia, tentatively dated to the 3rd - 2nd centuries BCE.¹²⁹ Isakovka was part of the Sargat culture whose imported goods indicated extensive contact with the Chinese, Iranian, eastern Mediterranean, Indian and Bactrian worlds.¹³⁰ Grave VI, kurgan III, comprised a wooden-framed funeral chamber containing the body of a high status male 'wrapped in golden textiles'.¹³¹ His head lay facing the northwest and close to his skull was a large Achaemenid-style silver dish with 'spoon-shaped' indentations, in which traces of silk survived.¹³² This warrior's quadrilobe dagger case is discussed below.

The aforementioned woman in the 1st century CE Koktepe burial is recorded as having her head laid onto a silver dish which had been cut to shape around the skull.¹³³ This woman was buried with a beaded veil across her face, and all three of the Tillya-tepe bodies under discussion possessed a face cloth.¹³⁴

¹²⁴ See YATSENKO 2001.

¹²⁵ SARIANIDI 1985, p.20.

¹²⁶ YATSENKO 2001, p.75.

¹²⁷ SARIANIDI 1990-92, p.105.

¹²⁸ SARIANIDI 1990-92, p.107.

¹²⁹ KORYAKOVA 2014, pp.303-308; 2006, pp.109-112.

¹³⁰ KORYAKOVA 2006, p.111.

¹³¹ KORYAKOVA 2014, p.304.

¹³² KORYAKOVA 2014, pp.304-305.

¹³³ RAPIN 2007, p.54. She is discussed in more detail further below.

¹³⁴ YATSENKO 2001, p.75.

Returning to Tillya-tepe, chin-stays, which customarily pass under the jaw and attach to a headdress at the outer edges, were present in all but grave I.¹³⁵

0.4.6 Tillya-tepe grave-goods

There was a clear gender divide in the choice of grave-goods, not only in terms of the actual types of objects found within the graves, but also the decoration. Since there were five female burials, we will also consider the hierarchical differentiation within their graves. Much of the information in the forthcoming case studies concerns the women's possessions, therefore more time is spent on the man's grave-goods here, particularly as they provide clues about the status of the Tillya-tepe folk.

0.4.6.1 The man's possessions

The man's grave included weaponry as well as horse bones and other items denoting the role of warrior.¹³⁶ A horse's head and foreparts were placed within the pit but outside the coffin, which Schiltz believes indicated traces of a sacrifice,¹³⁷ while additionally acting as a reminder of the warrior's horse-riding status, **Fig. 0 – 2**. The tradition of depositing the head and legs only of an animal was also practised in 1st century CE Xiongnu terrace tombs, generally outside the burial chamber.¹³⁸ Curiously, no phalerae, saddle ornaments or other horse-trappings were discovered at Tillya-tepe.

Several other objects associated with the warrior's rank were placed outside the coffin, including a leather-covered, iron *sella curulis* alongside two quivers.¹³⁹ Seats of this sort were associated with the mobility of Roman military life. They were found in a range of contexts around the 1st century CE.¹⁴⁰ They appeared on coins of Kushan king Kujula Kadphises in imitation of Augustan precedents, dated *ca.* 30-80 CE or 40-90 CE.¹⁴¹ A similar seat was excavated from the 1st century CE Bosporan grave 595 at Ust'-Al'ma, southwest Crimea (Ukraine).¹⁴² An imported textile from barrow 31 at Noin Ula, (northern Mongolia), the 1st century CE Xiongnu site, depicts a more elegant version

¹³⁵ SARIANIDI 1985, p.22, p.28, p.35, p.45, p.47.

¹³⁶ SARIANIDI 1985, pp.34-44; SARIANIDI 1990-92.

¹³⁷ SCHILTZ 2008, p.265.

¹³⁸ Gol Mod, Egin Gol, FRANCFORT 2011, p.317; and at Tsaram these horse parts were buried with the yoke of a chariot, BROSEDER 2009, p.261.

¹³⁹ SARIANIDI 1990-92, p.106.

¹⁴⁰ SARIANIDI 1989, pl.30-1, p.85; SCHILTZ 2008, p.265.

¹⁴¹ FRANCFORT 2012a, p.92; CRIBB 2007, p.353, no.80.

¹⁴² PUZDROVSKIJ 2013, pl.VII-4, p303.

with an enthroned figure dressed in a belted jacket and trousers.¹⁴³ The presence of this type of seat in these diverse sources indicates its role as a prestige object among elite people connected across the east-west communication routes.

Also in his grave, at head level, were a miniature tree and a naturalistic gold ram with extravagantly curled horns, both of which Sarianidi thought had been designed for other objects and re-deployed at Tillya-tepe.¹⁴⁴ Yatsenko reconstructs them both along the top of a headdress.¹⁴⁵ The tree is discussed further in Case Study III.

Several pieces of weaponry were buried alongside the body, including a long sword carried on his left side. He also owned two ceremonial weapons: a gold bi-lobed knife case, discussed in Case Study I, and a gold quadrilobe dagger scabbard, **Fig. 0 – 7a**,¹⁴⁶ both decorated with animal chase scenes. Such items were associated with horse-riding since they could be fixed to the rider's leg. Quadrilobe dagger scabbards originated in Siberia and spread to Central Asia, the Parthian empire and the north Pontic region.¹⁴⁷ The aforementioned Isakovka warrior owned a similarly-shaped, leather-covered wooden dagger scabbard. This was ornamented with black lacquer and, more relevantly, gold and turquoise roundels,¹⁴⁸ **Fig. 0 – 7b**. The Isakovka warrior also owned a long sword attached to a belt decorated with gold appliques.¹⁴⁹

The closest example to the Tillya-tepe quadrilobe dagger hilt and scabbard comes from kurgan I at Dachi on the Lower Don, **Fig. 0 – 7c**, dated to the third quarter of the 1st century CE on the basis of fragments of light-clay amphorae in the burial.¹⁵⁰ The Dachi and Tillya-tepe scabbards are similar in terms of general shape, including the distinctive rounded hilt, the materials used, and the tall round 'buttons' of coiled and battling animals (not shown in **Fig. 0 – 7a**) as well as the pierced fittings for them, **Figs. 0 – 7b** and **7d** (top left). As noted in 0.2 LITERATURE REVIEW, inlaid gold quadrilobe parade scabbards also came from other sites which are often described as Sarmatian-

¹⁴³ YATSENKO 2012, fig.5, p.44. Yatsenko identifies this textile as Bactrian, a gift from the Yuezhi to the Xiongnu, although the assumption that all of Bactria was equated with Yuezhi-Kushan rulership is unproven.

¹⁴⁴ SARIANIDI 1990-92, pp.108-109.

¹⁴⁵ YATSENKO 2001, pl.10, p.87.

¹⁴⁶ The roundels with coiled beasts, are not shown in this photograph, SARIANIDI 1985, cats 4.6, 4.6, p.247.

¹⁴⁷ BROSEDER 2015, pp.222-226.

¹⁴⁸ KORYAKOVA 2004, p.110.

¹⁴⁹ KORYAKOVA 2004, p.109. He also possessed iron body armour, a helmet and an iron belt.

¹⁵⁰ MORDVINTSEVA 2015, p.178, who also provides a site summary, pp.199-200. She relates the Dachi scabbard to another from Zubov (Krasnodar, Kuban region), with a quadrilobe form, round hilt and inlaid gold animal decoration, whose production she attributes to Bactria or Iran, p.184.

Alan, including Kosika, Porogi and Gorgippia.¹⁵¹ The distribution of all such daggers demonstrates an association with kings across a wide geographical area, broadly mirroring the distribution of framed belt buckles, another status-object which featured at Tillya-tepe.¹⁵²

Moreover, there are other elements in common between Dachi and Tillya-tepe. In addition to the use of the gold-turquoise style with abstract and animal motifs, antique engraved gems from the Graeco-Roman world were found at both sites: on a phalerae with imported garnets engraved with images of Artemis at Dachi;¹⁵³ and at Tillya-tepe, on a necklace in the man's graves and rings in the women's graves.¹⁵⁴ Other similar possessions are bracelets with animal-head terminals¹⁵⁵ and crenellated appliques.¹⁵⁶ Yet, there is nothing like the figurative pendants and clasps which were found at Tillya-tepe, nor the extensive plant imagery which is the subject of this thesis, although the Dachi grave had been robbed.

In view of the presence of various weapons, the Tillya-tepe male will now be described as a warrior. This warrior wore a necklace of thick gold wire which was twisted to form rigid, graduated, oval rings and was fitted with a locally-produced, Graeco-Bactrian cameo, **Fig. 0 – 8a**. The gold and sardonyx cameo depicts a man wearing a helmet, and Francfort has discussed this image in relation to a Bactrian coin depicting a helmeted ruler, Arseiles (20-1 BCE?), and a bulla from Djiga Tepe (close to Dilberjin in Bactria), which may be contemporary to the Tillya-tepe cameo.¹⁵⁷ Cameos were certainly worn on necklaces by elite people, as seen at Dalverzin-tepe in Bactria (modern Uzbekistan) where a gold necklace centered on a cornelian intaglio of Herakles;¹⁵⁸ and, from the north Pontic area: a carnelian cameo on a gold twisted wire necklace from a 1st century CE grave at Kerch,¹⁵⁹ **0 – 8b**, and a Roman cameo enclosed within a heart-inlaid frame on a plain gold wire necklace from a late 1st – early 2nd century CE grave at Čuguno-Krepinka (Crimea).¹⁶⁰

¹⁵¹ SCHILTZ 2003.

¹⁵² BROSEDER 2015, p.226; complete catalogue pp.292-293.

¹⁵³ SCHILTZ 2001, cat.235, pp.209-210.

¹⁵⁴ For example, SARIANIDI 1985, cat.2.2, p.231.

¹⁵⁵ SCHILTZ 2001, cat.236, pp.211-212; SARIANIDI 1985, cat.2.4, p.231.

¹⁵⁶ SCHILTZ 2001, cat.230, p.204; SARIANIDI 1985, cat.2.13, p.232.

¹⁵⁷ FRANCFORT 2012a, pp.88-89; fn.12, p.100.

¹⁵⁸ ABDULLAEV 1991, cat.160, p.130.

¹⁵⁹ TOKYO 1992, cats.158 and 159, p.133.

¹⁶⁰ VELIČKO 2013, p.420, where finds also included a Chinese mirror of the same type as those from Tillya-tepe.

The design of the necklace's oval rings has been compared with one depicted on coins worn by Gondophares, ruler of the Indo-Parthian kingdom *ca.* 20 – 46 CE, **Fig. 0 – 8c**, as an attribute of royal power.¹⁶¹ Many traces of Buddhism survive from that kingdom, especially at Sirkap-Taxila, which is interesting in the light of the gold Buddhist medallion in the warrior's grave. On one side of this medallion is a man pushing a wheel, inscribed in Kharosththi script, translated as 'he who brings the wheel of law in motion'; and on the reverse, a lion with its paw raised beside the Buddhist symbol of nandipada with further Kharosththi words, 'the lion has driven away fear.'¹⁶² The connection with Gondophares prompted Francfort to suggest that the Tillya-tepe warrior was a vassal or ally of this Indo-Parthian king.¹⁶³

The Tillya-tepe warrior's belt itself consists of nine medallions, each enclosing a figure seated on a lion, most likely representing the Central Asian goddess Nana.¹⁶⁴ Her image reflects the influence of both Dionysos and Artemis, including Artemis on the Parthian *rhyta* from Nisa, (near modern Ashgabat, Turkmenistan),¹⁶⁵ an example of overt Graeco-Roman influence in locally-manufactured artefacts in the Tillya-tepe warrior's burial. She is unlikely to be Artemis herself, as in one medallion the figure is shown with milk issuing from her breast, which would be impossible for the virginal Artemis. Nana's importance is attested by the Rabatak inscription in Afghanistan, *ca.* 100-125 CE, in which she is described as conferring kingship on the Kushan kings.¹⁶⁶ She also featured aniconically on the coins of Sapadbizes, *ca.* 20BCE - 45CE, a west Bactrian king, in which her emblematic lion is flanked by the name *NANAIA* below a crescent; and thereafter on Kushan coins and seals.¹⁶⁷

This openwork medallion design features on other gold belt fittings from this period, including a pair of buckles with eagles, inlaid with turquoise, reputedly from a chamber tomb at Nihavand, (western Iran),¹⁶⁸ and a single buckle with a coiled, undulating beast from the Yuezhi-Kushan site, Dalverzin-tepe.¹⁶⁹ Entire medallion belts similar to the Tillya-tepe design and also featuring deities, were worn by nine different kings and

¹⁶¹ BERNARD 1987, p.764. Note also a later version of the necklace

¹⁶² SARIANIDI 1985, cat.4.25, p.250; SCHILTZ 2008, p.276.

¹⁶³ FRANCFORT 2012a, p.88.

¹⁶⁴ PETERSON 2011, pp.11-15. For an evaluation of Nana images, SHENKAR 2014, pp.116-128.

¹⁶⁵ PAPPALARDO 2010, *rhyta* 2, 21, 22, 27, pp.144-145;

¹⁶⁶ SIMS-WILLIAMS AND CRIBB 1996, pp.77-78.

¹⁶⁷ SHENKAR 2014, pp.119-121.

¹⁶⁸ http://www.britishmuseum.org/research/collection_online/collection_object_details.aspx?objectId=367653&partId=1&searchText=parthian+nihavand&page=1 ; www.metmuseum.org/toah/works-of-art/17.190.2055 (both accessed November 2015).

¹⁶⁹ ABDULLAEV 2008; PUGAČENKOVA 1978, pl.140, p.205.

priests on 3rd century CE figurative sculptures at Hatra.¹⁷⁰ Brosseder relates the Tillya-tepe belt to examples from Porogi and Kosika, as indicative of ‘the uppermost ruling class in society’.¹⁷¹ In the 1st century CE, gold belts were associated with ostentatious male burials across the Eurasian steppes, from the Irtysh river in Central Asia across to the north Pontic area, demonstrating ‘assimilation and homogenization in the tradition of representing power and rank across this vast territory.’¹⁷²

0.4.6.2 The women’s possessions

Although the structure of the women’s burials were generally similar to the warrior’s, apart from the log coffin in grave V, their grave-goods were quite different. Since these four principal graves – I, II, III and VI - contained many artefacts and some are discussed in later chapters, the most important artefacts in the best-provisioned grave VI are discussed here and they are treated as representative of all the women’s grave-goods, with limited observations on comparable objects from these other graves. The key objects are then summarised in Table I below.

Among the most important items are those with figurative decoration since they are mostly individually crafted, with slight variations in detailing even when they are parts of sets, in contrast to the vast quantities of mass-produced appliquéés. Moreover, their subject-matter is generally considered to denote deities, and thus they offer the potential for deeper cultural insights.

The woman in Grave VI wore a pair of clasps at her throat, depicting a scene which is identified as the Graeco-Roman subject of Dionysos and Ariadne riding a lion-griffin, with a Nike and hairy satyr, discussed by Boardman in terms of Greek art,¹⁷³ **Fig. 0 – 9a**. The mirrored design, in which the mounted figures face each other, is a functional solution employed for all the paired clasps at Tillya-tepe, reflecting the great attention to detail exhibited by the Tillya-tepe craftsmen. This compositional principle is applied to the confronted soldiers on a pair of clasps from grave III, whose Hellenised style exhibits elements of Graeco-Bactrian and Macedonian art,¹⁷⁴ **Fig. 0 – 9b**. Each figure is framed by an ensemble comprising a column of leaves with a pair of birds at their apex and leonine monsters at their base.

¹⁷⁰ PETERSON 2011, pp.18-23.

¹⁷¹ BROSEDER 2011, p.401.

¹⁷² BROSEDER 2011, p.414.

¹⁷³ BOARDMAN 2012, pp.105-106. SARIANIDI 1985, pp.50-51, cat.6.2, p.254; pp.50-52.

¹⁷⁴ SARIANIDI 1985, pp.30-31, cat.3.1, p.236. SCHILTZ 2008, cat.79, pp.254-255;

A similar vegetation - bird – animal ensemble also features in grave VI, on a pair of temple pendants with a frontally-posed, naked woman in the guise of a ‘Mistress of the animals’ wielding a dog-like beast with fins,¹⁷⁵ **Fig. 3 – 23a**. Since these pendants are attached to the woman’s crown and manifest a wide range of different influences, they are discussed in detail in 3.4 CROWNS AND HAIRPINS. Her male counterpart, a ‘Master of the animals’ appears on a pair of temple pendants in grave II, also attached to a headdress,¹⁷⁶ **Fig. 0 – 10a**. Like the ‘Mistress’ this figure has a frontal pose and the composition is entirely symmetrical, thereby exhibiting a different design convention to the confronted clasps.

The possible role of the ‘Mistress of the animals’ in relation to Aphrodite (Venus) is debated in 3.4 CROWNS AND HAIRPINS, but other more conventional images allude to the goddess’s presence. The woman in grave VI wore an appliqué, described by Sarianidi as the ‘Bactrian’ Aphrodite,¹⁷⁷ **Fig. 0 – 10b**. Although elements of her contrapposto pose and draped costume testify to Graeco-Roman influences, she is shown winged, unlike the Greek Aphrodite. And her anatomical proportions are less ‘Classicising’, including her narrow waist, as well as her bracelets and armlets and the dot on her forehead. Another winged ‘Aphrodite’ in grave II, Sarianidi’s ‘Kushan’ Aphrodite, departs even further from Graeco-Roman norms although her identity is seemingly confirmed by the accompanying winged Eros.¹⁷⁸ These figures contribute to what Boardman picturesquely describes as an ‘Aphrodisiac atmosphere’.¹⁷⁹

Other Erotes appear at Tillya-tepe, and although Eros is absent from grave VI, he appears riding dolphin-like creatures (but with scales, unlike dolphins) in mirrored compositions from grave II,¹⁸⁰ **Fig. 0 – 10c**, and grave III. Further examples of ‘dolphins’ appear on a set of appliqués in grave I, slung over the shoulder of a hybrid man and snake or fish.¹⁸¹

Returning to grave VI, one of this woman’s most significant possessions was her folding floral crown, which is both better preserved and more elaborate than other crowns in graves III and II. Its unique folding structure is in itself worthy of further discussion, and because of the specific cultural importance of crowns, it will be

¹⁷⁵ SARIANIDI 1985, pp.48-49, cat.6.4, p.254.

¹⁷⁶ SARIANIDI 1985, pp.24-25, cat.2.7, p.231.

¹⁷⁷ SARIANIDI 1985, pp.49-50, cat.6.3, p.254.

¹⁷⁸ SARIANIDI 1985, cat.2.6, p.231.

¹⁷⁹ BOARDMAN 2003, p.362.

¹⁸⁰ SARIANIDI 1985, cat.2.5, p.231.

¹⁸¹ SARIANIDI 1985, cat.1.1, p.226.

discussed in 3.4 CROWNS AND HAIRPINS. Finally, a pair of crescent and flower hairpins was attached to the folding crown, and typologically-related hairpins are also found in the three other senior women's graves, I, II, and III. These too will be discussed in relation to the folding crown.

Several items reflecting the influence of Achaemenid art are discernible among the women's possessions, including heavy pairs of animal-head armrings, horse protome hairslides, and appliqués in the forms of rams' heads and crenellations.¹⁸²

In addition to the jewellery and the many costume appliqués, all four senior women were buried with an assortment of implements and vessels, most evidently in graves VI and III, but also in graves I and II. These are discussed further in 2.4 POPPIES AND THE TILLYA-TEPE WOMEN.

In view of Tillya-tepe's geographic position on important communication routes it is unsurprising to find a number of imported goods. Among the most important of these were Chinese Han-period mirror of the *zhaoming* type,¹⁸³ placed in direct contact with the women's bodies at chest level in graves VI, II and III. Examples of this type with twelve dots were also found at Munchak-tepe and Vrevskaia close to the Jaxartes river in Central Asia.¹⁸⁴ A simpler variation of *zhaoming* mirrors appeared in the Black Sea area from around the 1st century CE, including Čuguno-Krepinka,¹⁸⁵ while other designs of Chinese mirrors featured in female burials between 1st and early 2nd CE centuries in the north Pontic area. Unlike mirrors in Xiongnu tombs in Mongolia, the Tillya-tepe mirrors were deposited intact and were restricted to female burials, the general custom from Central Asia to the Black Sea. The presence of high status Chinese mirrors at Tillya-tepe and these other places is indicative of the movement of prestigious goods westwards across elite cultures.

The woman in grave VI was buried with one Parthian coin in her left hand and another in her mouth, which has been interpreted as reflecting the Greek practice of a fee payable to Charon to cross the river Lethe into the Underworld.¹⁸⁶ On the other hand, Sarianidi described her skull as elongated, a practice associated with steppe nomadic

¹⁸² SARIANIDI 1985, cat.2.4, p.231; cat.6.15, p.256; cat.3.51, p.242; cat.2.8, p.232; 2.13, p.232.

¹⁸³ SARIANIDI 1985, cat.2.34, p.235; cat.3.7, p.245, cat.6.31, p.258; BROSEDER 2015 discusses imported Han mirrors, fig.16, p.239, pp.240-242. 'Bactrian' mirrors on stands were also found in graves VI, III and V.

¹⁸⁴ BROSEDER 2015, p.240; list 10, p.284.

¹⁸⁵ BROSEDER 2015, map 16, p.239; list 9, p.284.

¹⁸⁶ SARIANIDI 1985, p.47; BOARDMAN 2007, p.13.

sources.¹⁸⁷ Nevertheless, Boardman's asserted that that the interred woman might have been Indo-Greek or had strong Greek connections.¹⁸⁸

With these grave-goods in mind, it is relevant to recall the locations of graves VI and III which were shown to be superior to graves II and I. Grave V stood out as the simplest coffin type, and, as can be seen from Table I below, it lacked the key objects.¹⁸⁹

¹⁸⁷ SARIANIDI 1989, p.130; FRANCFORT 2011, p.306.

¹⁸⁸ BOARDMAN 2003a, p.372 and 2007, p.14.

¹⁸⁹ This is a relative observation, since in other circumstances this young woman would be described as richly-provisioned. She owned a spectacular necklace and some gems and intaglios.

Table I Differentiation of selected grave-goods in female burials at Tillya-tepe¹⁹⁰

	Grave VI <i>aged 25-30</i> <i>Deformed skull</i>	Grave III <i>aged 18-25</i>	Grave II <i>aged 30-40</i>	Grave I <i>aged 25-35</i>	Grave V <i>aged 15-20</i>
Dish under head	✓	✓			
Crowns	Folding crown	Fragmentary crown	High conical headdress		
Figurative clasps	Dionysos & Ariadne	Paired warrior			
‘Sceptres’	Sceptre		Tube		
Temple pendants	‘Mistress of animals’		‘Master of the Animals’		
Aphrodite-related imagery	‘Bactrian’ Aphrodite	Erotes on ‘dolphins’	‘Kushan’ Aphrodite Erotes on ‘dolphins’		
Other imagery		Horse protomes	Musicians	Man with fish appliqués	
Crescent hairpins	✓	✓	✓	✓	
Torcs, bracelets	Anklets	Torc, bracelets	Armlets Anklets		Anklets
Implements and vessels	Implements/ knives, small vessels	Small vessels, knives	Implements in basket	Implements in basket	
Mirrors	Chinese ‘Bactrian’	Chinese ‘Bactrian’	Chinese		‘Bactrian’
Coins	2 Parthian	Tiberius/ Parthian		Heraus	
Amulets	✓	✓	✓		✓

0.4.7 Tillya-tepe ornament

There is a wide range of decoration on the Tillya-tepe objects and since much of this thesis is dedicated to discussing ornament in great detail, this section is confined to just a few, brief remarks.

¹⁹⁰ The burials are presented in order of importance. For alternative tables, see DAVIS-KIMBALL 2000, p.231; FRANCFORT 2011, p.330.

Some of the decoration is clearly differentiated by gender. The embellishment on the warrior's possessions is dominated by energetic animal predation scenes, vigorous fights, chases, and coiled felines, all reflecting ancestral artistic traditions from the Altai, as found at earlier sites such as Pazyryk and Berel. The vigorous, aggressive mood of this subject-matter waft from the female burials even where steppe nomadic influences are discernible, such as in the presentation of the 'Master of the animals', **Fig. 0 – 10a**, who wields two winged draconic creatures with reverted hindquarters, representing: 'among the latest of this old Saka convention...also its westernmost and southernmost occurrences'.¹⁹¹

In the women's graves the prevailing artistic milieu was Graeco-Roman, and Boardman and Francfort in particular have discussed precedents from the Hellenised east for the figurative imagery.¹⁹² There is also a mingling of different influences, as shown by the Dionysos and Ariadne clasps, which were 'Greek art, Bactrian style',¹⁹³ since Ariadne wears nomadic-style costume and they both ride a less than purely Graeco-Roman griffin-lion, one of many fantastical beasts at Tillya-tepe.

And yet, there is a notable consistency in style and detailing across a range of objects from all graves, indicating they originated in the same workshop. This is apparent not only in the choice of techniques and the prolific use of turquoise. One small example which demonstrates this is visible on two objects: turquoise eyes with carnelian pupils feature both on the dragons in the warrior's 'Chinoiserie' shoe buckles,¹⁹⁴ and on the antelope arm-rings from grave II which derive from Achaemenid prototypes.¹⁹⁵ These objects exhibit different artistic influences and yet are united by this revealing detail.

We have already noted the different compositional modes used on the symmetrical temple pendants, in contrast to the mirrored figures on the paired clasps, which required two productions. The Tillya-tepe warrior's medallion belt has slightly different figures within each roundel, requiring a more time-consuming operation than merely reproducing the same vignette nine times over. The degree of sophistication in the conception of this imagery suggests that the Tillya-tepe folk were discriminating and demanding patrons.

¹⁹¹ FRANCFORT 2012a, p.94.

¹⁹² BOARDMAN 2003a, 2007; FRANCFORT 2011.

¹⁹³ BOARDMAN 2007, p.13.

¹⁹⁴ SARIANIDI 1985, cat.4.1, p.246; pl.124, p.182.

¹⁹⁵ SARIANIDI 1985, cat.2.4, p.231, pl.109, p.167.

0.4.8 Imported items

In addition to the Chinese mirrors, other imported luxury goods in the Tillya-tepe graves included gems, seals, the dish below the warrior's head, and small flasks from the Graeco-Roman world, some of which were manufactured in previous centuries and were therefore heirlooms. An ivory comb was found in grave III,¹⁹⁶ of a type found at Begram, Koktepe, Dalverzin-tepe and Pompeii, all dating to around the 1st century CE.¹⁹⁷

0.4.9 Absent items

Aside from the implements, most of the women's possessions were jewellery, clothing appliqués and small personal effects. Although there were some larger ceramic vessels, it is perhaps surprising that there were no household objects like incense burners or cauldrons, high status objects which were especially found in 1st century BCE - 1st century CE tombs around the Lower Don/Volga area and Kuban.¹⁹⁸ And a large cauldron was uncovered in the aforementioned Koktepe tomb,¹⁹⁹ in which were also found gold appliqués, turquoise-inlaid metalwork, iron knives and an imported Chinese mirror. Equally, as mentioned, it is surprising that there were no horse-harnesses or phalerae, which might be expected in the tomb of a horseman.²⁰⁰ We can only speculate about the omissions at Tillya-tepe as perhaps connected with a hurried deposition.

0.4.10 Numismatic evidence and dating

Five coins were found at Tillya-tepe, including the 'Heraus obol' from grave 1, overlooked by Sarianidi, but discussed by Evgeny Zeymal.²⁰¹ This excludes the gold medallion in grave IV, treated as a coin by Sarianidi.²⁰² The Roman coin featuring

¹⁹⁶ SARIANIDI 1985, cat.3.56, p.243.

¹⁹⁷ PUGACHENKOVA *et al.* 1994. MEHENDALE 2012.

¹⁹⁸ BÂRCĂ 2011.

¹⁹⁹ RAPIN 2007, pp.53-55. Also Sarmatian levels at Filippovka, <http://www.pasthorizonspr.com/index.php/archives/09/2013/extraordinary-kurgan-burial-shines-new-light-on-sarmatian-life>

²⁰⁰ MORDVINTSEVA 2015, Table II, p.179, provides a list of grave-goods from elite burials of the late 1st century BCE - 1st century CE, in the north Pontic area including Dachi and Kosika, which gives an idea of typical prestigious artefacts.

²⁰¹ ZEYMAL 1999, p.241;

²⁰² SARIANIDI 1985, cat.4.25, p.250.

Emperor Tiberius from grave III, produced between 16 and 21 CE at the Lugdunum (Gaul) mint, affords a *terminus post quem* of 16 CE.²⁰³

Equally important for dating is the small, heavily-worn silver Heraeus' obol. Although the nature of 'Heraeus' coins is disputed, Joe Cribb has suggested that they were associated with Kujula Kadphises which would provide a *terminus post quem* of around 50 CE.²⁰⁴ In view of the extensive wear on this coin, Cribb suggests a likely date for the Tillya-tepe deposition as the last quarter of the 1st century CE.²⁰⁵

Another guide to dating is the aforementioned quadrilobe scabbard from Dachi, a sophisticated object close in design to Tillya-tepe's scabbard, from the third quarter of the 1st century CE. Thus the dating of the Tillya-tepe burials appears to be later than the second quarter of the 1st century CE provided in recent publications on Tillya-tepe which accompanied the travelling exhibition.

The other coins at Tillya-tepe include a counter-marked coin depicting a local Bactrian ruler Sapadbizes, one of only twenty in existence, which had limited circulation, only among sites near Tillya-tepe;²⁰⁶ and two Parthian coins, of Mithradates II (123-88 BCE) and a countermarked coin of Phraates IV (ruled 37-2 BCE), indicating the commercial significance of the Parthians in this region.

Therefore, the proposed date for Tillya-tepe in this thesis is around the third quarter of the 1st century CE. The dating convention applied in the captions here is 'the second half of the 1st century CE'.

0.4.11 Materials and technologies

The majority of the adornments were manufactured from gold, a material with a long history of use in nomadic funerary contexts. Gold's incorruptible property – its resistance to oxidation and other deterioration – lends it both practical and symbolic values. In earlier nomadic cultures, at Bashadar, Berel, and Tuekta in the Altai, wooden objects were covered with gold foil, presumably in imitation of real gold.²⁰⁷ Bactrian gold was likely to have been panned from River Oxus silt, which produced gold in a

²⁰³ BERNARD 1987, p.763; ZEYMAL 1999.

²⁰⁴ CRIBB 1993; and email correspondence 30th May 2016.

²⁰⁵ CRIBB email correspondence 30th May 2016.

²⁰⁶ BRACEY, www.kushan.org/essays/sapadbizes/finds.htm (accessed July 2014).

²⁰⁷ Examples available at: <https://depts.washington.edu/silkroad/museums/shm/shmpazyryk.html> (accessed January 2016); FRANCFORT *et al.* 2000, figs.4-55, p.782; JACOBSON 1993, p.59.

relatively pure form.²⁰⁸ Gold is remarkably easy to extract, requiring only the simplest of technologies, and it is far easier to process than other metals and alloys. The relative softness of gold means that it is often possible to determine whether an object has been used and Sarianidi was scrupulous in recording signs of wear, providing clear evidence that some of the Tillya-tepe artefacts served a function during their owners' lifetimes and were not specifically manufactured for funerary purposes. The same might be said for the clothes, since Yatsenko noted that these too had incomplete rows of appliqués where some had been lost.²⁰⁹

The technique of turquoise inlaid into gold was found centuries earlier in Central Asia, with some masterful examples of the goldsmiths' art discovered in kurgan 82 at Shilikty III, south of the Altai mountains (eastern Kazakhstan), 8th – 7th century BCE.²¹⁰ The Tillya-tepe turquoise presumably originated in the Chorasman mines located at the Lower Oxus delta on the southern shoreline of the Aral Sea, down-river and accessible from Tillya-tepe. Turquoise was doubtless regarded as an important choice of material since it was imitated in blue paste, for example on the folding crown at Tillya-tepe, and on a gold phiale at Kobiakovo, the 1st century north Pontic site.²¹¹

The Tillya-tepe folk clearly had access to workshops with a diversity of skills and techniques, including: gold casting, sheet-metal cutting, stamping and relief work, granulation, wirework, soldering, inlay, stone-cutting and polishing, and a capacity to execute work in a miniature scale.²¹² Hickman noted the presence of shared 'raw materials, decorative motifs, manufacturing techniques and methods of joining and assembly' indicating that some items from all six tombs originated from the same workshop.²¹³

0.4.12 Summary and discussion

The Tillya-tepe people were from a culture which buried their dead with a wide range of goods, many of which were locally manufactured to high artistic and technical standards, attesting to the elite status and discerning taste of their owners. They were laid to rest with care, placed fully-dressed and accoutred in relatively humble graves,

²⁰⁸ HICKMAN 2012, p.80.

²⁰⁹ YATSENKO 2001, p.85.

²¹⁰ TOLEUBAEV 2012, pp.58-59.

²¹¹ SCHILTZ 2008, cat.134, pp.284-285; ILIOUKOV 1995, cat.95, pp.64-65. Both crowns are discussed in 3.4 CROWNS AND HAIRPINS.

²¹² OGDEN 2007; HICKMAN.

²¹³ HICKMAN 2012, p.82, p.85.

simple inhumation burials laid in trenches, echoing earlier steppe nomadic traditions. The arrangement of the women's graves around the man's body, which was orientated to the north, provides evidence of an internal hierarchy, with three of the graves - III, IV and VI – situated within the actual walls of the re-used building. This suggests that these three incumbents were of higher rank than the rest, a view reinforced by the fact that they were laid with their heads on precious metal dishes and owned superior grave-goods, including crowns.

Some particular aspects of the man's grave corresponded to other cultures, including the earlier Sargat culture site of Isakovka in the Urals, associated with early Sarmatian culture. The warrior has also been associated with more local cultures, particularly in relation to his necklace. A recurring feature of the grave-goods is their similarities with artefacts from tombs in the north Pontic area, usually associated with Sarmatian-Alan peoples. And certain funerary characteristics may be isolated across this part of the world. In his overview of research on Sarmatian culture, Vitalie Bârcă summarised the aspects of Sarmatian graves from west of the Don area, 1st century BCE – 3rd century CE: burials within earlier tumuli; the use of rectangular pits; northern orientation of bodies; partial animal offerings; while also noting that there were changes in actual funerary inventory throughout time.²¹⁴

As discussed in 0.2 LITERATURE REVIEW, Mordvintseva compared burial practices and artefacts in the north Pontic area, correlating certain sites with both Tillya-tepe and migrations from Central Asia to this region.²¹⁵ Thus it seems from the analyses of both Mordvintseva and Bârcă's that there are distinctive commonalities between Tillya-tepe and the north Pontic area, and the Tillya-tepe folk were certainly culturally closer to the Sarmatian-Alans than the Yuezhi-Kushans.

Looking more closely at the man's possessions, his weaponry identifies him as a warrior, and the horse bones, bow, the knife case, and the dagger with its quadrilobe scabbard all indicate a life around horsemanship. This scabbard, like the widespread animal ornament on his possessions, was rooted in the traditions of the Inner Asian steppes, but its distribution extended well beyond its origins into the Sarmatian-Alan and Parthian worlds. These possessions, and other prestigious items such as his folding seat, belt, and twisted wire necklace all express his elite social and political position,²¹⁶

²¹⁴ BÂRCĂ 2006, p.156. He does not discuss Tillya-tepe.

²¹⁵ MORDVINTSEVA 2010.

²¹⁶ For additional correlations, see SCHILTZ 2008, p.265 and GRENET 2012, p.6.

in a manner replicated across many contemporary cultures. This necklace is widely associated with Gondophares, although some comparisons with Sarmatian-Alan sites are also notable.

Many of the objects in the women's graves demonstrate both broad cultural connections and differentiation in status. Much of the figurative decoration on their possessions indicates Graeco-Roman influences, which was often melded with imagery from other sources. Although graves VI and III were clearly the best provisioned, the second burial also contained prestigious objects, and these three graves were distinguished by the fact that they contained objects with elaborate figurative imagery, gold crowns, and Chinese mirrors. These mirrors were important objects among a range of imported goods which demonstrated contacts with distant cultures. Less prestigious objects were found in grave I, nevertheless it is still richly-endowed with objects exhibiting similar artistic themes, and all four women owned 'tools' and paraphernalia. These possessions all clearly show that these women were superior to the young incumbent of grave V.

A study of Tillya-tepe objects in both the male and female burials therefore provides significant information about the Tillya-tepe folk themselves, even if it cannot isolate the exact identity of these people; and the diversity of influences testifies to the wider international world in which they participated. It is anticipated that a study of plant imagery will augment the corpus of information assembled from other sources, but before embarking on this study it is necessary to provide an overview of both plant culture and imagery.

0.5 The cultural significance of plants

0.5.1 Introduction

Plants have an omnipresent role in society and this section provides an overview of their cultural roles in medicine, ritual and religion, in order to understand their wider social value.²¹⁷ It is intended to provide context to the visual imagery which will be observed and analysed in the forthcoming chapters. Both Graeco-Roman and Iranian sources are discussed since these literate cultures are most relevant for Tillya-tepe.

0.5.2 Medicine

Throughout the history of mankind plants have been the dominant source of medicine,²¹⁸ and this central function continues in those parts of the world where modern synthetic remedies are unavailable or too expensive.²¹⁹ The written evidence is sporadic since plant-lore was traditionally passed on by word-of-mouth even after the advent of the pharmacopeia, a list of medical remedies with instructions on use. However, writers such as Theophrastus employed information supplied by *rhizotomoi*, ‘root-cutters’ who were experts in medicinal plants, ensuring their knowledge was transmitted.²²⁰

Those herbals and medical treatises which survive from the Graeco-Roman world represent just a small proportion of the original corpus.²²¹ Furthermore, there are limitations to the interpretation of these medical texts because no early illustrated versions survive.²²² Therefore there are often taxonomic problems correlating these plants with specific botanical identifications in modern Linnaean classification.²²³

Many remedies were ‘simples’ consisting of a single plant, but there were also more sophisticated recipes comprising parts of the different plants combined together. The

²¹⁷ Plants in diet, trade and commerce are not reviewed here but are covered in journals such as *Economic Botany*; see also: DALBY 2000; PRICE AND NESBITT 2005; ZOHARY AND HOPF 2002.

²¹⁸ DRURY 1873; ELGOOD 1934; KUTUMBIAH 1999; NUNN 1996, SCARBOROUGH 2010; SINGER 1987.

²¹⁹ On the continuity of traditional medicine into the modern world, see GRIEVE 1931; HAMEDİ *et al.* 2013; KAUSHIK and DHIMAN 2000.

²²⁰ SCARBOROUGH 2006, p.1.

²²¹ NUTTON 2013, pp.1-2.

²²² An illustrated herbal, now lost, was compiled by Krateuas of Pontus (*ca.* 120-63 BCE), SINGER 1927, p.5.

²²³ HARDY AND TOTELIN 2015, pp.93-104 for Graeco-Roman nomenclature.

vegetal material was sometimes mixed with animal fats, milk, wine, honey, beer and other substances.²²⁴ The functioning of these simples and compounds as astringents, psychotropics, poisons, anti-dotes to poison, antimicrobials, styptics, purgatives and emetics were well-defined by Dioscorides.

To some considerable degree the medical applications of many plants have remained consistent throughout time and across a broad range of topographies, and therefore Roman literary sources, such as Pliny or Dioscorides are often relevant to later eras. This commonality arises because the active biochemical properties in plants are universal, they are present within each species wherever it is grown, although, as Dioscorides observes, they may vary in concentrations according to different climates and growing conditions.²²⁵

0.5.3 Greek and Iranian medical interaction

There is limited evidence of ancient Iranian medical practices, thereby precluding a comprehensive account of Achaemenid, Parthian or Sasanian pharmacology here, but it is possible to trace interactions between Greek and Persian schools of medicine from the late 6th century BCE onwards. Several Greek doctors served at the Achaemenid court, since both Darius (*ca.* 550-486 BCE) and Artaxerxes II Mnemon (*ca.* 435-358 BCE) had Greek doctors.²²⁶ Persian ideas influenced the development of Greek medical thought, as demonstrated in the medical writings of Hippocrates (*ca.* 460-370 BCE),²²⁷ and Greek practitioners incorporated Iranian medical plants into their pharmacological armoury.²²⁸ In the 1st century CE, Pliny records that both Pythagoras and Democritus wrote treatises on plants (now lost) and ‘visited the Magi of Persia, Arabia, Ethiopia and Egypt’.²²⁹ Dioscorides makes regular references to the Magi’s names for plants in his 1st century CE *Materia Medica*.

Dioscorides himself was a soldier and his familiarity with Iranian sources possibly arose from his role as surgeon with Nero’s army. This army fought long campaigns against the Parthians in Armenia (58-63 CE),²³⁰ and it is even possible that Dioscorides was

²²⁴ DIOSCORIDES Osbaldeston (ed.), *passim* provides particular evidence of this.

²²⁵ DIOSCORIDES Osbaldeston (ed.), ‘Introduction’, xi.

²²⁶ ELGOOD 1934, pp.23-26.

²²⁷ ELGOOD 1934, pp.11-12.

²²⁸ ARATA 2008 (accessed February 2016).

²²⁹ PLINY: XXV.v.13. Physicians were selected from the Magi class, ELGOOD 1934, p.19.

²³⁰ ARATA 2008 (accessed February 2016). Theophrastus, earlier authority on plants, too was a soldier in Alexander’s army, SINGER 1927, p.2.

present. Indeed, he himself remarked on his travels with the army and attributed his pharmacological knowledge to his inquisitiveness.²³¹ The Armenian campaign would have provided Dioscorides with both the opportunity to take samples of local flora and perhaps also to interrogate captured Parthians and learn from their knowledge of battle-wound treatments using locally-available remedies. Bearing in mind that Tillya-tepe was situated on the margins of the Parthian empire and there were Parthian coins in the burials, this brings the world of Dioscorides closer to that of Tillya-tepe.

Finally, recalling that Tillya-tepe artefacts exhibit a close association with Sarmatian-Alan culture, it is also worth noting that Dioscorides considered the Sarmatians were especially skilled in medicine.²³²

0.5.4 Ritual plants

Plants also fulfilled a wide range of ritual functions. They were exploited for their decorative qualities and were woven into wreaths and crowns to be worn both by worshippers and cult statues.²³³ Particularly important in this regard are those leaves and flowers which have some longevity as cut plants: evergreen leaves like bay-laurel and myrtle, and flowers such as marigolds and roses which decay slowly, retaining both colour and form. These species also provide scent which was considered an important virtue.

Flowers were used to decorate temples and were particularly important as offerings to the dead, not only at the funeral itself but also sometimes in annual commemorations of the dead, most importantly in the Roman festivals of *Rosalia* and *Violatio*, celebrated respectively with roses and violets.²³⁴ At a more modest level, a plant such as vervain (*Verbena officinalis*) might be tucked into amulets during purificatory rituals, thereby, according it a 'sacred' status.²³⁵

Plants played a fundamental role in the veneration of the gods, including psychoactive species, such as cannabis and opium poppies, which were consumed as a means to reach out to deities.²³⁶ Flower petals, roots and bulbs were processed to create precious and costly aromatic oils. The 2nd century CE writer Pausanias wrote of using rose oil on

²³¹ DIOSCORIDES 'Introduction' viii

²³² DIOSCORIDES ed. Osbaldeston 2000, 'Introduction', lxviii.

²³³ BRUN 2000, pp.281-282.

²³⁴ JASHEMSKI 1979, p.142; PERDRIZET 1900, p.300.

²³⁵ DIOSCORIDES IV: 60.

²³⁶ EMBODEN 1989; KENNEDY 2014, pp.6-10; MERLIN 2003; NENCINI 1997, VII.

wooden statues to prevent them from decay.²³⁷ Aromatics were also used as libation offerings and were burnt for ritual purification, all practices intended as communication with divinities.²³⁸

Fragrant oils played an important role in cleaning and anointing the bodies of the dead. The production of floral oils, not only for ritual functions but also for cosmetic and pharmacological purposes, was an important industry. Theophrastus described the production of scented oils using crocuses, irises, lilies, roses and other plant materials such as leaves and resins.²³⁹ The survival of oil presses, storage jars, furnaces, and steeping basins all provide evidence of Hellenistic period perfumeries at Delos.²⁴⁰ The production of aromatics from flowers is illustrated on wall-paintings at Herculaneum and in the House of the Vettii at Pompeii where Erotes are shown steeping roses in basins and extracting oils with a press.²⁴¹

Plants also played an essential role in rituals beyond the Mediterranean world. An important example of this was the central status of *haoma* in Zoroastrian worship.²⁴² The Zoroastrian sacred text the *Avesta* describes how *haoma* was pounded and made into a drink to accompany ceremonies. Some scholars considered Zoroastrianism to have been the religion observed by Parthian royalty.²⁴³

0.5.5 Plants in religion and mythology

Although vegetal imagery was absent from the artistic vocabulary of many societies, when plants did occur they were sometimes present for emblematic purposes. The principle of plant symbolism was well-established in many cultures, whereby particular plant types embody religious concepts or sentiments: as symbols of deities or allusions to sacred stories, such as the Buddhist lotus, *Nelumbo nucifera*,²⁴⁴ and the cult of the Bodhi tree at Bodh Gaya, and the Christian lily.²⁴⁵ Plants frequently appeared in Greek and Roman literature and two specific functions predominated. Firstly, they were attributes of particular gods²⁴⁶ and this sometimes extended to imagery, in which a deity

²³⁷ PAUSANIAS IX: XLI.7

²³⁸ BRUN 2000, p.278.

²³⁹ THEOPHRASTUS *On Odours*, vols. IV, V and VI.

²⁴⁰ BRUN 2000.

²⁴¹ BRUN 2000, p.297.

²⁴² This widely-discussed topic is summarised in TAILLIEU 2003/2012 (accessed March 2106).

²⁴³ CURTIS 2012, 2007; DE JONG 2015 p.95.

²⁴⁴ KINTAERT 2012; 2010.

²⁴⁵ HALL 1974, pp.192-193.

²⁴⁶ GIESECKE 2014.

is depicted wearing the appropriate crowns, especially on coins, such as Demeter with wheat,²⁴⁷ and Apollo with bay-laurel.²⁴⁸ Secondly, as described in Ovid's *Metamorphosis*, humans were transformed into flowers, shrubs and trees although these were less commonly reflected in the art of antiquity.

In terms of the potential symbolism of plants, one might propose a spectrum of interpretations based on an analogy with grapes and vine imagery which were among the most popular motifs in the Roman world and far beyond. Grapevines often weave their way as an entirely ornamental contribution to an artistic composition. When grapes appear on vessels such as ewers or amphorae, sometimes combined with other Dionysiac imagery such as vintaging putti, they indicated a function related to wine.²⁴⁹ Alternatively, grapes might be present in cultic circumstances to signify Dionysos, god of wine, a metaphor for the god himself.²⁵⁰ Or the motif of grapes and wheat, typically expressed in late Roman art in terms of 'The Four Seasons' (autumn and summer respectively) might allude to the sacrament of the Eucharist, in which wine represented the blood of Christ.²⁵¹ Finally, when depicted on sarcophagi, vine imagery was also probably used to express notions relating to a happy afterlife in both pagan and Christian contexts.²⁵²

Plants also possess religious associations in Iranian culture, since they constitute one of the seven sacred *Spentas*, divine beings, in Zoroastrian belief.²⁵³ Moreover, in the *Greater Bundahishn*, 'Primal Creation' compiled around the 9th century CE but reflecting accumulated wisdom and beliefs from many centuries earlier, a number of plants were associated with spiritual beings.²⁵⁴ A look through the list of Zoroastrian sacred flowers shows that there were a number which were also ritually important in the Graeco-Roman world, such as violets, roses, myrtle, narcissi, marigolds, saffron crocuses, demonstrating that these plants preserved a special status across at least two cultures.

Finally, there is a corpus of esoteric literature which explores the magical uses of plants, often in the form of spells.²⁵⁵ This subject is barely touched upon in this thesis since these texts are usually complex, disparate and obscure. Even when subjected to

²⁴⁷ LIMC vol. IV-2, figs. 168-186, p.573.

²⁴⁸ LIMC vol. II-2, figs 547-559, pp.224-225.

²⁴⁹ HARDEN 1987, cat.33, pp.74-78 and cat.43, pp.79.

²⁵⁰ FRAZER 1998, p.396; OTTO 1965, p.152.

²⁵¹ MALBON 1990, p.102.

²⁵² MALBON 1990, p.206.

²⁵³ BOYCE 1989 (accessed February 2016).

²⁵⁴ MACKENZIE 1989 (accessed February 2016).

²⁵⁵ Discussed in DUCOURTHIAL 2003; VONS 2000.

extensive exegesis the material is at best speculative. Moreover, the texts are concentrated around the 3rd and 4th centuries CE, a little late for this research.

0.5.6 Secular plant symbolism

Alternatively plants sometimes represented secular values. For the Assyrians, trees might denote the gift of abundance bestowed by a benevolent king to his subjects,²⁵⁶ in an environment in which gardens themselves had a political significance.²⁵⁷ They were associated with war propaganda, when kings seized trees and planted them in their own lands.²⁵⁸ This custom was also practised in the late Roman Republic and the Roman Empire when plants were symbols of conquest, taken as booty to celebrate famous victories.²⁵⁹ The notion was not uncommon, since ‘The connections between plants, displays of power, and kings are as old as civilization itself’.²⁶⁰

Plants were particularly important to the Romans,²⁶¹ and it is no surprise that numerous plants, among them many flowers, were used as expressions of imperial status on Augustus’s Ara Pacis. They have been interpreted as contributing to a propagandist expression of political purposes in a complex programme celebrating the Golden Age of peace under Augustus, with the divine patronage of Apollo and other deities.²⁶² Moreover, according to Pliny, vegetal crowns were worn outside the cultic environment by victors in sport and war.²⁶³

In later history, plants and particularly flowers served as emblems of families or rank, indicated by the wide range of species depicted on coats-of-arms and seals. An early example of this practice appears on 3rd century CE Sasanian wall-reliefs close to Persepolis in Iran, in which a nobleman attending the Investiture of Ardashīr both at Naqsh-e Rostam and Naqsh-e Rostam is shown wearing a ‘Phrygian’ cap decorated with a bud device.²⁶⁴ In a further image of a joust at Fīruzābād, apparently the same figure wears a different headdress but with the same device which is also replicated on the

²⁵⁶ PORTER 2003, p.95.

²⁵⁷ STRONACH 1990.

²⁵⁸ FOSTER 1998, p.320. This was in addition to the cultic functions of certain trees: GIOVINO 2007; PORTER 2003.

²⁵⁹ MACAULEY-LEWIS 2008.

²⁶⁰ MACAULEY-LEWIS 2008, pp.205-206.

²⁶¹ GOODY 1993, pp.56-59, pp.62-64.

²⁶² CASTRIOTA 1995; SAURON 2000; see also remarks by ROSSINI 2014, pp.80-88.

²⁶³ PLINY XXI.V-VI; much of book XXI concerns ‘chaplets’.

²⁶⁴ HERRMANN 1969.

horse-blanket.²⁶⁵ Other competitors have horse-blankets with tamga-type devices. In these circumstances it seems that the bud motif represents something akin to a personal or family signifier.

0.5.7 Summary

Plants were important in ancient society for their roles as medicines, and for a whole range of functions related to religious practices and beliefs. Since individual plants possess more-or-less consistent biochemical properties and aesthetic qualities wherever they are grown, it should not be surprising to find that to some degree their uses were consistent across different societies, including both Graeco-Roman and Iranian cultures.

Both texts and images demonstrate that certain ‘special’ flowers and leaves were culturally important, related to their particular virtues and useful characteristics which are particularly appealing to man — colour and general beauty, scent (either from petals or from extracted oils), and longevity — such as roses, violets, marigolds, bay-laurel and myrtle. Some species had potent biochemical qualities: psychoactive and narcotic plants, which were important in both medicine and ritual.

Since plants often possessed significant cultural values for society, then this type of information might amplify our understanding of their presence when they feature in art. Any such evaluation is of course dependent on identifying the images of plants in the first place, as discussed in 0.3 METHODOLOGY. With this information in mind, the next stage is to provide a brief account of plants in art.

²⁶⁵ HERRMANN 1969.

0.6 Plant imagery

0.6.1 Introduction

It has been remarked previously that around a third of the decorated objects at Tillya-tepe feature images of flowers, and there are many items which are entirely shaped as flowers. This degree of plant decoration is highly unusual since the depiction of plants was not universal. At the time of Tillya-tepe, plant imagery was almost entirely absent from large areas of the world such as the Americas, Africa (excluding Egypt), and the Far East.

There were various high points in the depiction of vegetal subjects throughout the Bronze Age, including in western Asia, the Levant and Egypt,²⁶⁶ and the Minoan and Mycenaean cultures.²⁶⁷ Although there are some images of plants in the Greek Classical period, a particular concentration is apparent in the arts of the Mediterranean region from the Hellenistic era onwards, including Egypt,²⁶⁸ and in Gandharan Buddhist art of the early centuries CE.²⁶⁹ A comprehensive history of this ornament is yet to be written and this following account concentrates only on those cultural areas which are most relevant to Tillya-tepe: the limited plant imagery in Iron Age steppe nomadic art from around the 5th century BCE (noted in some detail because of the lack of previous research), Hellenistic, Roman and Bactrian imagery.

0.6.2 Steppe nomadic plant images

Animal chase and fighting scenes are staple subjects in steppe nomadic art, and such images far outnumbered plant ornament, which was uncommon but not unknown among those steppe tribes which travelled throughout the centuries from Inner Asia, across Xinjiang, Central Asia and the Caucasus. Schematised trees, for example, were found in a number of contexts, including on crowns from Taksay in the Urals (*ca.* 5th – 4th century BCE)²⁷⁰ and Issyk, Semirechye in the Altai (*ca.* 4th – 2nd century BCE).²⁷¹ These are both illustrated and discussed in 3.4 CROWNS AND HAIRPINS. Leafy trees

²⁶⁶ KANTOR 1945/1999.

²⁶⁷ KANTOR 1945/1999; TZEDAKIS and MARTLEW 1999.

²⁶⁸ BAUMANN 1993; PFROMMER AND MARKUS 2001.

²⁶⁹ See 2.2.2 ARTEFACTS WITH POPPY FLOWER IMAGERY; also KINTAERT 2010 on the Indian lotus.

²⁷⁰ <http://en.tengrinews.kz/science/Golden-Princess-found-2-years-ago-finally-shown-to-public-256009/> and <http://en.tengrinews.kz/science/Reconstruction-shows-how-ancient-Scythian-Princess-255482/> (both accessed February 2016).

²⁷¹ L'UOMO D'ORO 1998, cat.271-272, p.176.

appear in figurative scenes on the so-called Ordos openwork metal plaques (*ca.* 3rd – 1st century BCE).²⁷²

Elsewhere in the Altai, stylised, abstract wooden leaves or buds, usually assymetric in form, were discovered at Tuekta (*ca.* 5th century BCE),²⁷³ **Fig. 0 – 11a**, and both asymmetrical and symmetrical plant patterns featured at Pazyryk (*ca.* 252-238 BCE).²⁷⁴ A felt hanging from kurgan V at Pazyryk depicts a crowned woman holding a branch of buds and tulip-like flowers,²⁷⁵ **Fig. 0 – 11b**, discussed further in 3.4 CROWNS AND HAIRPINS.

Actual floral motifs were mostly limited to a small range of symmetrical, radiating forms. Schematic quatrefoil flowers executed in several materials were found at the Altaic burial sites of Bashadar²⁷⁶ and Tuekta.²⁷⁷ They also featured at Pazyryk, often arranged in on colourful felt saddle-cloths and rugs, **Fig. 0 – 12a**, including rosettes enclosed within circular roundels on the costume worn by an antlered demon, **Fig. 0 – 12b**. These simple flowers appear on locally-manufactured pieces, in contrast to the elaborate composite floral motifs on the famous Pazyryk carpet, widely-considered to be an Achaemenid import. At Pazyryk there were also bands of colourful, abstracted floral motifs in appliquéd felt, close in design to Achaemenid versions of lotus flowers,²⁷⁸ while others seem to be more of a jumble of vegetal forms.²⁷⁹

Many dozens of gold floral appliqués, originally attached to textiles, were found in 4th century BCE graves at Filippovka in the Urals, attributed to the early Sarmatian culture by their excavator, Leonid Yablonsky.²⁸⁰ These ‘daisy-like’ flowers, around 2.5cm in diameter, have twelve or sixteen petals and may reflect the influence of Achaemenid costume on nomadic culture. The Miho Museum in Japan also has quantities of unprovenanced gold flowers, including some with multiple radiating petals, allegedly from Bactria, which likely exhibit the same influences.²⁸¹ Although free-standing florals

²⁷² BOARDMAN 2010, pls.49 – 51.

²⁷³ RUDENKO 1960, pls.LXXXI – XC

²⁷⁴ See AZARPAY 1959, figs. 2,3, 4, 8, 12, 15 and 39, which she associates with Greek influences, although any Greek elements are almost entirely assimilated into a local aesthetic, particularly where they are asymmetrical.

²⁷⁵ RUDENKO 1970, pl.154.

²⁷⁶ Kurgan II: gilt-wood, Hermitage Museum, St Petersburg, Russia, inv. 1793/230

²⁷⁷ Kurgan I: wood, horn and leather, Hermitage Museum, invs. 2179/771, 775, 776, 906, 907.

²⁷⁸ RUDENKO 1970, pl.148B; pp.245-246 for Rudenko’s remarks on lotuses.

²⁷⁹ RUDENKO 1970, pl.148C.

²⁸⁰ <http://www.pasthorizonspr.com/index.php/archives/09/2013/extraordinary-kurgan-burial-shines-new-light-on-sarmatian-life> (accessed January 2016).

²⁸¹ MIHO MUSEUM 2002, pl.207a, p.150.

have a deep history, going back to the headdresses worn by women at Sumerian Ur (southern Iraq) in the mid-3rd millennium BCE, the immediate heritage of such flowers is thought to be Elamite, as exemplified by gold floral appliqués originally attached to cotton garments and excavated from a tomb at Arjān in southwestern Iran, *ca.* 600-550 BCE.²⁸²

Squarish quatrefoil appliqués featured at Xiongnu sites from around the Common Era in the Transbaikalia region, including Noin Ula, Gol Mod and Sudzha.²⁸³ These quatrefoils were typically arranged in lattice patterns on coffins, **Fig. 0 – 13a**, and were executed in gold, iron, birch bark and wood. The Gol Mod pieces, **Fig. 0 – 13b**, are of special interest since they exhibit two characteristics widely associated with Tillya-tepe: turquoise inlays and granulation. From the same tomb came ‘comma’-shaped ornament, another widely-used motif at Tillya-tepe. Furthermore, fifty appliqués, seemingly a refined version of this design, came from grave II at Tillya-tepe, **Fig. 0 – 13c**.²⁸⁴

0.6.3 Greek and Hellenistic plant ornament

The Greek lands provide fertile soil and a suitable climate for a wide range of plants. From the 6th century BCE onwards, westward-bound migrating, horse-riding tribes, usually described as Scythians, reached the Black Sea and encountered Greek culture. By the 4th century BCE, ‘barbarian’ peoples in this area were commissioning large quantities of gold jewellery, often with elaborate plant ornament, from Greek craftsmen who set up workshops in the Pontic region.²⁸⁵ This jewellery accompanied their owners in their tombs, for example, in the Crimean area at Kul’Oba and Kerch, and in the Taman Peninsular at Bolshaya Bliznitsa and Pavlovsky.²⁸⁶ Plant imagery included leaves, flowers, fruits, seeds and nuts, generally comprising species found in the eastern Mediterranean and west Asia. When viewed in Greek ideological contexts, certain of these plants alluded to specific deities.²⁸⁷

A silver vase and dish were found at the mid-to-late 4th century BCE burial site Chertomlyk in Nikopol, southern Russia, with elaborate scrolled floral ornament

²⁸² ALVAREZ-MON 2010, 2015 (accessed January 2016). For Babylonian and Assyrian precedents, OPPENHEIMER 1949.

²⁸³ BROSEDER 2009: table itemising motifs, p.264; for Sudzha’s radiocarbon date, 30 BCE – 60CE, fig.14, p.269.

²⁸⁴ SARIANIDI 1985, cat.2.21, p.233.

²⁸⁵ WILLIAMS AND OGDEN 1994, p.126.

²⁸⁶ WILLIAMS AND OGDEN 1994, pp.122-198.

²⁸⁷ WILLIAMS AND OGDEN 1994, pp.43-45 correlates plants with divinities and mythological stories.

including anthemion and convolvulus flowers,²⁸⁸ **Fig. 0 – 14a**. Typical Hellenistic-style decoration also featured on a 3rd century sarcophagus lid from Vitjazevs near Gorgippia, Krasnodar, (south Russia).²⁸⁹ The design has a ‘Baroque’ complexity, with tendrilled patterns of scrolls emerging from frothy, cabbage-like acanthus leaves, and an arum spadix enclosing not only clusters of berries but also a human head, **Fig. 0 – 14b**. The general composition of these designs derived from Macedonian art such as the gold larnax from ‘Philip II’s’ tomb and the wall-paintings at Aigai (modern Vergina in Macedonia).²⁹⁰ Both acanthus leaves, the most common motif, and flowers became increasingly extravagant and remote from their botanical origins in this period.

Elaborate plant ornament comprising multi-layered leaf-calyx medallions was also popular on precious goods such as silver bowls. These were among items responsible for the dissemination of the Hellenistic styles, especially to the east of the Mediterranean region. This multi-layered design dates back to the 4th century BCE in architectural decoration, paintings, and mosaics.²⁹¹ By the 3rd century BCE these composite flowers dominated designs of hemispherical ‘sandwich glass’ bowls, probably originating in Alexandria,²⁹² which may explain the Egyptian ‘lotus’ motif present on many later items, including the Tillya-tepe ornaments discussed in 2.1.3 MORE ON TILLYA-TEPE ARTEFACTS WITH POPPIES. These designs influenced the centerpieces and bases of silver bowls,²⁹³ and the simpler scrolling plant decoration on silver bowls, perhaps from the Parthian world, in which flowery stems trail around the outer edge of vessels. The quantity of floral medallion designs, including on unprovenanced silverware in the Getty, al-Sabah and Miho collections, demonstrates that this decoration especially appealed to elite taste. These Hellenised plant designs featured alongside motifs such as anchors, interpreted as an emblem of the Seleucid dynasty, dolphins, and crenellations of Achaemenid or Parthian extraction.²⁹⁴

A similar arrangement of composite flower medallions and tendrilled florals was also popular on Sarmatian phalerae from around the Black Sea, including Thrace,

²⁸⁸ ARTAMONOV 1973, pls.162-179.

²⁸⁹ PFROMMER 1993, fig.23, p.28.

²⁹⁰ PFROMMER 1993, fig. 24, p.29.

²⁹¹ PFROMMER 1993, p.40.

²⁹² POLLITT 1977, p.256.

²⁹³ For example, in the al-Sabah collection, CARTER 2015, cat.4, pp.64-67 part-gilt silver shallow bowls, cat.17, pp.106-190 part-gilt silver hemispherical bowls and cat.22, pp.122-125 in which silver dolphins swim around the calyx at the centre of the bowls; cat.40, pp.180-181.

²⁹⁴ Pfrommer’s analysis of the Getty Museum silverware provides a wide margin of date, mostly from the 2nd – 1st century BCE, PFROMMER 1993, p.30.

demonstrating the extensive, continual dissemination of Hellenistic decoration.²⁹⁵

0.6.4 Roman plant ornament

Hellenistic design was the predominant, enduring influence on Roman art. A quintessential example of Roman floral decoration is the vegetal frieze on the exterior of the Ara Pacis in Rome.²⁹⁶ Here the fleshy acanthus rinceaux are arranged in an orderly, symmetrical manner. They provide the framework to support an unprecedented quantity of realistically rendered flowers, **Fig. 0 – 15a**, which were originally coloured. The root of this composition is later Hellenistic designs, typified by a 2nd century BCE marble relief from Pergamon, on the Aegean coast of modern Turkey.²⁹⁷ The Pergamon slab is alive with acorns, olives, poppy capsules, wheat, leaves and flowers in a botanically realistic manner within a design which was both more controlled and more symmetrical than typical Hellenistic imagery, **Fig. 0 – 15b**. Pergamon was also the source of highly realistic plant imagery on mosaics, discussed below in Case Study III. These characteristics became the hallmark of Roman plant depictions. This refined style of architectural ornament became widespread across the empire, often enhanced by the inclusion of birds, small animals, and even figures, referred to as ‘inhabited scrolls’.²⁹⁸

Funerary sculpture also included a wide range of plants especially evergreen (‘everlasting’) leaves such as myrtle, bay-laurel, olives and oak, and swags of fruit and flowers including poppies and pomegranates.²⁹⁹ Realistic flowers were also a favourite motif in the framing decoration of mosaics, a continuity of Hellenistic practices, in which the presence of colour enhances their botanical quality.³⁰⁰

Botanical realism was strongly evident in 1st century CE villa garden paintings at Pompeii, Herculaneum (discussed in Case Study I), and in Livia’s Garden Room at Prima Porta, Rome,³⁰¹ whereby the garden was brought into the house and dozens of different species were depicted as if growing in a real garden. This expansion in the repertoire of plant ornament in the early Roman Empire demonstrated society’s deep interest in plants, at practical, aesthetic and spiritual levels, perhaps a reflection of their

²⁹⁵ See MORDVINCEVA 2001 for examples.

²⁹⁶ ROSSINI 2014, pp.80-93; CANEVA 2010; CASTRIOTA 1995.

²⁹⁷ CASRTIOTA 1995, pp.14-18.

²⁹⁸ TOYNBEE AND WARD PERKINS 1950 charts the transition of this ornament from Hellenistic to Roman Imperial art.

²⁹⁹ ALTMANN 1905.

³⁰⁰ For example, in Palace V at Pergamon, ANDREAE 2003, pls.45-3, p.45.

³⁰¹ <http://archeoroma.beniculturali.it/en/national-roman-museum-palazzo-massimo-alle-terme/paintings-and-mosaics/painted-garden-villa-livia>, (accessed July 2015).

agrarian roots. Gardens were constructed in both town and country. They also incorporated sacred spaces with altars and shrines in which the choice of flower species played an integral part.³⁰² Entire garden areas were devoted to tombs and were cultivated with plants in order to furnish an agreeable environment in which to celebrate the departed.³⁰³

0.6.5 Bactrian and Gandharan plant ornament

There is a limited amount of material depicting plants in post-Hellenistic Bactria reflecting the sporadic survival of objects from this region but it is mentioned here since it local to Tillya-tepe. In all cases these images of plants ultimately reflect the influence of Graeco-Roman art. Two types of vegetal decoration have especially commanded academic attention, both of which also travelled south into the Buddhist art of Gandhara.

Firstly, there are acanthus leaves, found widely on column capitals and reflecting the fact that the Corinthian order was favoured in the Hellenised east.³⁰⁴ Relatively naturalistic, vigorously carved Corinthian capitals feature at Aī Khanoum.³⁰⁵ In typically Greek fashion, the leaves have a notched midrib, a reliable indicator of acanthus even in stylised examples, and deeply carved parallel and vertical veining which fans out from the base of the leaves. Less complex and elegant versions of this Corinthian style were found in the fortified settlement of a similar date, at Saksanokhur in north Bactria (modern Tajikistan).³⁰⁶ The Saksanokhur capitals were perhaps closer in style to simpler designs seen at Nisa.³⁰⁷

The popularity of the Corinthian order continued into Buddhist architectural sculpture. Notable examples include the frieze with busts of musicians emerging from stiff, conventionalised acanthus leaves at the 1st – 2nd century CE site Airtam, 70 miles westwards of Aī Khanoum;³⁰⁸ and on capitals at Gandharan Butkara in Swāt (modern northern Pakistan) with emergent blooms above a worshipper.³⁰⁹ More generally, acanthus was widely found on reliefs across the Gandharan art, including column

³⁰² JASHEMSKI 1993, p.116. MACDOUGALL 1987.

³⁰³ CAMPBELL 2008; CARROLL 2003.

³⁰⁴ See, for example, MASTURZO 2011 on the Corinthian order at Nisa (modern Turkmenistan).

³⁰⁵ BERNARD 2008, cat.24, pp.120-121.

³⁰⁶ LITVINSKII AND MUKHITDINOV 1969.

³⁰⁷ MASTURZO 2011, fig.4, p.268.

³⁰⁸ PUGACHENKOVA 1992.

³⁰⁹ TISSOT 1986, fig.83.

capitals³¹⁰ and acanthus cups.³¹¹ Acanthus skirts are worn by both classicising males,³¹² and by Indian-style figures on ivories found at Begram.³¹³ As a reflection of an eclectic taste, the acanthus order was used alongside the Indian lotus plant, including on sacred structures such as the clay stupa at Taxila.³¹⁴

Secondly, images of grapes and vines were popular across all cultures influenced by Graeco-Roman art, including in Bactria from at least the 2nd century BCE; and then later in Gandhara. At Aï Khanoum, maenad busts emerge from fleshy vine-leaves on a bronze vessel handle.³¹⁵ One of the many plaster medallions at Begram illustrates a finely executed grapevine circlet; and a single bronze vine-leaf was also discovered there.³¹⁶ More generally, grapes and vines, including those enclosed in rinceaux patterns, featured in loosely Dionysiac contexts, and they were also widely adopted into the local artistic and symbolic language.³¹⁷ Dionysos, sometimes paired with Ariadne, was a popular subject on Graeco-Bactrian silver vessels, where ivy-leaves were as common as vine-leaves.³¹⁸

Flowers are more elusive in Bactrian art and because this thesis is concerned with floral motifs, specific objects with floral decoration are generally reviewed within the case studies. The scattering of tiny flowerheads in the foreground of the ‘Cybele’ plate from Aï Khanoum, **Fig 3 – 19a**,³¹⁹ is discussed in 3.2.2.10 BACTRIAN ART. Elsewhere at the site, highly schematic anthemions feature on a pebble mosaic floor and as terracotta antefixae, both strongly reminiscent of Greek art.³²⁰

Similar antefixae were also present at the 1st century CE Yuezhi-Kushan site, Khalchayan (modern south Uzbekistan), alternating with stepped merlons on the parapet. There were also many fragments of acanthus, and putti who were originally garland bearers.³²¹ But of greater relevance here is the fragmentary wall-painting with relatively naturalistic floral decoration comprising flowerheads and tendrils.³²² Its

³¹⁰ ZWALF 1996, pls.456-467, pp.254-258.

³¹¹ ZWALF 1996, pls.346-8, p.201.

³¹² BEHRENDT 2007, p.28.

³¹³ TISSOT 2006, cat.K.p Beg 314.54, p.155.

³¹⁴ BOARDMAN 1994, fig.4.70 and pp.131-132.

³¹⁵ BERNARD 2008, cat.13, p.112.

³¹⁶ CAMBON 2008, cat. 189, p.185; cat.176, p.178.

³¹⁷ CARTER 2015, especially ‘The triumph of Dionysos in Asia’, pp.354-376; PETERSON 2011-2012.

³¹⁸ For example, in the al-Sabah collection, cat.26, pp.140-143, cat.28, pp.145-146.

³¹⁹ BERNARD 2008, cat.23, pp.118-119.

³²⁰ BERNARD 2008, p.98; cats.26-28, pp.122-123.

³²¹ PUGAČENKOVA 1966, fig.80, pp.136-137, fig.29, p.53; PUGAČENKOVA 1979, fig.138.

³²² FRANCFORT 2011, pp.321-324; PUGAČENKOVA 1966, fig.85, p.146.

stylistic similarities with vegetal ornament on an imported textile from Shanpula, in the Tarim Basin,³²³ are discussed in 1.2.2.6 ROSES TRAVELLING FURTHER EAST, **Figs. 1 – 19c, d and e.**

Later, at Dalverzin-tepe, sculpted heads of females wore headdresses with simple flowerheads comprising six rounded petals and eight pointed petals,³²⁴ dating to the Buddhist era in 3rd century CE. Lotus blooms ornament the crowns of Bodhisattvas, and petals appear on stucco figures at Hadda (modern Afghanistan) and other Buddhist sites in the following centuries.³²⁵ Small ceramic leaves and flowerheads also featured at Dalverzin-tepe, as well as bands of trefoils on wall decoration.³²⁶

It seems likely that the sparse survival of wall-paintings has deprived us of many images of flowers. Two sites which offer a glimpse of former glories are Mirān and Butkara. Mirān is situated on the southern edge of the Taklamakan desert (modern Xinjiang) but its paintings were close in style to Gandharan art. Although usually considered to date to the 3rd century CE, Mirān was recently discussed directly in relation to Khalchayan by Francfort.³²⁷ One scene shows Buddha Shakyamuni preaching to monks. Behind the figures on the right side is a meadow of red flowers on long leafy stems and white cordiforms, **Fig. 0 – 16a.**³²⁸ One of the Mirān pictures was signed ‘Tita’, judged to be a Prakrit form of ‘Titus’ and thereby denoting an artist from the west.³²⁹ This would explain the range of painting, ‘rich in western elements brilliantly recast’,³³⁰ including a scene on a dado of figures among long, heavy garlands supported by Erotes.³³¹ These garlands, likely derived from Roman sarcophagi, were present in many Gandharan carved reliefs.³³² Of particular interest are the large flowers, coloured either red or green. They are spaced either side of the figurative busts, several of whom wore tall ‘Phrygian’ headdresses, **Fig. 0 – 16b.** The form of these blooms recalls flowers at Butkara I. These latter were painted into plaster on the Great Stupa,³³³

³²³ FRANCFORT 2011, pp.323-324.

³²⁴ PUGAČENKOVA 1978, pl.141, p.207. The eight-point petals are similar to unprovenanced gold appliqués, MIHO MUSEUM, pl.206e.

³²⁵ PUGAČENKOVA 1979, pl.203, p.169.

³²⁶ PUGAČENKOVA 1978, fig.112, p.158, fig.52, p.81.

³²⁷ FRANCFORT 2011, pp.319-321.

³²⁸ BUSSAGLI 1963, p.23; ROWLAND 1970, p.33.

³²⁹ ROWLAND 1974, p.33.

³³⁰ BUSSAGLI 1963, p.21.

³³¹ ROWLAND 1974, fig.5, p.43,

³³² STANČO 2012, pp.124-131.

³³³ FACCENNA 1980-81, Vol. III, pl.337 and colour pls. F-a, G-a, H-b; pl.97 Q1-Q2, Q14.

and may be identified as lotuses, again presented in conjunction with garlands, **Figs. 0 – 16c and d**. The style probably travelled from Swāt via the southern silk route.³³⁴

The lotus was ubiquitous in Gandharan art and just a few examples are noted here. There are numerous scenes of the Buddha seated on a lotus flower, and lotus flowers decorate: the underside of stone palettes,³³⁵ the lids of reliquaries in precious metals,³³⁶ the base of the famous Bimaran gold reliquary,³³⁷ and Bodhisattva Maitreya's flask.³³⁸ They also enhanced the Buddha's footprint and the three jewels.³³⁹ Lotus leaves also typically appear on stupas including stone on chattra supports³⁴⁰ and stupa domes.³⁴¹

There are other types of flowers in Gandharan art, including at Sirkap-Taxila, which is important in view of the necklace worn by Gondophares, discussed above. Gold jewellery is of specific interest, as discussed particularly in Case Study II, 2.2.2.2 SIRKAP-TAXILA.³⁴² Flowers on stone vessels are noted in Case Study III.

More generally, four-petalled flowerheads regularly appeared within a trellis configuration, often decorating architectural elements in Gandharan art. For example, the pattern featured on stupa domes from Chag Pate and Nimogram (Swāt),³⁴³ on a stepped stupa tower,³⁴⁴ and on a finely carved band with embracing figures.³⁴⁵ In other instances, a flower with four *pointed* petals was depicted.³⁴⁶ It seems likely that such flowers represented real species, and one relief depicts Brahma and Indra pouring four-petalled flowers over the Buddha.³⁴⁷ Very similar quatrefoils within trellis designs appear on reliefs depicting textiles among the abundant plant decoration in Palmyrene

³³⁴ BUSSAGLI 1963, p.23.

³³⁵ LUCZANITS 2008, cats.20 and 21, pp.94-95.

³³⁶ LUCZANITS 2008, cat.44, p.105; ZWALF 1996, pl.660, p.348.

³³⁷

http://www.britishmuseum.org/research/collection_online/collection_object_details/collection_image_gallery.aspx?partid=1&assetid=303458001&objectid=182959 (accessed January 2016).

³³⁸ ZWALF 1996, pls.74-75, p.49; p.107; see p.420 for list of objects with lotus decoration. For lotus ornament on a stupa reliquary, BEHRENDT 2007, pl.21, p.24. For their significance, see KINTAERT 2012a and 2012b

³³⁹ LUCZANITS 2008, cats.139, 141 (highly stylised), 142, pp.214-215.

³⁴⁰ ZWALF 1996, pl. 476, p.263.

³⁴¹ LUCZANITS 2008, cat.120, p.204.

³⁴² See also ROSEN STONE 2008.

³⁴³ LUCZANITS 2008, cat.116, p.201; cat.120, p.204. and a similar pattern on a stepped stupa tower, cat.118, p.202.

³⁴⁴ LUCZANITS 2008, cat.118, p.202.

³⁴⁵ LUCZANITS 2008, pl.3, p.315.

³⁴⁶ ZWALF 1996, pl.184, p.113; pl.386, p.220.

³⁴⁷ LUCZANITS 2008, cat.176, p.231. See also in this thesis: 2.2.2.3 BUDDHIST CONTEXTS.

art.³⁴⁸ These are briefly remarked on in 1.2.2.6 ROSES TRAVELLING FURTHER EAST.

0.6.6 Summary

The three types of Tillya-tepe plants under consideration in this thesis are flowers, and as we review the material discussed above it is immediately apparent that floral imagery was extremely rare among the steppe nomadic tribes. There were quatrefoils at Xiongnu sites and generalised vegetal ornament at Tuekta and elsewhere, but these proved exceptional in an artistic style which was dominated by animal themes. The presence of tree-like forms has been noted and these are discussed later in relation to the two kinds of tree formations on Tillya-tepe headdresses.

On the other hand, floral decoration was widely found among Hellenistic plant ornament, and many of the flowers were sufficiently naturalistic to be identifiable, although others were presented in complex and fantastical configurations. The Hellenistic style was widely disseminated, including eastwards to Parthian territories where it sometimes appeared in a modified and simplified form. Under the Romans some of the more extravagant Hellenistic designs persisted, but there was also a move towards botanical realism and the inclusion of a greater variety of species. These changes reflected the wider cultural importance of plants in gardens and rituals in Roman society. Images of flowers occurred in local Hellenised Bactrian art but are relatively scarce and not always provenanced.

It is therefore from these Graeco-Roman sources that we might expect to find clues about the Tillya-tepe flowers although local sources will also be sought. Before embarking on the case studies, it is necessary to clarify the position regarding single cordiform motifs at Tillya-tepe.

0.7 Tillya-tepe cordiform motifs

One of the overwhelming impressions for anyone looking through Sarianidi's catalogue of Tillya-tepe is the profuse quantity of turquoise in the decoration. Among these turquoise inlays are hundreds of cordiform pieces, in addition to multiple heart-shaped

³⁴⁸ For discussion: AMY AND SEYRIG 1936; SCHLUMBERGER 1960a, 1960b; SEYRIG 1940, SEYRIG 1950.

motifs stamped into gold. As Véronique Schiltz noted, their combined presence renders a cumulative impression of countless hearts.³⁴⁹

However, as noted, closer scrutiny reveals that many of these hearts are arranged into flowers. One of the fundamental principles of this research is that these cordiform motifs should not be treated as a mass of individual hearts because two principal types of flowers may be discerned, discussed above and in Case Studies I and II.

In some instances, however, the cordiform elements were intended to represent single hearts rather than flowers. These individual hearts are not considered within their own case study and just a few points will be noted here since they have already been noted in Schiltz's article 'Le Coeur et le Lierre', discussed in 0.2 LITERATURE REVIEW.

Where quantities of heart-shaped pieces were found loosely together, one cannot be sure whether they constituted single motifs or were originally configured into flowers.³⁵⁰ However, there are a number of instances in which they were definitely intended as single hearts.³⁵¹

These heart shapes are generally identified as ivy leaves, genus *Hedera*, **Fig. 0 – 17a**, on the basis of well-known precedents from the Graeco-Roman world.³⁵² In several instances these hearts indisputably represent plant ornament, most notably when hanging within leafy spirals on the dagger scabbard hilt from the warrior's grave.³⁵³ Furthermore, three highly naturalistic, lobed ivy leaves with prominent veining hang from a crescent hairpin excavated from grave I, **Fig. 0 – 17b**. Another hairpin from the same grave has a large quatrefoil and what seem to be simplified ivy leaves, **Fig. 0 – 17c**, identifiable by clearly indicated central veining – a precedent dating back to ivy leaves on Hellenistic wreaths.³⁵⁴

But as remarked, because the majority of cordiforms are configured into flowers, the forthcoming two case studies will concentrate on these floral motifs.

³⁴⁹ SCHILTZ 2012.

³⁵⁰ SARIANIDI 1985, cat.1.6, p.227; cat.2.36, pp.235-236; cats.3.9 and 3.10, p.237; unusual elongated hearts, cat.3.46, p.241.

³⁵¹ SARIANIDI 1985, Grave I: cat.1.20, p.228; cat.1.30, p.230; p.20; cat.1.18, p.228. Grave II: cat.2.20, p.233; cat.2.19, p.233. Grave III: cat.3.50, p.242; cat.3.19, p.238. Grave IV: cat.4.8, pp.247-248; cat.4.9, p.248; cat.4.22, p.249; cat.4.36, p.251. Grave V: cat.5.2, p.252. Grave VI: cat.6.1, p.254; cat.6.4, pp.254-255. There is also a unique set of inlaid triple-heart roundels hanging from the male 'ruler and dragon' pendants from grave II, cat.2.7, p.231. For an analysis of some of this ornamentation, see MORDVINTSEVA 2010, pp.186-187 and fig.6, p.184.

³⁵² SCHILTZ 2011; MORDVINTSEVA 2010, p.186.

³⁵³ SARIANIDI 1985, cat. 4.8, pp.247-248 and pl.160.

³⁵⁴ TSIGARIDA 2011, cat.2.

1 CASE STUDY I: THE FOUR-PETALLED FLOWER WITH SEPALS

1.1 The four-petalled flower with sepals at Tillya-tepe

This first case study concerns a flower which comprises four symmetrically-arranged, heart-shaped petals which are interleaved with pointed sepals. It is present on just a few objects at Tillya-tepe and is also found in important contexts beyond Tillya-tepe. On one of the artefacts, the warrior's bi-lobed knife case, the tiny turquoise inlays for the petals and sepals survive. The craftsman has successfully created a convex, sculptural surface in order to render a slightly three-dimensional effect. There follows a review of this floral motif in some detail in order to discover: on which types of artefacts it appears, and whether its presence was restricted to particular graves. This process of observation is also intended to aid the subsequent task of identifying what genus or species this flower represents. First of all it is necessary to define certain formal criteria.

Morphology

At Tillya-tepe, the distinctive presence of *sepals* between the four heart-shaped petals of this flower differentiates it from another floral motif which appears on two objects at Tillya-tepe and consists of four petals only, i.e. there are no sepals.³⁵⁵ It is not assumed that both types of flower represent the same plant at Tillya-tepe. With a few important exceptions, non-sepalled flowers with four heart-shaped petals are not considered in the comparanda since they are more widely-found in diverse contexts, and there is insufficient space here to investigate their import thoroughly. Henceforth four-petalled flowers *with sepals* will be referred to as four-*sepalled* flowers in order to avoid any ambiguity until the process of identification is completed.

There are two additional morphological variations of the four-sepalled flower at Tillya-tepe which require clarification. In the first instance, some heart-shaped petals are bisected by a central vein, **Figs. 1 – 1a, b and f**, but they still denote a four-petalled and not an octopetalous flowers. The variability may be due to the materials used and techniques of manufacture. And then one set of appliqués from grave IV has three-pronged sepals, **Fig. 1 – 1f**, and these too will be considered among these four-sepalled flowers.

³⁵⁵ SARIANIDI 1985, cat.1.15, p.228, pl.27; cat.6.22, pp.256-257.

1.1.1 Catalogue of the four-sepalled flower at Tillya-tepe

Grave

I

I-i A pair of four-sepalled flowers cut from sheet gold, **Figs. 1 – 1a and b.**³⁵⁶ Both petals and sepals are bisected by a central veined ridge. Discs hang from each sepal, attached by a gold wire which is threaded through a loop and soldered to the sepals. Wires rise from the centre of the flower, from which are suspended three heart-shaped motifs. This pair was found near the woman's right shoulder and their tiny tree-like form suggests that they were hair ornaments.

Grave IV

IV-i A bi-lobed knife case was found on the right side of the warrior's body,³⁵⁷ **Figs. 1 – c and d.** This case consists of a bronze sheath with a rounded apex and base, covered by a cast gold mount with a cross-plate. The opening on the front of the case held an ivory-handled iron dagger, while a leather tube holding two knives was fixed to the reverse. Schiltz notes that the 'head to toe' arrangement of knives on the rear was also used in Tuva, Siberia and in Mongolia.³⁵⁸ The gold mount comprises repoussé decoration with turquoise inlays. Its central band of ornament follows the shaft's axis, and consists of battling, winged, dragon-like creatures, one with a lupine head, the other with a snake's head, both shown in profile while their bodies are twisted around to be viewed from above. Around this scene runs a row of nineteen four-sepalled flowers alternating with swastikas - apart from the section where one swastika is missed out and the flowers are duplicated. Another distortion occurs whereby the swastikas are squashed at the tip of the case. A single ram's head, viewed from above decorates the centre of each lobe. A row of single hearts frames the entire design.

IV-ii 454 square appliqués, each stamped with a four-sepalled flower, **Fig. 1 – 1e.**³⁵⁹ The corners are perforated to enable attachment to garments, and their position on the warrior's body shows that they were arranged in a band along the edge of his jacket. These pieces are dominant among other gold appliqués, including 155 simple eight-petalled flowers, other four-petalled flowers (IV-iii) and numerous discs.³⁶⁰

³⁵⁶ SARIANIDI 1985, cat.1.6, p.227.

³⁵⁷ SARIANIDI 1985, cat.4.9, p.248. Detailed descriptions provided by SARIANIDI 1985, pp.39-40; FRANCFORT 2011, pp.298-302.

³⁵⁸ SCHILTZ 2008, cat.115, p.274.

³⁵⁹ SARIANIDI 1985, cat.4.13, p. 248.

³⁶⁰ SCHILTZ 2008, p.226.

IV-iii 158 square appliqués enclosing a four-sepalled flower, with each petal double-lobed and loosely cordiform,³⁶¹ **Fig. 1 – 1e**. The petals are separated by three-pronged sepals which converge on a large, circular centre which may have been inlaid.

IV-iv Sarianidi mentions a loop decorated with a raised four-petalled rosette soldered to the lid of the warrior's quiver top,³⁶² but it is not possible to see it properly in his 1985 catalogue. This cylinder is decorated with vine rinceaux, typical Graeco-Roman ornament, which is uncharacteristically squashed into the band, a distortion which might suggest manufacture east of the Graeco-Roman world. It is included here only tentatively.

Table II The four-sepalled flower at Tillya-tepe

Grave no.	Object type	Cat. no.	Qty.	Material & Technique	Signs of wear	Size	Weight
I-ii	Hairpins	1.6	2	Stamped sheet gold	Deformation	Flower diam. 4cm	5.6 and 4.6g
IV-i	Knife case	4.9	1	Sheet gold and turquoise	Some inlays missing	Length 26cm	196.5g
IV-ii	Appliqués	4.13	454	Stamped, thin sheet gold	Deformation	1.4 x 1.4cm	90g total
IV-iii	Appliqués	4.14	158	Stamped sheet gold	Faint sign of wear	1 x 1 cm	56.28g total
IV-iv <i>tentative inclusion</i>	Quiver top	4.33	1	Cast silver		Loop diam. 1.7cm	unknown

On the basis of the observations above, it is apparent that almost all the four-sepalled flowers occur grave IV. This is unusual in the context of Tillya-tepe since there are relatively few types of flowers in the warrior's grave. The bi-lobed knife case is the most important object and it will be considered in greater detail in its own section, 1.4 THE TILLYA-TEPE WARRIOR'S BI-LOBED KNIFE CASE. The possibility that a similar flower also featured on the quiver top may be significant as it would represent a second piece of weaponry with the motif. The 454 floral appliqués are one of three

³⁶¹ SARIANIDI 1985, cat.4.14, pp.248-249.

³⁶² SARIANIDI 1985, cat.4.33, p.251; pl.155, p.210.

different ornaments in similar positions along the warrior's clothing, but their square frame renders them the dominant motif.

1.1.2 Identification of the four-sepalled flower

Flowers with four heart-shaped petals are relatively common and there are several candidates, but the presence of the sepals is far more rare and they are thus considered to be an important indicator of genus or species.

Two interesting plants fulfil the criteria of four heart-shaped petals interleaved by pointed sepals. The first is *Potentilla erecta* (also known as tormentil), **Fig. 1 – 2a**, part of the genus *Potentilla* which is found throughout Europe and western Asia. Like all members of the *Potentilla* genus it possesses pharmaceutical properties, most importantly as a styptic to staunch wounds.³⁶³ Perhaps for this reason it was associated with the war god Ares (Mars).³⁶⁴ *Potentilla erecta* is a unique example of a four-petalled flower within the *Potentilla* genus, since other species have five petals.

Mustard plants, *Sinapis alba*, *Brassica nigra* or *junceae*, with their narrow sepals below yellow cordiform petals, are another contender, **Fig. 1 – 2b**. Mustard is a food crop with medicinal uses which had a wide distribution across Europe and west and Central Asia from the Bronze Age onwards.³⁶⁵ Although it did not play any role in Graeco-Roman ritual or mythology, it was mentioned in *New Testament* parables where it was a simile for the Kingdom of God, and is thus a plant with religious associations.³⁶⁶

Therefore potentilla and mustard are both contenders in terms of shape and also because their medical properties and sacred connotations gave them a wider cultural significance within society. One problem is that they are only shown with single sepals and never with triple-spurred sepals as seen on one item at Tillya-tepe. So which one of the two is more likely, or is there a better option ? To avoid an impasse it is helpful to preview some of the comparanda in order to support this search for a credible identification.

An early 2nd century mosaic from Pietra Papa, Rome, **Fig. 1 – 3a**, illustrates the four-sepalled flower and it is immediately evident that its petals are colourful: deep red graduating inwards to a pale pink, and the sepals are green-black. A second mosaic with

³⁶³ SCARBOROUGH 2010, VI, pp.80-81.

³⁶⁴ VONS 2000, p.157.

³⁶⁵ PRICE and NESBITT 2005; ZOHARY and HOPF 2002, p.139.

³⁶⁶ MATTHEW 13:31-32; MARK 4:30-31.

a similar, slightly warmer tonality from the following century has a flower with three-pronged sepals, **Fig. 1 – 3b**, similar to the appliqués from grave IV at Tillya-tepe, **Fig. 1 – 1f**. If this distinctive colouring proves to be decisive, then neither *potentilla* nor mustard is a correct attribution. Therefore closer scrutiny is required.

Since colour provides essential information, one must look to other polychrome media with naturalistic flowers which exhibit this notable colouring. Flowers with similarly toned petals, coloured in some combination of red and pale pink, feature in both Roman art and Bosporan art in the north Pontic area (discussed below). Pompeii offers an excellent source of colourful, naturalistic wall-paintings of gardens, and a review of the imagery offers a strong clue that these Pompeian flowers are roses, based not only on the flowerheads but also the presence of thorns and leaves, as exemplified by the painting in the House of the Golden Bracelet, **Figs. 1 – 3c and d** in which a nightingale sits on a bamboo stick between roses. Similar roses appear among other flowers in the House of the Calavii, **Fig. 1 – 3e**. Two different species are shown: roses with multi-petalled blooms representing the cultivated species, and simpler flowers representing wild roses which are morphologically closer to both the Tillya-tepe and the Roman mosaic flowers.

All the roses at Pompeii are painted in tones of red and pink, none is shown as yellow or white.³⁶⁷ Wild roses are usually depicted with flushed pink, heart-shaped petals against background petals of deep pink or red. Yellow stamens are also consistently indicated at the centres. It should be no surprise that Pompeii was replete with rose flowers in its fertile soil: not so far away at Paestum grew the celebrated roses which flowered twice in a single year.³⁶⁸

The delicate toning of these wall-paintings was translated into a far steeper gradient of colour in mosaics creating dramatic contrasts which arise due to the nature of the medium. However, even allowing for these exaggerated colour conventions, they broadly reproduce the natural toning found on roses such *Rosa canina*³⁶⁹ and *Rosa rubiginosa*³⁷⁰ which both have graduated pink to white petals, **Fig. 1 – 4a and b**. The images with cordiform petals replicate the shape of rose petals, but in nature roses

³⁶⁷ See also fresco paintings at Livia's Villa Giulia in Rome, ca.30 – 20 BCE, <http://archeoroma.beniculturali.it/en/national-roman-museum-palazzo-massimo-alle-terme/paintings-and-mosaics/painted-garden-villa-livia> (accessed July 2015).

³⁶⁸ VIRGIL, *Georgics*, IV: 119.

³⁶⁹ <http://www.gbif.org/species/3002461> (accessed July 2015).

³⁷⁰ <http://www.gbif.org/species/8174785> (accessed July 2015).

always have *five* heart-shaped petals with the sole exception of *Rosa sericea* from China and the Himalayas, which has four petals; but *Rosa sericea* is white.³⁷¹

This artistic convention for roses with *four* prominent petals is a curious one.³⁷² Perhaps it was a pragmatic choice by artists since five-fold axes are problematic in geometric designs. In these circumstances a four-petalled flower, symmetrical across both the vertical and horizontal axes, was far more versatile, as is demonstrated on a Neronian period (54-68 CE) *opus sectile* panel from Domus Tiberiana on the Palatine Hill, Rome, actually built for Nero, **Fig. 1 – 5a**. This transformation, from the five-petalled rose in nature to the four-petalled rose in art, is a manifestation of Jacobsthal's previously remarked 'ornamental disguise'.³⁷³

The Tillya-tepe roses are closer to the Roman convention depicted on mosaics than the more realistic flowers at Pompeii, since the sepals on the flower-head are clearly depicted, even though they are not visible from this viewpoint in nature. The reflexed sepals on real roses support the underside of the petals and are therefore only seen in certain circumstances: enclosing the emerging bud; on mature flowers when viewed either from underneath or in profile; and shrivelled and brown on rosehips. Many roses have single sepals, but some sepals are multi-spurred and it is presumably this latter formation which is represented as three-pronged sepals, **Figs. 2 – 1f** and **3b**.

As will be discussed, this sepalled convention is present in many stylised versions of roses. Perhaps this distinctive and artificial convention was a means of differentiating these roses from other flowers with similar forms. This would have appealed to the Tillya-tepe folk with their prolific use of certain floral motifs, especially because the four petalled and sepalled roses were entirely different from the five-petalled flowers discussed in Case Study II. The convention certainly endured, as 5th century CE Coptic textiles depicted both full-blown roses and single heart-shaped petals showing the rose in profile, with characteristic petal colouring, **Fig. 1 – 5b**.³⁷⁴

³⁷¹ http://www.efloras.org/florataxon.aspx?flora_id=2&taxon_id=200011313 (accessed February 2016).

³⁷² See also the roses beside the fountain in the Pompeian House of the Fruit Orchard, JASHMESKI 1979, figs. 124 and 125, p.77.

³⁷³ JACOBSTHAL 1956, p.37.

³⁷⁴ See also MOOR AND FLUCK 2009. Coptic textiles, whose survival in great numbers is due to fortuitous conditions are a great source of information about floral motifs.

Table III Typology of the four-sepalled rose at Tillya-tepe

Artistic depictions	Botanical accuracy
Flowers with heart-shaped petals	Correct
Four rather than five petals	Incorrect
Petals with graduated colouring in shades of red and pink	Correct in broad terms, although exaggerated
Presence of sepals	Correct
Sepals interleaved between the petals when viewed face-on	Incorrect
Occasional three-pronged rather than single sepals	Correct

Several authors have referred in passing to this floral form as ‘roses’, employing words such as ‘rose’ and ‘rosette’ interchangeably, without expanding on the logic of their identification, for example: Brunner in his discussion of plants on Sasanian seals³⁷⁵ and in Schiltz’s French translation of Rostovtzeff.³⁷⁶ Minns refers to bi-coloured hearts with green leaves on wall-paintings in the underground tombs at Kerch as: ‘apparently a conventionalized rose’.³⁷⁷ Remarks by Rudolf Pfister and Louisa Bellinger came closest to an understanding: ‘It would be natural to assume the flower to be a rose, except this it is regularly represented with four petals while a rose has five. No satisfactory botanical prototype can be found, but speculation is useless, for apparently the number of petals was a matter of convention, not of observation’.³⁷⁸

Genus *Rosa*

Roses are largely native to temperate parts of the northern Hemisphere, including western Asia, Europe and northwest Africa.³⁷⁹ The discovery of carbonised roses in the garden of the House of the Chaste Lovers, Pompeii, confirms their actual existence in 1st century CE gardens.³⁸⁰ The question of the exact species of rose in these images

³⁷⁵ BRUNNER 1978, p.116.

³⁷⁶ The word ‘rosette’ is applied to flower on the Vasjurina Gora chariot, p.85, but ‘une fleur de rose épanouie’ regarding a similar flower in the tomb wall-paintings of N.I. Tur at Chersonesos, p.598, ROSTOVITZEF 2004 (1913-1914).

³⁷⁷ MINNS 1913, p.316.

³⁷⁸ BELLINGER and PFISTER 1945, p.8; referred to as a quatrefoil rose, p.39.

³⁷⁹ <http://www.britannica.com/plant/rose-plant>; <http://www.gbif.org/species/8395064> (both accessed July 2015).

³⁸⁰ JASHEMSKI and MEYER 2002, pp.158-160.

remains unresolved. Expert on Pompeian gardens, Wilhelmina Jashemski, considered it impossible to identify the types of roses depicted on wall-paintings.³⁸¹ But on the basis of the above analysis regarding identification, one might suggest that the Tillya-tepe flowers represented a wild species of rose such as the aforementioned *Rosa canina*,³⁸² since *Rosa rubiginosa*³⁸³ has many-spurred sepals, **Figs. 1 – 4a and b**.

Having established that the four-sepalled flower represents a rose at Tillya-tepe one should note that there were alternative conventions for roses, which are discussed briefly in Case Study II.

Interim summary

The repeated presence of the four-sepalled flowers on the Tillya-tepe warrior's possessions was discussed, prompting the possibility that they were particularly significant to him since, with one exception, they are absent from Tillya-tepe women's graves. The next stage was to identify these flowers, and this was achieved by comparison with Roman images of this flower, whose distinctive red and pink coloured, heart-shaped petals provided a decisive clue, leading directly to the identification as a wild rose. The use of four petals in the representation of roses rather than the botanically correct five petals reflects a practical decision which was dictated by design considerations rather than nature. Of course the graduated polychromy is not reflected in the imagery at Tillya-tepe due to the constraints of the media used – gold and turquoise.

1.1.3 The Tillya-tepe bi-lobed knife case

The most important object with roses is the bi-lobed case from the warrior's grave, **Figs. 1 – 1c and d**. This highly decorated piece of weaponry is a parade object which would have been used for ceremonial purposes. It demonstrates a combination of influences: a shape ultimately deriving from Inner Asia, and decoration from Graeco-Roman and steppe sources. Due to these complexities, as noted, this knife case is discussed in 1.4 THE TILLYA-TEPE WARRIOR'S BI-LOBED KNIFE CASE.

³⁸¹ JASHEMSKI and MEYER 2002, p.160.

³⁸² <http://www.gbif.org/species/3002461> (accessed July 2015).

³⁸³ <http://www.gbif.org/species/113653892> (accessed July 2015).

1.2 Comparanda for rose imagery beyond Tillya-tepe

Although roses are not one of the most common vegetal motifs – they are outstripped by grapes and grapevines, ivy and acanthus – they are nevertheless present in a wide range of artistic contexts. This presumably reflects the widespread cultural importance of roses as a species. Also, in purely design terms this four-fold convention is versatile: the artificial configuration of four equal-sized petals renders it symmetrical across both axes, as noted, and the presence of the sepals reinforces this symmetry. Moreover, this linearity means that roses can be aligned to produce diaper patterning, a popular decorative configuration on textiles and mosaic floors.

1.2.1 Typology and chronology

As defined in the morphological description of the Tillya-tepe four-sepalled flowers, there are three criteria which define this motif and each is essential. First of all, the flower must comprise *four* petals, occasionally shown bisected by a central vein, and these four petals are *heart-shaped*. Between each petal is a pointed sepal, whose length depends on its visual context. Where the flower is enclosed within a square, as seen in **Figs. 1 – 1c, d and e**, the sepals are elongated to reach the four corners. The sepals are shorter in circumstances where the flower is enclosed by a circle or is freestanding. Thus the rose's morphology is modified by its decorative function. Sepals with three spurs are also discussed, as seen on **Fig. 1 – 1f**.

This classification therefore excludes three other similar flower types on most, but not all, occasions:

1. Flowers with four heart-shaped petals but no sepals.
2. Flowers with four more-or-less rounded rather than cordiform petals interleaved with four sepals. These appear in a range of contexts, including metalwork from Luristan,³⁸⁴ and within squares on the costume of an archer on a 6th century glazed brick relief panel from Achaemenid Susa in the British Museum.³⁸⁵ A flower is possibly indicated schematically by a cross with dots for petals on Greek vases from the early 6th century onwards, often on textile ornament.

³⁸⁴ Four flowers around a human face on a pinhead, GHIRSHMAN 1964a, fig.62, p.51.

³⁸⁵ BM 132525, with thanks to Professor Henri-Paul Francfort for pointing this out.

3. A flower comprising four *pointed* petals, present in textile diapering designs at Palmyra and as single florals on headdresses, as well as in Kushan art. These are only noted in passing in this thesis.³⁸⁶

On the other hand, profile images of roses, depicted with distinctive pink-red colouring, will be discussed in the painted underground tombs at Kerch since they contribute contextual information.

If we look broadly at earlier research on roses, in terms of literature, they were definitely mentioned in Homer's *Iliad*,³⁸⁷ and perhaps even earlier in Linear B texts,³⁸⁸ but there has been no study on their presence in art.³⁸⁹ The focus here is the centuries around the time of the Tillya-tepe burials.

1.2.2 Artefacts with rose imagery

1.2.2.1 The Hellenistic four-axis convention

There are no unequivocal images of four-petalled and sepalled roses until the Hellenistic era. An early example appears on a coin, *ca.* 300 BCE, from Rhoda, Girona, Spain, a Catalan town whose modern name is actually Roses. The rose is depicted full-face with four rounded, not cordiform petals, superimposed with strongly rendered sepals, **Fig. 1 – 6a**.³⁹⁰ Although this version of the rose does not provide a direct precedent for the Tillya-tepe roses, it demonstrates early experimentation with the four-petalled convention in circumstances where a rose identification is indisputable.

Another early four-petalled rose appears on a 3rd or 2nd century BCE silver medallion from Taranto, the important jewellery-making centre in southern Italy, **Fig. 1 – 6b**. An outsize rose floats between Aphrodite (Venus) and her female attendant in a scene which is replete with the goddess's characteristic iconography: a playful Eros sporting a basket on his head, a butterfly, cicada, dolphin, and a cithara.³⁹¹ The rose is Aphrodite's

³⁸⁶ 1.2.2.6 ROSES TRAVELLING FURTHER EAST.

³⁸⁷ Discussed in 1.3 A SHORT CULTURAL HISTORY OF ROSES.

³⁸⁸ SARPAKI 2001, p.201.

³⁸⁹ The proposal by Sir Arthur Evans that a rose features on the 'Blue Bird' wall-painting at the Minoan Palace, Knossos (*ca.* 1450 BCE), EVANS 1928; pl.XI and fig.266, is rejected here on morphological grounds. It more closely resembles *Cistus creticus*, which was an important economic plant featuring in Linear B tablets as *ki-ta-no*, SARPAKI 2001, pp.210-212.

³⁹⁰ <http://www.museunacional.cat/en/colleccio/drachma/rhode/020491-n> (accessed April 2016). With thanks to Dr. Simon Glenn, Heberden Coin Room, Ashmolean Museum, who identified the source of the coin. Email communication, 19th April 2016.

³⁹¹ BUDIN 2003.

quintessential flower and it is given due prominence here, so this provides further confirmation that this four-petalled configuration represents a rose. Many depictions of Aphrodite and her entourage (the Personification of Spring and the goddess Flora) are accompanied by generalised images of pink-red flowers representing roses, particularly on mosaics.

Therefore based on their contexts the four-sepalled flowers on the Rhoda coin and the Tarentine silver dish are roses. Although neither design exactly matches the convention for the Tillya-tepe roses – the Tarentine rose is close - they do demonstrate the principle that a four-petalled and four-sepalled flower could represent a rose, a deviation from botanical reality, which presumably influenced the development of later versions of the rose. Two further examples demonstrate the rose's gestation into an established convention and both appear on elaborate sarcophagi: a flower (third from the right) on the sarcophagus belonging to the Roman consul Lucius Corneliu Scipio Babatus (died 280 BCE) in Rome, in which the bold, ribbed sepals recall the design of the Rhoda coin, **Figs. 1 – 6c and d**; and the sole repeat flower on the Etruscan sarcophagus of Seianti Hanunia Tlesnasa, *ca.* 150-140 BCE from Poggio Canterello in Italy, whose colour confirms the rose identification, **Figs. 1 – 6e and f**.

In the Black Sea area, roses appear on the cast bronze decorations of an iron chariot, part of horse accoutrements in a male burial in a kurgan at Vasjurina Gora, Krasnodar, variously dated to between the 3rd and 1st centuries BCE.³⁹² These roses, comprising four petals with curled edges, not yet depicted as hearts but already displaying sepals, emerge from characteristic Hellenistic ornament of an acanthus stem, fruiting arum blooms,³⁹³ and pomegranate flowers, **Fig. 1 – 7**. They may be considered an immature prototype for the Tillya-tepe rose convention. Hellenistic motifs also appear on other objects from this tomb such as two caryatids with *kalathos* headdresses,³⁹⁴ and silver phalerae with multi-layered plant decoration discussed in Case Study II, **Fig. 2 – 10d**.

These examples show that roses developed their four-petalled convention in Hellenistic art, but the four-fold design with *heart-shaped* petals, as seen at Tillya-tepe, seems to

³⁹² Dated 3rd to 2nd centuries BCE: MORITZ 2006, pp.146-147; ROSTOVITZEF 2004 (1913-1914), p.84; TROFIMOVA AND KALASHNIK 2007, p.283; 1st century BCE: SÎRBU and BÂRCA 2009, p.266.

³⁹³ This curious but common convention for the arum, perhaps *Arum italicum*, shows the fruiting body against a stylised leaf or flower cowl with an exaggerated, ornamental margin, although they are never present contemporaneously in nature. <http://www.gbif.org/species/5330661> (accessed July 2015).

³⁹⁴ TREISTER 2012a.

have been established later, around the 1st century BCE to 1st century CE, and this will be discussed next.

1.2.2.2 The Roman Empire

The 1st century CE was a period of increasing trade across Eurasia in all directions. Such was the demand in the Roman empire for luxurious goods from the East that Pliny the Elder felt moved to rail against the extravagances of the moneyed classes: ‘At the lowest reckoning, India, China and the Arabian peninsular drain our Empire of one hundred million sesterces every year – that is what our luxuries and womenfolk cost us’.³⁹⁵ Conversely, there was an eastward movement of luxury goods from the Roman Empire into Central Asia. With this in mind we now look west to consider the status of the four-sepalled flower in the Roman world.

The distinction between the Hellenistic four-axis rose and Roman roses is a fine one, and is based around the Roman preference for heart-shaped petals of the type found at Tillya-tepe, and the persistent, well-defined colour convention. An early example of roses appears at the aforementioned Domus Tiberiana in Rome, **Fig. 1 – 5a**, in which the petals are barely cordiform. The shaping along the top of the petals is reminiscent of the curled petals on the Vasjurina Gora chariot fitting, **Fig. 1 – 7**. The colouring of the Domus Tiberiana rose is barely indicated, with soft pink colouring around the black centre.

The rose on the aforementioned Pietra Papa mosaic in Rome was executed in the standard graduated colour configuration for roses, **Figs. 1 – 8a and b**. This rose is part of a design comprising a bow quatrefoil at the centre, thunderbolts and other florals, all within a guilloche framework. The design of this rose is virtually identical to the flowers on the Tillya-tepe knife case and square appliqués, **Figs. 1 – 1c, d and e**. As remarked, roses with calibrated shading on their petals appear on a mosaic from Thuburbo Majus, the Roman city on the main route to Carthage in Tunisia, a country which preserves a rich heritage of mosaics, **Fig. 1 – 3b**.³⁹⁶ The flower partakes of floral ornamentation which surrounds the image of a poet reading a scroll under the gaze of masks. In this case the brownish-green sepals have three spurs, a stylised version of the

³⁹⁵ PLINY XII: xli.84-85.

³⁹⁶ KHADER 2003, cat.211, pp.528-529.

natural shapes of some rose sepals, which, as will be seen, were popular in the eastern Roman empire.

Four roses decorate the corners of a 2nd century CE pavement mosaic from the old Via Imperiale, Rome. The emblema illustrates a bird sitting among plants which might represent rosebuds since they are presented in the same red-pink tones and are cradled within the same pale green sepals as on the outer roses, **Fig. 1 – 8c**.

Roses also featured on Egyptian glass mosaics, a medium which was popular for naturalistic flowers, in the Ptolemaic period, or thereafter when Egypt was under Roman period from 30 BCE.³⁹⁷ These roses have pink toning *inwards* to a deeper hue on the petals, reflecting an idiosyncratic inversion of the colour convention.³⁹⁸

1.2.2.3 North Pontic and Thracian contexts

Images of roses were also skilfully reproduced in glass mosaic jewellery from the north Pontic area. Four-sepalled flowers embellish a dress-pin and ring accompanying the body of a woman in tomb I at the Artyukhov kurgan on the Taman peninsular in south Russia, **Figs. 1 – 9a, b and c**, close to the aforementioned Vasjurina Gora, source of the immature prototype rose convention. This was a family burial place comprising eight elite graves.³⁹⁹ The woman wore a dress-pin with a round medallion head decorated with four petals delineated by gold plates and filled with glass mosaic. These petals are inlaid with narrow bands, described by Treister as ‘strip cloisons’,⁴⁰⁰ and exhibit non-roseate colouring: white, red-brown and blue-green glass.⁴⁰¹ The sepals are manufactured from green-brown glass. This dress-pin has spherical beads hanging from tassels, **Fig. 1 – 9a**, and is typologically related to another dress-pin from the same grave, which displays the narcissus, discussed in Case Study III, **Fig. 3 – 10b**. The Artyukhov ring has lost its inlay but the gold frame survives, **Fig. 1 – 9c**.⁴⁰² Among the woman’s other lavish polychrome jewellery was a necklace with large, sculptural, heart-shaped garnet pendants,⁴⁰³ a type which Mkhail Treister ascribes to the 1st century CE.⁴⁰⁴ However, the dating of the tomb is disputed. Treister discusses the ring and

³⁹⁷ See remarks on dating WHITEHOUSE 2003, pp.128-129.

³⁹⁸ KISA 1908, vol.II, figs. 181 and 182, pp.368-369.

³⁹⁹ REMPEL 2010, p.32; TROFIMOVA and KALASHNIK 2007, p.287.

⁴⁰⁰ TREISTER 2004b, p.195; see also cat.3, p.209.

⁴⁰¹ TROFIMOVA and KALASHNIK 2007, cat.176, p.289.

⁴⁰² TREISTER 2004b, cat.4, p.209.

⁴⁰³ TROFIMOVA and KALASHNIK 2007, cat.175, p.288.

⁴⁰⁴ TREISTER 2004d, pp.230-231.

dress-pin in terms of a 'late Hellenistic' workshop, from the second half of the 2nd century BCE.⁴⁰⁵ Elsewhere the burial is dated to between 140 and 25 BCE.⁴⁰⁶

Similar flowers decorate circular and rhomboid appliqués from the man's grave I at Kosika, in the Astrakhan region, **Fig. 1 – 9d and e.**⁴⁰⁷ The colouring resembles the Roman mosaics⁴⁰⁸ and therefore a rose is surely depicted. Like the Artyukhov roses, the sepals are shorter than the Tillya-tepe and Roman roses, corresponding to the shape of the roundel. The proximity of the Artyukhov and Kosika designs and their shared technique might suggest a common workshop source and the same date. The Kosika burials are dated to the mid-1st century CE based on the presence of an inscribed silver basin in the burial and Gian Luca Bonora assigns this date to both the medallion and rhombus,⁴⁰⁹ although Mordvintseva dates the burial to a century earlier.⁴¹⁰ It seems that the Artyukhov and Kosika roses are the earliest surviving examples of this exact convention. Treister also discussed several minor Tillya-tepe items exhibiting this cloisonné technique in the same article, as well as Dachi for its geometric cloisonné.⁴¹¹

Finally, there is an unprovenanced rhomboid medallion, allegedly from Amisos (modern Samsun) on the south coast of Black Sea, slightly larger in scale but very similar to the Kosika examples.⁴¹²

The choice of flowers is noteworthy here: roses and six-petalled flowers (discussed in Case Study III) feature at both Artyukhov and Tillya-tepe; roses alone appear at Artyukhov, Kosika and at Tillya-tepe. Kosika is of particular interest since its graves contained several other objects which exhibit connections with Tillya-tepe, including a fragmentary quadrilobe dagger scabbard in the same grave as the rose medallions,⁴¹³ and a number of gold items with steppe animal imagery.⁴¹⁴

These isolated images of roses on jewellery are difficult to contextualise in iconographic terms. More useful information may be derived from roses on wall decoration in tombs from the 1st and early 2nd century CE at nearby Kerch. Kerch

⁴⁰⁵ TREISTER 2004b, cat.4, p.209 and p.195.

⁴⁰⁶ TROFIMOVA and KALASHNIK 2007, pp.287, revised due to a re-assessment of coin evidence.

⁴⁰⁷ BONORA 2005, cats.98 and 99, pp.142-143.

⁴⁰⁸ A second, very similar round appliqué was found at Kosika but displaying a sepalled six-petalled flower, BONORA, cat.97, p.142.

⁴⁰⁹ BONORA 2005, pp.114-115.

⁴¹⁰ MORDVINTSEVA 2013b, p.56.

⁴¹¹ TREISTER 2004b, p.199; p.203.

⁴¹² TREISTER 2004b, p.202.

⁴¹³ SCHILTZ 2002, pp.806-807.

⁴¹⁴ BONORA 2005.

(Panticipaeum) was capital of the Bosporan kingdom on the northeast of the Black Sea, which controlled trade and communication routes eastwards from the Sea of Azov area into the nomadic steppes.⁴¹⁵

The Kerch roses are a variation on the representations discussed so far since they are represented in profile view with characteristic colouring: deep red at the outer edge and pink at the base, **Figs. 1 – 10a and b**. This was an enduring convention, as demonstrated by the above-mentioned Coptic textile, **Fig. 1 – 5b** (top right). A closer look at their context may cast light on the choice of roses in art of this period. In a number of tomb paintings these profile roses, usually with simplified foliage, with or without sepals, are arranged as a meadow backdrop to a range of scenes including: a row of Bosporan infantrymen, two in scale armour, holding spears, swords, shields and a *vexillum* (regimental banner), **Fig. 1 – 10a**; and cavorting Erotes and wild animals, **Fig. 1 – 10b**, both in the ‘1872 crypt’.⁴¹⁶ Two other scenes in the same tomb depict battling horsemen, in which the enemy is differentiated by its military dress and hairstyle. Unfortunately there is no information about the incumbent of this burial but the visual context strongly suggests a warrior horseman. Roses are the only flowers which are repeatedly depicted on wall-paintings in these Kerch tombs, and their distinctive two-tone colouring in most examples mitigates against their presence as mere generic flowers.

In the 1st century CE ‘Tomb of Demeter’ at Kerch, simple pink cordiform-petalled roses dot the landscape behind a scene of the *Abduction of Persephone*, a popular theme which occurs in other local tombs.⁴¹⁷ This scene, part of the story of *Persephone’s Descent to the Underworld* was entirely apt for a sepulchral environment.⁴¹⁸ Similar red and pink rose petals (also leafless) appear on painted panels inside a sarcophagus, where they provide a backdrop to figurative scenes played out against a colonnade, including musicians, an artist’s studio, the meeting of horsemen and a banquet.⁴¹⁹ The lid features these heart-shaped flowers as a background to pomegranate shrubs and peacocks, garlands and dancing pygmies.⁴²⁰

⁴¹⁵ See http://www.pontos.dk/research/ra_7 (accessed July 2015).

⁴¹⁶ ROSTOVTZEF 2004 (1913-1914), pls.LXXXI and LXXVI.

⁴¹⁷ MORITZ 2006, pp.91-94; ROSTOVTZEF 2004 (1913-1914), pl. LVIII; UTECHIN 1979.

⁴¹⁸ Summarised in 3.3.4 NARCISSI IN RELIGION AND MYTHOLOGY.

⁴¹⁹ ‘Painted sarcophagus of 199, ROSTOVTZEF 2004 (1913-1914), vol. II, pls.XCII-XCIV. Text pp.474-491.

⁴²⁰ ROSTOVTZEF 2004 (1913-1914), vol. II, pl.XCV.

All these roses partake of a funerary setting and the sarcophagus decoration recalls to mind Plutarch's quotation from Pindar (5th century BCE) describing Elysium:

'For them doth the strength of the sunshine below,

While night all the earth doth overstraw.

In meadows of roses their suburbs lie,

Roses all tinged with a crimson dye.

They are shaded by trees that incense bear,

And trees with golden fruit so fair.

Some with horses and sports of might, others in music and draughts delight.'⁴²¹

On this sarcophagus and in these wall-paintings there are roses galore, and shrubs with orange-coloured pomegranates: 'trees with golden fruit...'. The many incidences of hunting scenes and even battling soldiers may denote 'sport'. There are even musicians, and draughts might be reflected in the customary banquet scenes.

This 'rosy' perception of Elysium was popular in elegiac poetry around the 1st centuries BCE and CE and this subject is considered further in 1.3 A SHORT CULTURAL HISTORY OF ROSES. One may therefore propose that there was a perceived connection between rose meadows in the Kerch tombs and Elysium. Certainly the Kerch paintings manifest strong influences of Graeco-Roman art and it seems possible that the iconography expressing Roman concepts of a blessed afterlife was deployed by these Bosporan peoples. Rose sprigs and peacocks also appeared together on a sarcophagus in the aforementioned '1872 crypt',⁴²² and this combination signals a theme which became increasingly popular in the following centuries, eventually as part of the Christian repertoire of ornament.⁴²³

Funerary sculpture from Kerch also sometimes featured roses, as seen on the carved pediment of a 1st or early 2nd century CE grave stela, **Figs. 1 – 11a and b**. It shows a typical horse-riding warrior wearing a costume of trousers and a cross-jacket. An inscription identifies him as Staphilos, son of Glaukias. This simple rose was less popular on Kerch stelae than the convention for *cultivated* roses, a double- or triple-layered rosette. These elaborate, cultivated roses were found in Greek art, as shown by

⁴²¹ PLUTARCH (*ca.*46 - 120 CE) citing Pindar (*ca.*522 - 443 CE), *Moralia: Letter to Apollonius* 35. http://penelope.uchicago.edu/Thayer/E/Roman/Texts/Plutarch/Moralia/Consolatio_ad_Apollonium*.html (accessed July 2015).

⁴²² ROSTOVTZEF 2004 (1913-1914), vol.II, pls.LXXVI-2, LXVII, LXIV.

⁴²³ For the significance of peacocks: ANDELKOVIC *et al.* 2010.

two double-petalled flowers on a large silver dish from the ‘Scythian’ Chertomlyk kurgan, flanking a goddess emerging from tendrils, dating to the mid or late 4th century BCE.⁴²⁴ Many years later in the 1st century CE, this version of the rose decorated funeral monuments, including the stela of the Tomb of Myrines, wife of the Meges,⁴²⁵ and soldiers at Kerch, all often described as Sarmatian.⁴²⁶ The stylised representation of the multi-petalled, cultivated rose replicates the type which appeared on Pompeian wall-paintings, and has a central rosette usually with four petals (no sepals). As will be discussed in 1.3 A SHORT CULTURAL HISTORY OF ROSES, roses in general were certainly one of the commonest plants for funerary paraphernalia, including garlands, particularly in areas influenced by Roman culture.

Four-sepalled flowers – again presumably roses - are occasionally present on objects in burials which are not necessary funerary trappings. They feature on the underside of phalerae or bowls, a position which sometimes displayed radiating composite floral motifs in a Hellenistic style.⁴²⁷ They came from a hoard near a kurgan at Tvardica in southeast Bulgaria, east of the Black Sea, part of the world usually associated with the Thracians, *ca.* 1st century BCE,⁴²⁸ **Figs. 1 – 11c, d, e, and f.** It is not known whether their function was as decorative fittings for horse harnessing which would indicate the owner was likely horse riding military aristocracy.⁴²⁹

1.2.2.4 The eastern Roman Empire

Roses also occasionally feature in sepulchral contexts at the eastern end of the Roman Empire. The multi-petalled rose discussed above appears alongside the Tillya-tepe type sepalled rose feature on the frieze of the substantial octagon superstructure of a mid-1st century BCE tomb, part of a design alternating with *bucrania* draped with swags of fruit, which combination was commonly used on altars and funerary stelae in the Graeco-Roman world, **Figs. 1 – 12a and b.** The ox skull alluded to sacrificial activities associated with funerals. The tomb belonged to a young woman in Ephesus,⁴³⁰ the prosperous city which had become part of the Roman Empire in the 2nd century BCE.

⁴²⁴ ARTAMONOV 1969, pl.178. It was also a frequent ornament on sculpture related to Demeter.

⁴²⁵ MORITZ 2006, also with some debased versions of simple roses, pls.64-2.

⁴²⁶ TREISTER 2010, cavalrymen pl.2, p.489; pl.3, p.491. Standing figure with sword, pl.11, p.507.

⁴²⁷ See remarks on the Tillya-tepe composite-flower ornaments, section 2.1.3 MORE ON TILLYA-TEPE ARTEFACTS WITH POPPIES.

⁴²⁸ MORDVINCEVA 2001, p.80; dating from SÎRBU and BÂRCA 2009, p.266. See also MORDVINCEVA 2001, fig.344.

⁴²⁹ SÎRBU and BÂRCA 2009, p.257.

⁴³⁰ OBERLEITNER 1978, pp.95-96.

The scale and grandeur of the structure suggests that she was a person of considerable status and wealth. Widespread speculation that the incumbent was Arsinoe IV (died 41 BCE), sister of Cleopatra VII and a warrior queen who fought Caesar,⁴³¹ who was then exiled to Ephesus, is the subject of academic debate.⁴³²

A single rose is depicted in a band of decoration on the façade of a tomb at Maqāti‘Ābūd in Roman Palestine, alongside a six-petalled flower, discussed briefly in Case Study III, **Fig. 1 – 13a**. The influences are mixed since the tri-partite design of the grapes and the concentric circles derive from Assyrian precedents.⁴³³ Elsewhere in Israel-Palestine, complex four-petalled flowers occur among floral ornament on lead coffins, an elaboration of the Roman floral vocabulary of flowers. They are mentioned here only in passing since they presumably derived from roses but have developed into composite flowers.⁴³⁴

At Khirbet edh-Dharih, a Nabataean hilltop temple sanctuary and caravan stop on the route to Petra, a rose features prominently on the battledress of twins representing Gemini, part of a Zodiacal frieze carved on the temple façade, **Fig. 1 – 13b**.⁴³⁵ Although it is unknown whether this zodiac cycle pre-dated or post-dated Roman rule (established 106 CE),⁴³⁶ its design is particularly Graeco-Roman in flavour, far more than the other zodiac fragments.⁴³⁷ These edh-Dharih figures surely represent the twins Castor and Pollux, known in Greece as the Dioscuri, identifiable by their pointed ‘Phrygian’ caps and their military bearing. Although the Dioscuri often appeared with horses, sometimes they were simply shown as two identical beardless young men, as here. They were widely found in the eastern Roman Empire, and even beyond at Dilberjin in Bactria.⁴³⁸ The Dioscuri’s astral role as Gemini is attested in literature, although according to the *LIMC* this was not translated into images on zodiacal monuments,⁴³⁹ so these provide rare visual confirmation of textual evidence. In fact, these Gemini Dioscuri are not

⁴³¹ RIDGWAY 2002, p.20.

⁴³² <http://anthropology.msu.edu/anp455-fs14/2014/09/25/arsinoe-iv/> (accessed July 2015).

⁴³³ AVI YONAH 1981, p.70.

⁴³⁴ AVI YONAH 1981, fig.3, p.247. In contrast, a simplified ‘rose’ appears on a Roman period garland sarcophagus, Haifa (modern Israel), AVI YONAH 1981, pl.19-9.

⁴³⁵ VILLENEUVE and AL-MUHEISEN 2003, pl.78, p.95.

⁴³⁶ VILLENEUVE and AL-MUHEISEN 2003, p.95.

⁴³⁷ VILLENEUVE and AL-MUHEISEN 2003, pls. 76-79, pp.94-95.

⁴³⁸ LO MUZIO 1999.

⁴³⁹ *LIMC*, Vol.III-1, p.631.

unique since another rather damaged pair, wearing the same headwear, features in the Tyche Zodiac at Nabataean Khirbet Brak, on the road to Petra.⁴⁴⁰

In the 1st century CE the Dioscuri were venerated because of their identification with emperors, they were ‘two cavalier protectors par excellence of the Roman aristocracy’,⁴⁴¹ and were moreover associated with military victory.⁴⁴² This latter connotation is alluded to in this sculpture as they are wearing military kit. Here the rose replicates the exact position of a flower – possibly also a rose although without sepals – on a bronze statuette of a male in Roman armour who wears a similar headdress, from the Roman Imperial era,⁴⁴³ **Fig. 1 – 13c**. It is even possible that this figure represents one of the Dioscuri since his pose suggests that originally he held a spear, a common attribute of the Dioscuri. The historian Polybius (*ca.* 200-118 BCE) call this kind of breastplate a *kardiophulax*,⁴⁴⁴ literally a ‘heart-protector’, although it was intended to safeguard all the soldier’s vital organs and was thus an appropriate position for protective emblems, in this case, a rose. This position is typical for emblematic decoration on breastplates, famously exemplified by the Medusa-Gorgon on Alexander the Great’s breastplate on the Roman floor mosaic at Pompeii, *ca.* 100 BCE.⁴⁴⁵ Returning to edh-Dharih, there are many other features which demonstrate Roman influences beyond the Dioscuri: the triangular pediment on the temple façade is decorated with sea centaurs and a flying Victory; the missing tympanum is thought to have contained a Zeus (Jupiter) type figure; and a cornucopia, perhaps an attribute of a lost Tyche, denoted Romanised versions of local deities.⁴⁴⁶

The apparent association of roses with martial protection may have been transferred to battling gladiators. The 4th century ‘Mosaic of the frightened animals’ at the Roman city of Hadrumetum (modern Sousse) in Tunisia featured two fighters dressed in green tunics covered with red-pink single cordiform rose petals, a backdrop to the image of a wild boar pelt and lion mask.⁴⁴⁷

A variation of these roses exists in which the petals are interleaved with trifoliate rather than single sepals. This version is present in several contexts within the Parthian world,

⁴⁴⁰ GLUECK 1966, pl.46, p.108.

⁴⁴¹ SAURON 2000, p.68.

⁴⁴² LO MUZIO 1999, p.44.

⁴⁴³ Sometimes described as Alexander the Great, Hansen *et al.* 2010, cat.10, p.245.

⁴⁴⁴ POLYBIUS, *Histories*, VI: 23.

⁴⁴⁵ HASE 2010, fig.2, p.70. A medusa also appears on a 3rd or 2nd century bronze helmet at Melos, HANSEN *et al.* 2010, cat.63, p.266.

⁴⁴⁶ VILLENEUVE AND AL-MUHEISEN 2003, p.95.

⁴⁴⁷ KHADER 2003, cat.231 and p.530.

the earliest of which featured on tall painted panels in the *hypogeum* (underground tomb) of ‘Three Brothers’ at Palmyra, *ca.* 160 CE, **Fig. 1 – 14a**.⁴⁴⁸ Palmyra was a prosperous caravan city on routes between the East and the Mediterranean, trading as an independent kingdom with both the Roman and Parthian empires and rising to particular importance in the early 2nd century CE.⁴⁴⁹ The pictures comprise male and female busts within large roundels. Roses are painted at each corner, their petals delineated by a red outline fading inwards into pink, with green multi-spurred sepals. The lower flowers float above winding, thorny stems, presumably belonging to the roses. These thorns are slightly curved and their appearance suggests that they might represent the prickly briar-rose species, *Rosa rubiginosa*, which is native to Europe and west Asia,⁴⁵⁰ **Fig. 1 – 14b**. *Rosa rubiginosa* also has dramatically multi-spurred sepals (**Fig. 1 – 14c** top left), unlike *Rosa canina*, whose sepals are smoother. Again the context exhibits strong Graeco-Roman elements: the roundels are held aloft by a Victory figure, and elsewhere in the tomb are images of Zeus and Ganymede, a scene depicting an episode from the life of Achilles,⁴⁵¹ vines and architectural *trompe l’oeil*.

In the following century, multi-spurred roses appeared in different incarnations at Dura-Europos, an important caravan city sited above the Euphrates in north Syria. Although the Romans took control of the city in 165 CE, Dura-Europos preserved some of its earlier Parthian character. It was distinguished for the peaceful co-existence of different cultures and religions, including Roman, Levantine pagan, Jewish and Christian communities. The Temple of the Palmyrene gods (also known as Temple of Bel), was located within the Roman military camp from 165 CE, and it housed a number of figurative wall-paintings, several of which depicted ritual activities held within the temple itself.⁴⁵²

Among these pictures is a scene with soldiers, identified in an inscription as commissioned by the Commander of the 20th Palmyrene cohort at Dura-Europos, the Roman tribune Julius Terentius, and dated 239 CE.⁴⁵³ With an array of soldiers in attendance, Terentius offers incense over a *thymiaterion*, **Figs. 1 – 15a**. A large pale pink rose with a red outline and sketchy black sepals, floats between the city goddesses for Dura-Europos and Palmyra who are seated on the left. The rose’s large scale and

⁴⁴⁸ <http://users.stlcc.edu/mfuller/palmyratombs.html/> (accessed August 2015).

⁴⁴⁹ BALL 2000, p.74.

⁴⁵⁰ <http://www.gbif.org/species/8174785> (accessed July 2015).

⁴⁵¹ COLLEDGE 1976, p.85.

⁴⁵² HEYN 2011, p.222.

⁴⁵³ HEYN 2011, p.222.

prominent position among the deities render a mere ornamental function unlikely and its potential significance is discussed further, including in relation to swastika motifs on soldiers' tunics, **Figs. 1 – 15c and d**, in 1.4 THE TILLYA-TEPE WARRIOR'S BILOBED KNIFE CASE.

Pink, multi-spurred roses – henceforth called 'Durene' roses - also appear in a banqueting scene at Dura-Europos, **Fig. 1 – 16a**. Giant roses are arranged at shoulder-level between the reclining figures and below a tripartite swag. Although the flowers have rounded petals in this drawing, a photograph of the original, rather damaged painting, shows that they were cordiform.⁴⁵⁴ Another banqueting picture, dated to 193 CE, has a similar arrangement, and although the flowers are unsepalled, on the basis of the similar context they must represent roses. The composition is more complex, with the seated figures on one side, separated from a hunting scene by an Eros with a downturned torch, customarily a chthonic motif.⁴⁵⁵ Banqueting scenes themselves were sometimes associated with funerary rituals, and Ann Perkins mentions in passing that the combination of banquets and hunt scenes was found in South Russia,⁴⁵⁶ presumably referring to the Kerch wall-paintings, where roses are also present. As she says, funerary themes might seem an unusual theme for the principal room of a private house,⁴⁵⁷ but this view may rather reflect our lack of understanding of earlier attitudes towards death.

Also at Dura-Europos, large 'Durene' roses were painted on the Synagogue ceiling, dated 244 - 245 CE, again outlined in red with the customary green sepals, **Fig. 1 – 16b**. This coffered ceiling, reconstructed in the National Museum, Damascus, is decorated with 234 tiles featuring: wreaths enclosing Greek and Aramaic dedications; Roman mythological figures; composite creatures perhaps representing the Zodiac; animals; 'symbols' such as an apotropaic eye and a sun within a wreath; and fruit.⁴⁵⁸ Forty-one roses – by far the most prolific motif – are presented both in isolation and enclosed within wreaths.⁴⁵⁹ Such wreaths also framed dedications from donors to the synagogue, as well as birds and grapes. Roses alternate in one row with bunches of grapes and in another with a cluster of round fruits, most likely apricots or peaches.⁴⁶⁰ In addition to

⁴⁵⁴ BRODY AND HOFFMAN 2014, pl.178, p.401, but it does not reproduce well enough to use here.

⁴⁵⁵ PERKINS 1973, pls.26.

⁴⁵⁶ PERKINS 1973, p.66.

⁴⁵⁷ PERKINS 1973, pp.66-67.

⁴⁵⁸ STERN 2010, Table 1, p.485, gives a comprehensive list. For illustrations: STERN 2010, p.484 and 486; CHI *et al.* 2-12 to 2-19, pp.50-51; cats. 25 – 34, pp.112-113.

⁴⁵⁹ STERN 2010, fig.6, p.484.

⁴⁶⁰ Karen Stern identifies these fruit as apples or oranges, STERN 2010, Table 1, p.485. However, oranges were not cultivated in western Eurasia until centuries later. It is uncertain whether apples existed

the roses, round fruits and grapes, there were pomegranates, pinecones, wheat and sesame plants. In the context of a sacred building one might expect that these plants had ritual or symbolic functions,⁴⁶¹ in addition to being economically useful crops. Karen Stern records eighteen further ‘Durene’ flowers in the House of the Roman Scribes,⁴⁶² and the House of the Atrium at Dura-Europos.⁴⁶³ They formed part of a similar repertoire to the Synagogue ceiling with fruit and zodiacal images. Images of fruit might be expected in a religious building as many types of fruits had an important cultic and symbolic status in the Jewish religion, and wheat, and seeds such as sesame also had their place in ritual foods.⁴⁶⁴ But the presence of the roses is perhaps surprising as flowers do not traditionally play a strong role in Jewish religious activities, and floral garlands, for example, were generally excluded from offerings at festivals since they were associated with earlier idolatrous religions.⁴⁶⁵

Roses also appear repeatedly among fruit in a later sacred environment, on a 5th century floor mosaic in a Christian church at Masada, Palestine.⁴⁶⁶ The flower is the rarer type with bisected petals, as found at Tillya-tepe and occasionally elsewhere, including a carving on 1st – 2nd century CE limestone Jewish ossuary.⁴⁶⁷

There are several examples of roses on textiles from Dura-Europos, although depicted without sepals, the finest being a woollen furnishing fragment woven with staggered rows of richly-hued roses with petals recreated in five carefully calibrated bands of colour on a green background,⁴⁶⁸ **Fig. 1 – 16c.**

Roses were clearly important at Dura-Europos, not only because they were depicted prominently and in large scale but also because they were found in two different sacred spaces, the Temple of the Palmyrene Gods and the Synagogue.

‘Durene’ roses sometimes appeared outside Dura-Europos. A colourful version with graduated shading on the petals, from deep red to pink-orange, appears on the

in Syria-Palestine at this date, GOOR and NUROCK 1968, p.187. Most likely the fruits are either apricots or peaches, which appear more realistically, for example, on North African mosaics, KHADER 2003, cats. 96 (apricots) and cat.98 (peaches). See GOOR and NUROCK 1968, p.202 for their significance in Jewish culture.

⁴⁶¹ For discussion of potential fruit symbolism, see GOOR and NUROCK 1968.

⁴⁶² STERN 2010, Table 1, p.485.

⁴⁶³ STERN 2010, p.490.

⁴⁶⁴ GOOR and NUROCK 1968.

⁴⁶⁵ GOODY 1993, pp.46-47. Flowers were not mentioned in the Garden of Eden and there are only sparse references to them in Jewish literature.

⁴⁶⁶ GOOR and NUROCK 1968, p.163.

⁴⁶⁷ RAHMANI 1994, cat. 60, pl.10; p.91.

⁴⁶⁸ PFISTER and BELLINGER 1945, p.8; cat.140, p.39.

aforementioned mosaic from Thuburbo Majus among the complex floral ornament surrounding the image of the poet, **Fig. 1 – 2d**.⁴⁶⁹ They also appear alongside hunting dogs in rose meadows and other motifs of a ‘paradisiacal’ character, similar in manner to the Kerch wall-paintings, on a *trompe l’oeil* coffered ceiling in a 4th century tomb of a dignitary at the Roman legionary settlement of Durostorum (modern Silistra, Bulgaria),⁴⁷⁰ **Fig. 1 – 17**. The demi-lune painting at the back of the tomb also has profile bi-coloured, sepalled roses, similar to Kerch. The tomb’s incumbent, who was ‘of high military aristocracy’,⁴⁷¹ wears a costume comparable with that worn by the soldiers at Dura-Europos, particularly his cloak and its large fibula.⁴⁷² Julia Valeva, having noted the source of this tomb’s design as deriving from Roman Imperial art, connected the painted architectural perspective with tomb-paintings in the aforementioned *hypogeum* of ‘Three Brothers’ at Palmyra, and at another 4th century tomb at Nicaea (modern Iznik, Turkey), all three of which have similar vaulted constructions.⁴⁷³ The Nicaea vault is profusely painted with roses alongside two other floral types.⁴⁷⁴

1.2.2.5 Bactria

Among the surviving architectural fragments of the Kushan dynastic shrine at Surkh Kotal, southern Bactria (modern south Afghanistan),⁴⁷⁵ 2nd – 4th century CE, are two stepped crenellations with rose decoration, **Figs. 1 – 18a and b**. They are part of group, all probably from the upper walls of the main temple. They are all decorated with blind arrow-slits flanked by false recessed windows, which have different motifs in the position occupied here by roses, including: a poppy or pomegranate plant, an elaborate lotus flower, a dancing (?) figure, and a seated male.⁴⁷⁶ The temple included dozens of pilasters and capitals, all in the Corinthian style with fleshy acanthus leaves and half-figures.⁴⁷⁷ Surkh Kotal was well-known both for its inscriptions and the headless statue

⁴⁶⁹ KHADER 2003, cat.211.

⁴⁷⁰ ATANASOV 2007.

⁴⁷¹ ATANASOV 2007, p.456.

⁴⁷² JAMES 2010: Breeches, p.58; belt p.60; cloak with large brooch, p.62.

⁴⁷³ VALEVA 2001, pp.170-171.

⁴⁷⁴ VALEVA 2001 illustrates other contemporary tombs with roses (the roses are not identified in her account): tomb 7, Sofia-Serdica, Bulgaria (fig. 17); and tombs at Brestovik, Serbia (fig. 18), and Stari Kostolac-Viminatum, Serbia (figs. 36-37).

⁴⁷⁵ BALL 1982, 1123, p.261.

⁴⁷⁶ SCHLUMBERGER *et al.* 1983, pls.56-57.

⁴⁷⁷ SCHLUMBERGER *et al.* 1983, pls.66-77.

of Kanishka, whose gown was decorated with a plant comprising a vertical band of undulating hearts, which reminds us of the cordiform motifs at Tillya-tepe.⁴⁷⁸

1.2.2.6 Roses travelling further east

Roses travelled yet further afield, to Noin Ula in Mongolia and Shanpula near Khotan in the Tarim Basin. They appear on an embroidered woollen textile from a Xiongnu tomb at Noin Ula, **Figs. 1 – 19a and b**. This richly-provisioned burial was occupied by a horseman thought to have been a *shanyu* (prince).⁴⁷⁹ The inclusion of an inscribed Chinese lacquered cup in the burial provides a *terminus post quem* of 2 BCE,⁴⁸⁰ and carbon dating indicates the 1st century CE.⁴⁸¹ The graduated shading of the rose petals conforms to usual conventions but the colours are faded and only the outer edges of the petals preserve traces of pink. The roses form the junction points in diaper patterns enclosing flying birds, carp-like fish and bow quatrefoils. Thus these rose sepals provide axial alignments in a similar manner to the Roman *opus sectile* panel from the Domus Tiberiana, **Fig. 1 – 5a**. This diapering was widely-found on textiles: at Pazyryk on felt hangings, **Fig. 0 – 12a**, reflecting what seems to be a taste for four-petalled flowers with pointed petals;⁴⁸² and on furnishings depicted on funerary stelae at Palmyra,⁴⁸³ on Hatrene costumes;⁴⁸⁴ on Kushan and Central Asian textiles;⁴⁸⁵ on a throne at Mirān in which bright red flowers are loosely indicated within the diamonds;⁴⁸⁶ and even at Tillya-tepe itself on the saddle-cloth cushioning the figure of Nana on a lion, on the warrior's belt roundels.⁴⁸⁷ Its popularity was presumably due to its versatility, whereby it could cover larger areas than, for example, linear bands of guilloche (entrelac) enclosing flowers.⁴⁸⁸ The bow quatrefoils on the Noin Ula textile were also present at Tillya-tepe, in the form of 205 appliqués found in grave III.⁴⁸⁹ From

⁴⁷⁸ SCHILTZ 2012, p.347.

⁴⁷⁹ The grave-goods included considerable quantities of carpets, silk and woollen textiles, clothing, TREVER 1932 pp.58-67.

⁴⁸⁰ MINIAEV 2009, p.23.

⁴⁸¹ MINIAEV 2009, p.27.

⁴⁸² Quatrefoil motifs from steppe nomadic sites are discussed in 0.6 PLANT IMAGERY.

⁴⁸³ TANABE 1986: horse blanket, fig.175, p.208; four pointed-petal flowers within a trellis pattern on a triclinum mattress, fig.190, p.223; sleeves and cuffs etc. figs.338, p.369; diapering on furnishings, fig.255, p.286. See also: AMY AND SEYRIG 1936, figs.7-11, 7-13; SCHLUMBERGER 1960b fig.3, p.295; SEYRIG 1940.

⁴⁸⁴ King Vologases, SAFAR AND MUSTAPHA 1974, fig.5, p.64.

⁴⁸⁵ FRANCFORT 2011, pp.322-324.

⁴⁸⁶ BUSSAGLI 1963, p.22.

⁴⁸⁷ SARIANIDI 1985, cat.4.2, pp.152-153.

⁴⁸⁸ E.g. Palmyra: AMY AND SEYRIG 1936, figs.7-3, 7-10, 7-15.

⁴⁸⁹ SARIANIDI 1985, cat.3.8, p.237.

the same Noin Ula burial came a pair of embroidered trousers in which a fragment depicts the hilt of a quadrilobe dagger, of the type worn by the Tillya-tepe warrior.⁴⁹⁰

A second textile with roses was discovered in a cemetery at Shanpula, and unusually it includes flowers presented in three different styles. This textile comprises trousers worn by a male which were assembled from pieces of a woollen wall-hanging.⁴⁹¹ One piece of this textile depicts flowerheads framing a lively centaur blowing a trumpet, **Fig. 1 – 19c**. The warm pink graduated colouring on several of these flowers replicates the usual colouring of roses, while others are paler. There are not the usual green sepals here. Instead, red lines criss-cross the pink flowers, and golden lines separate the four unusual creamy-yellow petals on the paler blooms, and they all have golden yellow centres like real roses. The effect is decorative rather than naturalistic while still preserving the general character of roses. Either the colour has changed over the centuries, or it is fantastical in keeping with the mythological theme. A fragment of a wing floats above the centaur, possibly an Eros, a favoured subject on imported textiles.⁴⁹² Tillya-tepe objects themselves exhibit a vocabulary not only of flowers but also Erotes, demonstrating Tillya-tepe's participation in a wider artistic language which was used to decorate Central Asian textiles.⁴⁹³

Below the roses and centaur ensemble is a scattering of flowerheads – profiles of an orange flower and a red bud emerging from foliage - among trailing stems or tendrils. These flowers are more naturalistic than the conventionalised roses and recall the style of flowers, grapes, vine-leaves and tendrils on a wall-painting fragment of the same date at the 1st century CE Yuezhi site, Khalchayan in Bactria, **Fig. 1 – 19e**.⁴⁹⁴

The lower section of this fragment has a near life-size image of a soldier, **Fig. 1 – 19d**.⁴⁹⁵ He wears a long-sleeved cross-jacket secured by a belt, broadly similar to the costume worn by the Tillya-tepe warrior. The lapels of the soldier's cross-jacket are decorated with blue flowers in a red trellis pattern, another example of the aforementioned diapering, in a similar position to the rose appliqués and others on the Tillya-tepe warrior's. This raises the possibility that these flowers are also very

⁴⁹⁰ FRANCFORT 2011, fig.18, p.297; RUDENKO 1969, pl.LXIV.

⁴⁹¹ WAGNER *et al.* 2009, p.1069.

⁴⁹² Erotes decorate a textile from Yingpan, Xinjiang, *ca.* 1st – 3rd centuries CE, BUNKER 2004, p.34.

⁴⁹³ SARIANIDI 1985, *Erotes*: cats.2.5, 2.6 (with winged Aphrodite (Venus) or Psyche), 3.2.

⁴⁹⁴ PUGAČENKOVA 1966, fig.85, p.146; FRANCFORT 2011, pp.321-324.

⁴⁹⁵ STAUFFER 2007, p.83.

formalised roses, but it is not possible to be sure. Although the dating for Shanpula is disputed,⁴⁹⁶ Francfort has convincingly demonstrated a 1st century date CE, so this textile is more-or-less contemporary with Tillya-tepe.⁴⁹⁷ His opinion is based on the resemblance of this soldier's facial features, headband, hairstyle and costume to Bactrian clay portrait sculpture at Khalchayan and embroidered faces on textiles from tomb XXV at Noin Ula.

These rose textiles, and fragments from the Noin Ula with poppy capsules discussed in Case Study II, are usually described as Bactrian, Central Asian or Iranian.⁴⁹⁸ Bactria is a possibility since there is a tasselled horse rug from Shanpula with diapering which recalls the aforementioned lion's saddle in the Tillya-tepe belt roundels.⁴⁹⁹ In his study of textiles at Noin Ula, Yatsenko proposed that the embroideries were executed in Bactria.⁵⁰⁰ Fragments from kurgan XXXI show that diaper patterning was popular on costumes, including a short caftan with infill decoration which looks rather like roses.⁵⁰¹ Therefore these images of roses on the Shanpula and Noin Ula textiles might indicate that the sepalled rose did indeed exist in Bactria beyond Tillya-tepe but the case unclear.

1.2.2.7 Post-Roman roses

This Roman convention for roses continued to play a role in the art of the following centuries, although they are seldom identified as such. In Christian art, they are especially popular in imagery alluding to the afterlife, such as 5th and 6th century church baptisteries at Clypea and Teboulba in Tunisia.⁵⁰² They are also a frequent motif in Coptic art, as in **Fig. 1 – 5b**.

On mosaics, roses appear as ornament on textiles: decorating curtains in the 6th century CE Great Palace of Theodoric at Sant'Apollinare, Ravenna, and on the costumes worn by Empress Theodora's entourage at San Vitale, Ravenna, 547 CE.⁵⁰³ Naturalistic and stylised roses feature in opulent mosaics in the rich cities of Asia Minor in the 5th and

⁴⁹⁶ For example, WAGNER *et al.* 2009, p.1073. A Carbon 14 date for the tomb has been give as *ca.*100 BCE, JONES 2009, p.25.

⁴⁹⁷ FRANCFORT 2011, pp.323-324.

⁴⁹⁸ FRANCFORT 2011, p.297; TREVER 1932, p.13.

⁴⁹⁹ SARIANIDI 1985, pls.89-97, pp.152-154; LAING 1995, fig.11, p.10.

⁵⁰⁰ YATSENKO 2012, p.39.

⁵⁰¹ YATSENKO 2012, fig.4-18, p.41, p.45.

⁵⁰² Church of the Priest Felix, KHADER 2003, cat.380; a church at Teboulba, cat.381.

⁵⁰³ RIZZARDI 2012, pl.135, p.143.

6th centuries, such as the famous acanthus mask in the Great Palace, Istanbul,⁵⁰⁴ and alongside geometric motifs on floor mosaics at Antioch.⁵⁰⁵

Roses also appear in the Iranian sphere, as exemplified by a row of six flowers on a Sogdian ossuary⁵⁰⁶ and as single pink rose petals among the hunt scene and above the laid-out body on the painted vase from Gyaaur Kala, known as the ‘Merv’ vase.⁵⁰⁷ Therefore roses seemingly preserve their funerary connotations in Zoroastrian art. Elaborate four-sepalled roses also feature in Sasanian secular art, on the so-called ‘Cup of Khosroes’,⁵⁰⁸ and as part of complex ornamental florals decorating costumes at Tāq-e Bostān near Kermanshah,⁵⁰⁹ as well as extant silk textiles,⁵¹⁰ and on silverware.⁵¹¹ In the early Islamic period roses occur in paintings at the Umayyad palace at Qasr al-Hayr al-Gharbi,⁵¹² and repeatedly on the so-called Marwān *Tiraz*,⁵¹³ reflective of Sasanian influences. Single-petalled, profile roses also appear in Central Asian art, especially textiles.⁵¹⁴ All these examples testify to the longevity of the rose motif but they feature far outside our time-frame.

1.2.3 Overview and discussion

1.2.3.1 Roses at Tillya-tepe

Roses occur in at least four or five circumstances at Tillya-tepe and are almost entirely found in the warrior’s burial. The most prominent roses are the 454 appliquéés decorating the warrior’s jacket, and the roses which alternate with swastikas on his parade knife case, a prestigious possession which was likely to have been of specific personal importance to its owner. This will be discussed in further detail in 1.4 THE

⁵⁰⁴ Buyuk Saray Mosaic Museum, CIMOK 2005, pl.42.

⁵⁰⁵ LAVAGNE 2000. LEVI 1947, CXXVII and p.313.

⁵⁰⁶ PAVCHINSKAIA 1994, Fig 4/3b2 XIII, p.214.

⁵⁰⁷ COMPARETI 2011.

⁵⁰⁸ GHIRSHMAN 1962, pl.244, p.205.

⁵⁰⁹ For example, in a decorative arrangement with ‘*Senmurvs*’, <http://sirismm.si.edu/sackler/herzfeld/d-0315.jpg> (accessed February 2016).

⁵¹⁰ Fragments of two different designs, at St. John Lateran, Rome, GHIRSHMAN 1962, pl.280, p.230 and the Cleveland Museum of art, <http://www.clevelandart.org/art/1951.88> (accessed February 2016).

⁵¹¹ BRUSSELS 1993, pp.250-251; GUNTER and JETT 1992, cat.17, p.128; cat. 28, p.174; TREVER and LUKONIN 1987, cat.28.

⁵¹² SCHLUMBERGER 1986, pl.34.

⁵¹³ MORAITOU *et al.* 2012.

⁵¹⁴ Including Bactrian costumes: Ghulbiyan, (north Bactria, ca.3rd- 4th century CE), LEE AND GRENET, p.78; an unprovenanced ‘Kushan’ worshipper (ca.3rd century CE), <http://metmuseum.org/collection/the-collection-online/search/327831> (accessed July 2015); and Balalyk Tepe (north Bactria, ca.5th century CE), TALBOT RICE 1965, fig.96, p.112; and the backdrop to a female at Toprak Kala (Chorasmia, ca.6th century), <http://www.qaraqalpaq.com/kiymeshek04.html> (accessed July 2015).

TILLYA-TEPE WARRIOR'S BI-LOBED KNIFE CASE, particularly in relation to images of roses which appear in conjunction with soldiers. Potentially there is also a rose on the top of his quiver. The hairpins are the only example of this flower in a female burial.

1.2.3.2 Identification

The process required to identify these flowers as roses was complicated since the images have been transformed from their botanical origins into an artificial convention. The composition of four petals interleaved with clearly defined sepals deviates from the actual formation of a rose which is five-petalled. The main clues for the identification were provided by morphologically similar flowers on Roman mosaics, in large part because mosaics illustrate the distinctive roseate colouring. The motivation behind the development of this four-fold convention was possibly calculated to enable roses to be configured into grid and trellis patterns.

Four-axis, sepalled roses with *rounded* petals existed earlier in the Hellenistic era. Thereafter, the Kosika pieces are important examples as they have four cordiform petals with the typical shaded rose colouring. The widespread use of cordiform rather than simple rounded petals was largely disseminated via the Roman Empire. A variation of this rose, with triple-spurred sepals, was present at Palmyra and Dura-Europos, and to a limited degree at Kerch. The success of this rose convention is proven by its longevity in art, where it continued into Sasanian, Coptic, Byzantine, and even early Islamic art.

1.2.3.3 Range and Media

The distinctive combination of this rose's shape and colour enables us to identify a whole corpus of roses across a diverse spectrum of artistic media. Roses were a popular motif on mosaics, some limited examples of jewellery, and above all textiles. The 1st century CE evidence is limited to imported pieces at Noin Ula where they typically featured in a diaper pattern, interestingly appearing alongside bow quatrefoils similar to Tillya-tepe appliqués; and at Shanpula, reflecting the poor survival rates of textiles generally. Roses are more prolific among those cultures where greater quantities survive: they are present among the 3rd century fragments found at Dura-Europos, and are seen on extant Coptic pieces from Egypt, on Byzantine textiles depicted at Ravenna, as well as Sasanian fragments and images of roses on costumes at Tāq-e Bostān.

Full-blown roses also appeared on funerary reliefs including one depicting a soldier from Kerch, while profile versions of roses, not found at Tillya-tepe, were a frequent motif on wall-paintings in tombs at Kerch, and later at Durostorum (modern Silistra). From the Kuban area east of the Kerch peninsular came a small group of glass mosaic roses inlaid into gold jewellery from graves at Artyukhov and Kosika. Silver bowls or phalerae with roses on their underside were found at Tvardica in Bulgaria. The ‘Durene’ roses in wall-paintings at Dura-Europos and Palmyra represent a variation on the rose theme.

1.2.3.4 Transmission

The very fact that this convention for a rose was distinctive and artificial means that its presence in different cultures is a clear indication of transmission. The roses at Tillya-tepe imitated a form which was found across the Roman empire, and beyond its borders in the Pontic-Caspian area. An immature prototype for this version of the sepalled rose, with slightly curled petals featured on chariot fittings at Vasjurina Gora (3rd – 1st cent BCE), although the earliest morphologically identical roses appeared on jewellery from nearby Artyukhov (1st century BCE – 1st century CE) and Kosika, loosely dated to 1st century BCE – 1st century CE, but probably 1st century CE, although the dating for both Artyukhov and Kosika is disputed. The general popularity of roses in the north Pontic area is apparent from the quantities in the Kerch tombs, although usually these were usually shown in profile.

The presence of roses around the centaur at Shanpula and the roses on the Noin Ula textile provides a hint that this motif was also present more locally to Tillya-tepe on Bactrian textiles. But any firm statements about transmission are inhibited by the generally poor survival of such material, difficulties over dating, and because we cannot be sure of the true origins of these textiles.

So on the basis of the current status of evidence, the question arises as to whether the Roman Empire or the north Pontic area was the likely source of the Tillya-tepe rose. It is perhaps surprising that so few objects found at Tillya-tepe have unequivocal Roman origins: a gold Roman coin from the reign of Emperor Tiberius found in grave III,⁵¹⁵ a 1st century cameo and a gem,⁵¹⁶ and some of the small vessels.⁵¹⁷ These objects are all

⁵¹⁵ SARIANIDI 1985, cat.3.47, p.241 and Ill.130, p.187.

⁵¹⁶ BOARDMAN 1994, P.145 and fn.233, p.335. SARIANIDI 1985, pls. 68, 69; 4.10, p248 and pl.71; 4.27, p.250.

small-scale, valuable and readily traded across frontiers, presumably reflecting the elite taste of the period. Therefore, in view of the relative paucity of Roman goods in the Tillya-tepe burials and the distance from Rome itself, it is possible that the north Pontic area was either the direct immediate source of the rose convention, or represented a stepping-stone between the Roman Empire and Tillya-tepe. It is difficult to differentiate between the two options. Kosika is particularly interesting since the motifs on the medallions are typologically closest to the Tillya-tepe roses and the two sites shared other specific commonalities. Kosika itself had few Roman imports,⁵¹⁸ but significant quantities of Roman goods found their way into graves in the north Pontic area, and therefore this region was a possible theatre of contact and communication between Rome and Central Asia.

Aleksandr Simonenko and his co-authors provided evidence of interaction between the Roman Empire and the north Pontic region, identifying four different waves of Roman imports into the area, which they defined as Sarmatian. If the later dating of the Kosika burials is accepted, then it corresponds to the 'Roman-Bosporan' phase which they date from the second half of the 1st century to the mid-2nd century CE, when the majority of Roman imports are recorded.⁵¹⁹ In addition, they also discussed Roman objects in the neighbouring Kuban region, with the post-35 CE phase being correlated with military activity by the Alans in Transcaucasia in 72 CE and 114 CE.⁵²⁰

Finally, the Roman army presence is possibly attested in the Pontic region during this period in the form of military paraphernalia and archaeological monuments.⁵²¹ More generally, Mairs has noted that soldiers were a particularly mobile group of people and therefore were potential disseminators of artistic styles and motifs.⁵²² In view of the iconography of the rose in relation to military subject-matter (discussed further in 1.4 THE TILLYA-TEPE WARRIOR'S BI-LOBED KNIFE CASE) this is an alternative

⁵¹⁷ BOARDMAN 2007, p.13.

⁵¹⁸ A bronze ladle of the Pescate type, and a fragmentary basin manufactured in Italy, were found at Kosika, TREISTER 2005, p.230, fig.11, p.235.

⁵¹⁹ SIMONENKO *et al.* 2008, p.47. See also TREISTER 1995, pp.178-80 on historical analysis of 1st century CE Roman finds in Kerch.

⁵²⁰ SIMONENKO *et al.* 2008, p.326.

⁵²¹ See TREISTER 2000-2001; TREISTER 1995. Two inscriptions were found further east but their veracity is disputed. The first is at Beyuk-Dash (modern Azerbaijan) near the Caspian Sea, referring to the XII legion, dated 89-96 CE, during Emperor Domitian's reign.⁵²¹ And at Kara-Kamar in northern Bactria (borders of Uzbekistan and Turkmenistan), around 120 km north of Tillya-tepe, two Latin inscriptions were uncovered in a cave complex, the easternmost occurrence of a Latin army inscription (USTINOVA 2000, p.169).

⁵²² MAIRS 2014b, p.186.

mode of transfer to the textile proposal mooted above; or it may be seen as an additional means of transmission.

Fully-bloomed ‘Durene’ roses represent a slightly different convention and are only found on one set of appliqués at Tillya-tepe. Multi-spurred roses featured in the Kerch tomb wall-paintings, but mostly in profile. These ‘Durene’ roses appeared later on wall-paintings in the 2nd and 3rd centuries in a Palmyrene tomb, and at Dura-Europos. Their transmission thereafter to later Christian art is shown, for example, by this version of the rose among peacocks at Chersonesos.⁵²³

1.2.3.5 Gender

As observed, the Tillya-tepe roses mostly featured on objects belonging to the warrior. A survey of the comparanda indicates that many of the roses were depicted in conjunction with images of soldiers or male activities: a number of the post-mortem scenes in the Kerch wall-paintings; the Kerch funerary grave-stone belonging to Staphilos; the Gemini panel with the Dioscuri, and the statuette of a figure in Roman armour; the scene of Julius Terentius burning incense to deities, and the banqueting paintings at Dura-Europos; perhaps even the Shanpula warrior. These examples all offer hints that in certain circumstances roses were associated with warriors and therefore embodied some sort of military connotation. Although a connection between men and flowers in art is not unique, it is unusual. These potential connections are analysed further in 1.4 THE TILLYA-TEPE WARRIOR’S BI-LOBED KNIFE CASE.

1.2.3.6 Context and Iconography

Roses featured in a wide range of contexts in Roman art and doubtless many examples were entirely ornamental. In the wall-paintings at Pompeii, roses like all the other species shown are essentially representational as ornamental garden flowers.

Roses appear in figurative wall-paintings in both the Bosporan and Parthian worlds, but the moods of the scenes are very different. The roses at Kerch usually appear alongside real and mythological characters, and even those scenes of human activities such as feasting and hunting partake of a lyrical and paradisiacal mood. This is appropriate for what is, it has been argued, a depiction of Elysium. There is evidence for a later use of such roses in a military tomb at Durostorum in Thrace. The oversized ‘Durene’ roses

⁵²³ In the tomb wall-paintings of N.I. Tur at Chersonesos, p.598, ROSTOVTZEFF 2004.

appear in several contexts at Dura-Europos, including ritual themes, most notably the Terentius votive scene which will be analysed in more detail in 1.4 THE TILLYA-TEPE WARRIOR'S BI-LOBED KNIFE CASE. The banqueting scenes may represent a post-mortem activity, which also brings them into the same sepulchral environment as the roses framing the Palmyrene busts. Indeed many roses under discussion here feature in funerary contexts, which raises the possibility that the flower itself had some sort of chthonic status. This will be explored further in the next chapter, 1.3 A SHORT CULTURAL HISTORY OF ROSES.

Images of roses were evidently considered to be appropriate for sacred environments, such as the Dura-Europos Synagogue. The Jewish context is difficult to decode, especially in view of the general absence of flowers in Jewish culture,⁵²⁴ but there are dozens of 'Durene' roses on the Synagogue roof and such images were doubtless carefully chosen in an important religious building. As noted, this style of 'Durene' roses also appeared with peacocks in a Christian tomb-painting at Chersonesos, a combination which had featured earlier on the Kerch wall-paintings, demonstrating the migration of roses from pagan to Christian funerary iconography where they played a prominent role. The appearance of roses on two Zoroastrian funerary items was also remarked. The detailed study of all these later roses is beyond the scope of this research. Aspects of the rose's status in funerary and ritual environments, including possible military contexts, up until the 3rd century CE will be explored further in the following chapters.

The potency and endurance of the Roman visual convention for roses, both in terms of form and colouring, is remarkable. Its continued use for many hundreds of years is a striking demonstration of the transmission of a floral motif across different societies through time. It is now necessary to review textual references to roses in order to discover what information they offer, in the hope that these sources will supplement the material evidence and deepen our understanding of the role of roses in society.

⁵²⁴ Although the roses on the aforementioned Jewish ossuary represent a notable exception to this assertion.

1.3 A short cultural history of roses

The visual material has shown that images roses were largely found in the warrior's grave. Roses were also widely present in the art of the Roman Empire, the north Pontic area and the Levant, often in funerary contexts. We will now assess their wider cultural status, commencing with some brief remarks on an earlier period.

1.3.1 Introduction

There is no archaeobotanical, textual⁵²⁵ or artistic evidence indicating that roses were important in Mesopotamia. Roses were probably known in Bronze Age Greece since list of aromatics and other substances in oils on Mycenaean tablets from Pylos, include: *wo-do-we /wodowent*, which is widely translated as 'rose-scented'.⁵²⁶ Roses were grown in Egypt many centuries later as an important part the floricultural trade, and *Rosa Richardii* roses were exported to the Roman Empire.⁵²⁷

Without doubt roses were greatly valued in the Graeco-Roman world,⁵²⁸ and Theophrastus mentions them frequently in *De Odoribus*, ca. 300 BCE.⁵²⁹ Generally, Graeco-Roman literature celebrated roses both for their beauty, 'blushing roses with crimson blooms',⁵³⁰ and their scent, 'Resplendent rose! The flower of flowers, whose breath perfumes Olympus's bowers'.⁵³¹

The rose's popularity was well-documented among the Romans, who 'were extravagantly fond of roses and used them on all manner of festal occasions'.⁵³² From her review of Latin plant literature, Wilhemina Jashemski concluded that roses with violets and lilies were the most popular Roman flowers,⁵³³ and it is surely pertinent that all three were prized for their fragrance as well as their beauty.

⁵²⁵ With thanks to Dr Mark Weeden (SOAS), who relates *Murdinnu* and *Amurdinnu* to blackberries rather than roses, email communication 19th May 2016.

⁵²⁶ MELENA 1983, p.114; SARPAKI 2001, pp.228-229 and Table III.

⁵²⁷ GERMER 2001, p.543.

⁵²⁸ JASHEMSKI and MEYER 2002, p.158 provide a list of key texts.

⁵²⁹ THEOPHRASTUS, book II.

⁵³⁰ From Roman *Culex*, concerning plants growing around a tomb, CAMPBELL 2008, p.36.

⁵³¹ ANACREON, (ca.570- 485), *Anacreontea*, lines 25, pp.232-233, a widely-known poet who was still popular in the Roman era, when 'Anacreon' coins and mosaics were produced. GERBER 1997, pp.199-200.

⁵³² HAMMOND and SCULLARD 1970, p.936.

⁵³³ JASHEMSKI 1979, vol. I, p.271.

The ubiquity of roses was recognised by Pliny when he itemised the ingredients of ‘Royal’ perfume manufactured for the kings of Parthia, noting that like wine, myrtle-leaves and olive-oil, roses were ‘the common property of almost all countries.’⁵³⁴ The Iranians were indeed famously keen on plants and above all, roses, and the Middle Persian word *gul* meant both ‘rose’, and ‘flower.’⁵³⁵ In the sacred text, the *Greater Bundahišn*, not only were roses included among the list of sweetly-scented flowers, but they were also associated with divine beings (see below).

1.3.2 Medical uses of roses

Pliny discussed roses at length, listing the most-esteemed examples – the hundred-petalled rose from Campania and the brilliantly-coloured twelve-petalled rose from Milesia,⁵³⁶ while noting that the roses of Cyrene (Roman Libya) had the finest scent, ‘for which reasons the choicest ointment is to be obtained there’.⁵³⁷

This fragrance was captured in two types of extract: in rosewater, and as the volatile rose oil, *oleum rosae*, which was used in medicine, rituals and perfumes. Both Pliny and Dioscorides described the preparation of rose oil, a multi-stage activity which according to Dioscorides required a thousand rose petals to produce an astringent and cooling remedy for many ills.⁵³⁸ In the House of the Vettii wall-paintings at Pompeii, situated in the Campania region famous for its roses, there are scenes of perfumiers at work in which Erotes steep masses of roses in deep basins and squeeze out the oil with a press.⁵³⁹ As noted traces of actual roses were found at Pompeii in the garden of the House of the Chaste Lovers, pre-79 CE.⁵⁴⁰

Dioscorides recommended a fermented rose must for stomach and bowel disorders and a honey and rose solution for the throat.⁵⁴¹ Roses were also an ingredient for plasters and eye-salves.⁵⁴² Decoctions of rose petals were mixed with other substances, such as opium latex dissolved in oil to be used as an embrocation for headaches,⁵⁴³ and

⁵³⁴ PLINY, XIII: ii.18.

⁵³⁵ SHAPIRA 2005, p.177.

⁵³⁶ PLINY XXI: x.16.

⁵³⁷ PLINY XXI: x.19.

⁵³⁸ PLINY XXI: x.15, pp.170-171; DIOSCORIDES I:53 and I:130; for pomanders I:131.

⁵³⁹ JASHEMSKI 1979, pp.276-278.

⁵⁴⁰ JASHEMSKI AND MEYER 2002, p.158.

⁵⁴¹ DIOSCORIDES V: 35.

⁵⁴² PLINY XXI: x.15.

⁵⁴³ DIOSCORIDES IV: 64.

remedies of roses and other plants were mixed in wine.⁵⁴⁴ The clinical application of roses and other flowers in oil continues today in some areas of the world, as shown, for example, by current research into historical and contemporary medicinal plant oils in Iran.⁵⁴⁵

1.3.3 Roses in cult and ritual

Roses and violets were the most important flowers for chaplets, wreaths and garlands for all types of rituals and festivals,⁵⁴⁶ a reflection of the longevity of their cut blooms, which would fade gracefully. Whole flowers of *Rosa richardii* were arranged with strips of date palm leaves (*Phoenix Dactylifera*) into garlands found on the mummified body of the daughter of Egyptian High Priest *Mm-ntr*, son of Ra, at Hawara in Roman Egypt dated to *ca.* 220 BCE.⁵⁴⁷ One might speculate that these roses indicated the worship of Isis, since we know from Apuleius that when the cult of Isis was imported from Egypt into Italy, the worship entailed branches of roses and palms and crowns of lotus.⁵⁴⁸ Roses were strongly associated with the worship of Aphrodite (Venus), although in the 1st century BCE philosopher, Lucretius, describes the Nature goddess Cybele and her armed Phrygian attendants being showered with roses as they travelled through great cities.⁵⁴⁹

Importantly, roses were a favourite flower for commemorating the dead. Homer's *Iliad* alludes to an early protective role for roses when Aphrodite, mother of Aeneas and supporter of the Trojans, anointed the dead body of the Trojan hero Hector with rose-sweetened or rose-scented oil: 'and with oil she anointed him, rose-sweet, ambrosial'.⁵⁵⁰ This process was, as Homer described, intended to preserve Hector's body from defilement by dogs or further degradation by Achilles, in order that he could be delivered to his grieving father intact. This incident was recalled in the 1st century CE when Pliny refers back to Homeric era and its use of roses steeped in oil.⁵⁵¹ Moreover, rose oil would be useful to counter the reek of bodily decomposition.

⁵⁴⁴ DIOSCORIDES IV: 140.

⁵⁴⁵ HAMEDI *et al.* 2013; p.5 for roses.

⁵⁴⁶ PLINY XXI: x.14, although he acknowledges that their greatest value is their scent.

⁵⁴⁷ HAMDY 2007, p.118, pp.121-123.

⁵⁴⁸ GOODY 1993, p.64; Apuleius, *Metamorphosis* XI.

⁵⁴⁹ LUCRETIUS II: 627-628.

⁵⁵⁰ HOMER, *Iliad*, XXIII: 186-187. This translation is from REES 1991, pp.506-507; sometimes translated simply as 'oil of roses' e.g. Thomas Hobbes, 1677, re-issued 1843.

⁵⁵¹ PLINY XXI: x.15.

An association of roses with military activity and death occurred in Plutarch's *Life of Brutus*, in the account of the defeat Brutus's army at the second Battle of Philippi in 42 BCE.⁵⁵² It was based on an eye-witness account by Publius Volumnius, who described a curious occurrence among the bad portents: 'that the arm of one of the officers spontaneously gave off rose oil and that repeated attempts to wipe or rub it off proved fruitless'.⁵⁵³ As a result of the defeat, Brutus immediately committed suicide. A further example of roses in a military context is attested by Tacitus in his description of a visit by Emperor Vitellius (ruled 69 CE) to Cremona after a particularly bloody battle. The local populace raised altars and scattered bay-laurels and roses among the dead bodies in celebration of victory.⁵⁵⁴ This apparent thematic association with soldiers and death is discussed further in 1.4 THE TILLYA-TEPE WARRIOR'S BI-LOBED KNIFE CASE.

A further connection between roses and death emerges in the *Anacreontea*, a collection of sixty-two fragmentary lyric poems in the style of the poet Anacreon, variously dated to the Hellenistic, Roman or possibly even early Byzantine periods.⁵⁵⁵ Poem 55 writes of the pleasures offered by the 'soft rose' and then addresses its 'unpoetic' functions, to help the sick and protect the dead.⁵⁵⁶ Later, there is reference to the immortal quality of the rose: 'in order that the rose may resemble the blessed gods, Lyaeus⁵⁵⁷ sprinkled it with nectar and made it flourish proudly on the thorn, an immortal plant'.⁵⁵⁸

This 'immortal' quality of roses rendered them appropriate flowers for Elysium. This association was attested as early as the 5th century: Pindar's 'meadows of crimson-tinged roses' was quoted by Plutarch.⁵⁵⁹ In the *Frogs* (ca. 405 BCE), Aristophanes also speaks of Elysian roses.⁵⁶⁰ From the 1st century BCE, the elegiac poet Tibullus (ca. 55-19 BCE) describes the Elysium of the Golden Age, its fields abloom with fragrant

⁵⁵² Brutus is famously remembered as one of Julius' Caesar's assassins in 44 BCE.

⁵⁵³ CORNELL 2013, vol. II, p.823.

⁵⁵⁴ TACITUS, *Histories* II: 70.

⁵⁵⁵ GERBER 1987, p.200.

⁵⁵⁶ *ANACREONTEA*, 55: 125.

⁵⁵⁷ Lyaeus is a name for Dionysos

⁵⁵⁸ *ANACREONTEA*, lines 39-43. 'Immortal', 'αμβροτον' seemingly references the Iliad.

⁵⁵⁹ Discussed in 1.2.3 ARTEFACTS WITH ROSE IMAGERY.

⁵⁶⁰ ARISTOPHANES, *Frogs*, line 449.

roses,⁵⁶¹ and Propertius (*ca.* 50-15 BCE) describes the sweet airs caressing the roses of Elysium.⁵⁶²

This Elysian context perhaps provides the background for Virgil's *Aeneid*, in which great-hearted Aeneas honoured his father with funeral games, first pouring libations of wine, milk and bulls' blood into the earth and then scattering roses over the hero's sepulchre.⁵⁶³ Ausonius in his poem, *Epitaphs on the heroes who took part in the Trojan war*, of the 4th century CE, mentions the use of oils from spikenard, balsam and red roses to provide an 'unending Spring' for the dead hero.⁵⁶⁴

The demand for roses came even from beyond the grave: the incumbent of one Roman tomb specifically requested in an inscription that his descendants might 'offer roses to me on my birthday forever'.⁵⁶⁵

Roses were so connected with death for the Romans that from the reign of Domitian onwards (81-96 CE) an important funerary cult, the *Rosalia* was celebrated across the empire in May, when roses were in flower.⁵⁶⁶ Families would gather together wearing rose crowns at gravesides, decorating tombs with various flowers including roses.⁵⁶⁷ The *Rosalia signorum* was specifically a military supplication and this will be discussed in further detail below.

In some societies, roses typified the short-lived quality of flowers, mirroring the ephemeral nature of life itself. This is expressed in *The Wisdom of Solomon*, the Hellenistic Jewish religious text of around 1st century BCE, in which the author exhorts his audience to enjoy the pleasures of life such as wine and perfumes and: 'Let us crown ourselves with rosebuds, before they be withered'.⁵⁶⁸ And yet, when roses wither they retain some semblance of their original qualities: the faded reds and pinks of their crumpled blooms display a desiccated beauty and the peppery memory of their original fragrance is just discernible. This longevity which is so useful in floral decoration also

⁵⁶¹ TIBULLUS, *Elegies*, I: III.61-62, in a poem which mentions myrtle garlands and has close allusions to Aphrodite/Venus.

⁵⁶² PROPERTIUS, *Elegiae* IV: 7.60, one of several references to Elysian roses.

⁵⁶³ VIRGIL, *Aeneid*, V: 9.

⁵⁶⁴ AUSONIUS, VI: 31.

⁵⁶⁵ CAMPBELL 2008, p.35.

⁵⁶⁶ Although roses were available from Egypt throughout the year.

⁵⁶⁷ PERDRIZET 1900, p.300. HOEY 1937, p.22. See also KLOPPENBORG 2011, pp.324-329.

⁵⁶⁸ King James Bible, *Wisdom of Solomon* 2.8 <http://www.kingjamesbibleonline.org/Wisdom-of-Solomon-2-8/> (accessed July 2015).

means that roses serve as a melancholy *memento vivo*, while other funerary plants such as narcissi and lilies degrade gracefully into dark sludge or dust.

1.3.4 Roses in religion and mythology

The beauty of the rose led to its emblematic association with Aphrodite, the Three Graces, and Flora (Roman Chloris) the goddess of flowers who breathed spring roses from her lips.⁵⁶⁹ Flora was closely related to the Personification of Spring whose basket spilled over with roses on many a mosaic, and thus roses preserved an allegorical association with springtime. According to Lucretius, the arrival of roses in spring epitomised the natural order of created things.⁵⁷⁰ Like certain other spring blooms the presence of roses was a reminder of the ephemeral circumstances of human life since their beauty fades at death, only for the flowers to return the following year as part of the natural, cyclical order of creation.

We have discussed Aphrodite's use of rose oil to embalm Hector's body, and there was another important circumstance in which Aphrodite and roses were related directly to death, the story of the demise of Adonis. In Bion's lyrical account, *The Lament for Adonis* (ca. 100 BCE), the blood of the dying Adonis was transformed into a rose and Aphrodite's tears became an anemone.⁵⁷¹ Pausanias considered this to be the reason why Aphrodite was associated with roses.⁵⁷² This transformation into a rose evoked the connection between the red colour of roses and the colour of blood.

Another story connecting roses and metamorphosis is retold by Apuleius in *The Golden Ass*, written in the mid-2nd century CE, but based on earlier versions.⁵⁷³ The hero Lucius accidentally turns himself into an ass and, after many adventures, prays to Isis, who is equated with Venus in her incarnation as 'Queen of Heaven',⁵⁷⁴ to be restored to manhood. This is achieved when Lucius (as an ass) eats a crown of roses belonging to a priest of Isis. These roses are his salvation, his human form is restored and he himself becomes a priest in the cult of Isis. The pivotal status of the rose is considered to be the means of change and a symbol of redemption.⁵⁷⁵ Similar associations extended into

⁵⁶⁹ OVID, *Fasti* V: 195-197.

⁵⁷⁰ LUCRETIUS I: 174-179.

⁵⁷¹ BION, *Adonis* 66 in REED 2006, p.80; also citing Philostratus and Servius Auctus.

⁵⁷² PAUSANIUS, VI: 24.7.

⁵⁷³ BRADLEY 2012, p.38.

⁵⁷⁴ BRADLEY 2012, p.39.

⁵⁷⁵ BRADLEY 2012, p.39.

Christianity when the rose symbolised victory over death, resurrection, the promise of eternal life and entry into paradise.⁵⁷⁶

Roses enjoyed a special status in Ptolemaic or Roman Egypt as demonstrated by their presence in the *Eighth Book of Moses*, one of the Magical Papyri (2nd century BCE – 4th century CE)⁵⁷⁷ a series of manuscripts containing spells, hymns and rituals. Roses appear in a list of ‘magical plants’, seven flowers, mostly heavily-scented ornamental garden plants⁵⁷⁸ which were the material constituents of a complicated spell. They were listed in relation to the seven principal gods and their planets.⁵⁷⁹ It is difficult to interpret this esoteric text, but at the very least it reinforces the magical and divine aspect of roses.

In Iranian culture, roses appear twice in the scented flowers category of the Zoroastrian *Greater Bundahišn*, ‘Primal creation’, Pahlavi texts which present ‘a detailed cosmology and cosmography based on the Zoroastrian scriptures’.⁵⁸⁰ Although from the 9th century the *Bundahišn* drew upon works from earlier centuries. Among the cultivated flowers worked by man, was the ‘rose of a hundred petals’ connected with Dēn, the manifestation of divine wisdom or the Zoroastrian religion itself, who in the incarnation of the *daena* or conscience of the dead acted as psychopomp.⁵⁸¹ The wild, sweet briar rose was sacred to Rašn, the *yazata* of Justice who judged the soul of the dead.⁵⁸²

1.3.5 Overview and discussion

Roses were prized among the Greeks and Romans for their beauty, arising from their pink-red colouring and sweet fragrance. Consequently they were a favourite constituent in garlands for celebrations and cult worship, as well as an important ingredient in perfumes and medicinal compounds. They were also a popular flower in rituals around death, the epitome of which was the annual dedicated rose festival, the *Rosalia*.⁵⁸³

⁵⁷⁶ BRADLEY 2012, p.40.

⁵⁷⁷ BETZ 1986, xli.

⁵⁷⁸ Although one, *erephyllinon*, remains unidentified

⁵⁷⁹ BETZ 1986, pp.172-173 and 182; *PGM* XIII, lines 18ff.

⁵⁸⁰ MACKENZIE 1989: <http://www.iranicaonline.org/articles/bundahisn-primal-creation> (accessed June 2015).

⁵⁸¹ SHAKI 2011 (accessed July 2015).

⁵⁸² SHAPIRA 2005, p.179.

⁵⁸³ HAMMOND and SCULLARD 1970, pp.936-937; PERDRIZET 1900.

In many texts relating to roses they were described as Aphrodite's flower, and in two important stories which relate to the goddess their context was related to death. The metamorphosis of Aphrodite's lover, Adonis, into a rose; and the reference in the *Iliad* to Aphrodite using ambrosial rose oil to protect Hector's corpse. This Homeric association with roses had resonances throughout the following centuries in poetry. More broadly, roses were variously used to aid the ill and protect the dead.

The connection between roses and death underpins descriptions of the rose meadows of Elysium by Tibullus, Pindar and Propertius. The chthonic status of roses is further evident in Virgil's account of Aeneas strewing his father's grave with their flowers, and Ausonius's reference to blending roses and other plants to provide an everlasting spring for a dead hero. The rose's identity as an 'immortal' plant and its related capacity to protect the dead explains its especial function in the commemoration of death, and these associations may be connected with its Elysian status.

Perhaps these protective notions or associations with Elysium might underpin the custom of Roman soldiers under the great commander Scipio Africanus placing red roses on their shields.⁵⁸⁴ These ideas may also explain the use of roses in tomb decoration. Roses were particularly prevalent in the wall-paintings at Kerch which hint at the theme of an afterlife in paradise. As we have seen, thorny roses wind their way below the roundels in the *hypogea* at Palmyra and carved roses decorate funerary monuments at Kerch and Ephesus.

It was postulated in the previous chapter that roses may have had some special connection with warriors, particularly in relation to the Terentius votive scene with the giant rose at Dura-Europos, and the protective emblem of the rose on the breastplate of the Gemini Dioscuri. The literary sources also relate roses and warriors, commencing with the Homeric reference to Hector and thereafter in relation to the treatment of heroes after death.

These textual connections – between death, a happy afterlife and soldiers - are apparently consistent over several centuries suggesting that they were fundamentally embedded within the iconography of the rose. This possible convergence of imagery and text will be discussed further in the next section, when we evaluate the evidence and consider the possible significance of the roses on the Tillya-tepe warrior's knife case.

⁵⁸⁴ HEINZ-MOHR AND SOMMER 1988, p.140, but lacking references to the textual source.

1.4 The Tillya-tepe warrior's bi-lobed knife case

This case was designed to hold a dagger and a pair of knives, is elaborately decorated and would have had a ceremonial function. It has already been described in detail, 1.1.1 CATALOGUE OF THE FOUR-SEPALLED FLOWER AT TILLYA-TEPE, and a summary is provided here.

1.4.1 Introduction

The decoration of this knife case, the gold-sheet casing inlaid with a central band of ornament, relates it typologically to the warrior's quadrilobe scabbard.⁵⁸⁵ This band comprises a longitudinal scene of battling animals running the length of blade cover. This type of bloodthirsty animal chase reflects a style with origins in the eastern steppes, as do the rams' heads presented in frontal view on the bi-lobed knife case, which recall exemplars at Bashadar in the Altai.⁵⁸⁶ These steppe animal scenes, a subject-type which appears only on the warrior's possessions, denote a battling context which is appropriate to weaponry. The animals on the knife case are surrounded by a row of inlaid roses alternating with swastikas. A line of single hearts constitutes the outermost decoration.

We will now look more closely at the rose ornament against the backdrop of the most relevant comparanda and in the light of an understanding of the rose's wider cultural status. The swastikas are also briefly reviewed in order to posit a theory as to why they were chosen to feature alongside roses.

1.4.2 Rose imagery in military contexts

Since the Tillya-tepe roses mostly appear in the warrior's grave, it is interesting to note from both the material evidence and literary sources that sometimes roses have a particular association with soldiers. The literary contexts are largely but not exclusively funereal. Perhaps this should not be a surprise since the life of a soldier in battle was intrinsically connected with the prospect of death, potentially bringing the afterlife closer than for most other mortals. This combination is also apparent in a number of the wall-paintings in the tombs at Kerch which are heavily decorated with roses, usually massed together to denote meadows. They have the character of a paradisiacal

⁵⁸⁵ SARIANIDI 1985, cat.4.8, pp.247-248, pls.157-161.

⁵⁸⁶ See FRANCFORT 2011, pp.298-302; SARIANIDI 1985, pp.39-40.

landscape, largely peopled with huntsmen and soldiers, **Fig. 1 – 10a**, mostly notably in the ‘1872 crypt’ which also includes two battle-scenes against a backdrop of roses. A full-blossomed rose also features on the apex of the soldier Staphilos’s grave stela at Kerch, **Figs. 1 – 11a and b**, and cultivated, multi-petalled rose too appear on such stelae.

The military context is also apparent in non-sepulchral contexts in relation to the single rose in a protective position over the heart on the Roman-style armour worn by the Nabataean Dioscuri and a Roman-period bronze statuette, **Figs. 1 – 13b and c**; perhaps also in the scene of the Shanpula warrior.

Roses appear at Dura-Europos in two types of figurative subjects.⁵⁸⁷ They float between seated males in banqueting scenes, possibly representing post-mortem activities,⁵⁸⁸ **Fig. 1 – 16a**. In one of the compositions, the men are named. As noted, Ann Perkins considered that a funerary subject was an odd choice for a private house, but if the roses in these scenes can be interpreted as an indication of a happy afterlife, an equivalent to Elysium, then these could be contemplated contentedly by later generations.

The painting in the Temple of the Palmyrene gods at Dura-Europos is an enigmatic subject deserving closer analysis. A single giant rose appears in the scene of Terentius, Commander of the 20th Palmyrene cohort, **Fig. 1 – 15a**. Terentius stands at an altar with his soldiers behind him, burning incense. A standard bearer holds the *vexillum*, the regimental banner of the 20th Palmyrene cohort,⁵⁸⁹ always an important emblematic possession for any military unit. This *vexillum* is also used as a pictorial device, dividing the picture between military figures on the right and some deities on the left-hand side. The recipients include three males attired in military uniform, standing on plinths, who are variously identified as Palmyrene deities or Roman emperors.⁵⁹⁰ Below them are seated the tutelary deity of Palmyra, reflecting the origin of the cohort, and the Dura-Europos goddess, a reference to their current location.⁵⁹¹

The focus of the composition is doubtless the ritual activity performed by Terentius. The large floating rose is significantly positioned between the two city goddesses who both face inwards towards it, therefore engaging with the rose at a psychological level.

⁵⁸⁷ They also appear in the Dura-Europos synagogue but it has not been possible to explain the context.

⁵⁸⁸ PERKINS 1973, pp.65-67.

⁵⁸⁹ JAMES 2014, p.93.

⁵⁹⁰ HEYN 2011, p.222; fn.15, p.230.

⁵⁹¹ Both identified in inscriptions.

Because of the rose's prominent presence, it is proposed here that this painting depicts a military ceremony called the *Rosalia signorum*, 'the rose festival of the standard'. The *Rosalia signorum* is attested at Dura Europos since it was listed twice in the *Feriale Duranum*, a papyrus calendar of cultic festivals and observances for Roman military units.⁵⁹²

The *Feriale Duranum* dates to 223-225 CE, only a decade before the Terentius scene discussed here. It was found among a repository of documents relating to the 20th Palmyrene cohort in the Temple of Azzanathkona at Dura-Europos.⁵⁹³ Terentius is the Tribune for this very cohort. The calendar lists two days in May when the *Rosalia signorum* rituals would be performed, and they took the form of a *supplicatio* – a prayer to the gods for their intercession. During the *Rosalia signorum* ceremony, it is thought that the *vexillum* itself received a cult, rather than the entire *signa*, since the *vexillum* constituted the entirety of the standard for a detachment of troops,⁵⁹⁴ and this seems to be the case in the Terentius painting. In this scene the strategic positioning of *vexillum* of the 20th Palmyrene Cohort separating Terentius and his soldiers from the divinities who were the recipients of the *supplication* is then more than a pictorial device. Since the *vexillum* was part of, or represented the entire *signum* (apropos the *signorum of Rosalia signorum*), this scene, with its large rose and literally embodies the name *Rosalia signorum*.

Ian Richmond has suggested that the *Rosalia signorum* entailed the decoration of military standards with garlands of roses, based on the discovery of fragments from the Roman garrison at Corbridge, near Hadrian's wall in northern England.⁵⁹⁵ These consisted of a displaced rose-crowned pilaster and a relief of what is described as a 'tasselled flag inscribed *vexillus leg(ionis) II Aug(ustae)*'.⁵⁹⁶ This sculpture may indeed allude to the *Rosalia signorum* or may just represent another example of roses in a military context. The Dura-Europos painting is different in actively representing the actual *Rosalia signorum* ceremony.

The precise purpose of the *Rosalia signorum* is unknown but the very fact that it was a *Rosalia* festival means that, like its civilian counterpart, it likely had an element relating

⁵⁹² HOEY 1937.

⁵⁹³ FINK *et al.* 1940, pp.115-120.

⁵⁹⁴ FINK *et al.* 1940, pp.116-117.

⁵⁹⁵ RICHMOND 1943, pp.163-184; Pl.Xb.

⁵⁹⁶ RICHMOND 1943, p.163.

to the commemoration of the dead, and this accords well with the solemn and reverential tone of the ritual in this wall-painting.

However, if the suggestion is accepted that Terentius is indeed participating in the *Rosalia signorum*, then it is possible to propose a more nuanced interpretation of the scene. The positioning of the rose between the goddesses implies that its presence was closely tied in with these tutelary figures and this is an important guide to an understanding. As an enhancement of Hoey's suggestion that the *Rosalia signorum* commemorated dead soldiers, we might postulate a more active role on the part of the deities, that this *supplicatio* expressed an entreaty for a blessed afterlife for heroic comrades past and present from this cohort - based on the Elysian connotation of roses - under the auspices of the two local tutelary goddesses, Dura and Palmyra.

This theory accords with the apparent association of roses with Elysian landscapes seen in the tombs at Kerch. Both Parthians and these Bosporans shared various themes in their funerary art, such as images of horsemen, banqueting, and hunting scenes, often including Graeco-Roman imagery such as Erotes and Nike figures. Since the *Rosalia signorum* with Terentius in attendance has a strong Roman imprint, with Dura-Europos under Roman rule and the depiction of the soldiers in Roman military kit, then this interpretation conforms to the status of the rose in Roman society.

Having garnered a certain amount of evidence in favour of an association between roses and soldiers,⁵⁹⁷ it may be useful to enquire whether images deploying a slightly different convention for roses also demonstrated a military association. This alternative convention consists of four-petalled flowers without sepals, as seen on the finely-coloured specimens decorating a Dura-Europos woollen textile, **Fig. 1 – 16c**. These variants were not considered in any detail in the study of the comparanda since they are typologically different from the Tillya-tepe roses.

However, once this variation is factored in, it is possible to identify several such non-sepalled roses in military contexts. There is a small but significant early example on a sardonyx gem (*ca.* 278-269 BCE), **Fig. 1 – 20a**, where a simple rose is just visible at temple level above a thunderbolt decorating the cheek-piece and in conjunction with the

⁵⁹⁷ There are also highly stylised, sepalled roses on a 1st century Roman army belt from Vindonissa, Switzerland, but these are outside the geographical scope of this research, JAMES 2014, fig.6.3b, p.94.

head of Zeus Ammon (perhaps a reference to Alexander the Great), on a helmet worn by Ptolemy II Philadelphos, portrayed as a general with his sister-spouse, Arsinoe II.⁵⁹⁸

A rose is positioned between arrow-shaped slits on the metopes in the 2nd century BCE Square Hall at Old Nisa (modern Turkmenistan), **Fig. 1 – 20b**. It features alongside a bow and quiver, Herakles's club, the Seleucid dynastic anchor, a lion protome, a solar disc and lunar crescent, in a room which housed two monumental statues of warriors whose style demonstrated Hellenistic influences.⁵⁹⁹ The sources are thus varied, and the rose like Herakles's club demonstrates the appropriation of Graeco-Roman iconography to express the Arsacid's own messages around regal and martial themes.

More roses appear at the Nemrud Dağı Hierothesion, the 1st century BCE burial site for a Hellenised Armenian dynasty. Nemrud Dağı was part of the independent kingdom of Commagene in south-eastern Anatolia which was previously ruled by the Achaemenids and then the Seleucids. Its king was Antiochos I Theos (reigned 70-38 BCE) who enjoyed dual royal descent: Parthian from his father's side, the dynastic line of Mithradates; and Greek from his mother's side. This heritage was reflected in the hybrid dynastic cult which the king celebrated in reliefs placed in cities throughout his kingdom and above all at Nemrud Dağı. Commagene flourished through trade and acted as a buffer between Imperial Rome and the Parthians.

Richly detailed reliefs depicted scenes of *dexiosis*, the king shaking hands with various deities who were conflation of Greek and Persian gods: Zeus-Oromasdes (Ahura Mazdā), Apollo-Mithras-Helios-Hermes and Artagnes-Herakles-Ares. According to the accompanying inscriptions, these signify Antiochos's acknowledgment of the gods' assistance in his rule.⁶⁰⁰ As an expression of this syncretic religion, these deities are dressed in a mixture of Greek and Persian costumes, an example of the iconographic mingling of different cultures. Loosely-carved roses consisting of four heart-shaped petals decorate the chape and transverse lobes of a quadrilobe dagger scabbard worn by Antiochos I in two *dexiosis* reliefs,⁶⁰¹ **Fig. 1 – 20c**. Another weapon with roses is attached to Aroandas's (Orontes) thigh on another relief.⁶⁰² These scabbards are relevant

⁵⁹⁸ PICÓN AND HEMINGWAY 2016, cat.129, pp.208-209.

⁵⁹⁹ INVERNIZZI 2011, pp.658-660.

⁶⁰⁰ Epigraphic analysis, SANDERS 1996, pp.361-377.

⁶⁰¹ SANDERS 1996, vol.I, p.413, although not visible in plates. See also Case Study III for remarks regarding narcissi decorating Antiochos's headdress.

⁶⁰² SANDERS 1996, vol. II, fig.347, p.190. Note also that Darius holds a phiale decorated with the same flower, presumably a rose, SANDERS 1996, vol.I, p.413; vol.II, figs. 334, 336, pp.185-186. Similar 'roses' appear on two phialae from Sirkap-Taxila, MARSHALL 1975, vol.III, pl.140: u, x.

since they are typologically close to the quadrilobe scabbard owned by the Tillya-tepe warrior. There are similarly located lion-head protomes on a quadrilobe sword in Antiochus's *dexiosis* with Herakles, mirroring Herakles's lion pelt, at Arsameia-on-the-Nymphaios,⁶⁰³ suggesting that motifs in this position had a symbolic content. On the Tillya-tepe scabbard, coiled beasts occupy this position.⁶⁰⁴

Small but well-sculpted roses alternate with five-point stars on the lappets of a military skirt worn by the emperor Nero (reigned 54-68 CE). They appear below a breastplate decorated with confronted griffins on this monumental headless statue, **Fig. 1 – 20d**.

The fifth example of this simple type of roses appears on the 'Phrygian' headdress worn by a woman, found at Shirokaya Balka in the Taman Peninsular, **Fig. 1 – 20e**. The roses are executed in red copper inlays and they alternate with eight-pointed silver stars. The woman's Roman hairstyle dates her to the 1st century CE and she is variously described as Bosporan Queen Dynamis (early 1st century CE) or Queen Hypepyria (reigned 37-38 CE).⁶⁰⁵ The roses seem to be emblematic and if this headgear is a helmet as it appears to be, then we may have another example of a martial context. Bearing in mind the association of roses with Aphrodite, I note that Iulia Ustinova discusses the role of Aphrodite *Ourania* in relation to warriors in Bosporan art, attributing her presence as a 'grantor of victory',⁶⁰⁶ and it is possible that the roses here are an allusion to this goddess. The significance of Aphrodite *Ourania*, the most important goddess in the Bosporan kingdom, is discussed further in 3.4.6 'MISTRESS OF THE ANIMALS'.

It is difficult to imagine that the presence of roses was random decoration on such important objects, and therefore they may be judged to contribute to a body of evidence linking roses with warriors. Since the Tillya-tepe roses alternated with swastikas, we will explore the status of this motif in the art of the period.

⁶⁰³ SANDERS 1996, vol.II, fig. 655, p.328. See remarks in 3.2.2 ARTEFACTS WITH NARCISSUS IMAGERY regarding the use of plant iconography and mirroring of emblems at these sites.

⁶⁰⁴ SARIANIDI 1985, cats. 4.6 and 4.7, p.247; reunited with the quadrilobe scabbard in the exhibition: *Afghanistan: Crossroads of the ancient world* at the British Museum, London, 3rd March to 17th July 2011.

⁶⁰⁵ TROFIMOVA 2007, cat.85, pp.185-187.

⁶⁰⁶ USTINOVA 1999, pp.143-146.

1.4.3 Swastikas⁶⁰⁷

The swastika is a contentious motif which has been the subject of much speculation, and any analysis is further complicated by the apparent presence of swastikas within meander patterns. They were an ancient Indo-Iranian motif with a deep history in Central Asia reaching back to the Bronze Age.⁶⁰⁸ They occurred throughout subsequent millennia in many cultures including in Indian Buddhist art. At Sirkap-Taxila around the 1st century CE swastikas decorate several items, including a stone palette and a stone slab alongside Buddhist *triratna* devices.⁶⁰⁹ However, there was very little imagery at Tillya-tepe which obviously derived from an Indian source,⁶¹⁰ other than: the imported ivory comb from grave III⁶¹¹ and the warrior's gold medallion featuring the 'Wheel of Dharma';⁶¹² and perhaps the 'Bactrian Aphrodite' from Grave VI, Graeco-Roman in style but with a dot on her forehead.⁶¹³ So it cannot be assumed that India was the source of the swastika image.

Swastikas were also known in Bronze Age Greek art and featured regularly on painted vessels from the protogeometric period onwards.⁶¹⁴ By the 7th and 6th centuries BCE, swastikas were one of a small corpus of motifs scattered in the background of vase scenes, but thereafter, freestanding swastikas were less common. They featured in a range of images where their significance is unclear. There are present in a number of war-faring contexts, including an episode from the *Iliad* depicted on a Corinthian hydria of ca. 530 BCE in which the dying Trojan ally Memnon clutches at his shield emblazoned with a swastika.⁶¹⁵ A late 5th century BCE Boeotian *lekane* features an image of Ares on horseback and armed with a lance combatting Herakles against a background peppered with large swastikas.⁶¹⁶ The three-headed monstrous warrior Geryon, who was slain by Herakles, is shown on a late 4th century south Italian vase with two large swastikas on his breastplate. A late 4th century BCE Macedonian or

⁶⁰⁷ Running key patterns made up of swastika motifs feature on Sarmatian silver vessels from Artyukhov and Kosika (TREISTER 2005, fig.5, p. 210) are barely discussed here.

⁶⁰⁸ SARIANIDI 1998; BRYANT 2001, p.212.

⁶⁰⁹ MARSHALL 1975, vol.III, pl.140, i=18 on a slab; vol.III, pl.146-92 in reverse on a stone palette dividing it into four compartments; see also: vol.III, pl.185, k=395 a compound swastika; vol.III, pl. 191, v=85, vol. II, p.631 four square gold appliques with hearts in the outer arms and diamond at the centre; and other minor items.

⁶¹⁰ Professor Christian Luczanits of SOAS remarked on how little Tillya-tepe objects have to do with South Asian imagery, email correspondence 31 July 2015.

⁶¹¹ SARIANIDI 1985, cat.3.56, p.243.

⁶¹² SARIANIDI 1985, cat.4.9, p.250.

⁶¹³ SARIANIDI 1985, cat.6.3, p.254.

⁶¹⁴ COLDSTREAM 1977, fig.8f, p.38.

⁶¹⁵ LIMC, vol.III-1, pp.61-62, vol.III-2 pl.49, p.57.

⁶¹⁶ LIMC, vol.II-1 p.482, vol. II-2, pl.44, p.363.

Phrygian-style helmet found at Herculaneum was decorated with swastikas alongside a four rounded-petal flower, and it is possible that this latter represents a rose depicted with a very simple convention.⁶¹⁷ Two swastikas feature on the breastplate, in a similar position to the rose on the Dioscuri Gemini at Khirbet edh-Dharih, part of a panoply of arms on a balustrade relief at Pergamon, *ca.* 180 BCE,⁶¹⁸ **Fig. 1 – 21**. In these circumstances the swastika may have functioned, like the rose, as a protective emblem.

Swastikas were more common in Roman contexts, particularly on mosaics, but in most cases it is difficult to relate them to any specific themes and therefore their presence was probably ornamental. There is specific evidence for swastikas in Roman military imagery at Dura-Europos in the Terentius scene discussed above in terms of the *Rosalia signorum* - a large swastika is discernible above the hem of the tunic worn by the third figure standing behind Terentius.⁶¹⁹ **Fig. 1 – 15c**. Because Tillya-tepe shares the rose iconography with Dura-Europos, this is a very relevant instance of swastikas in a military context. Swastikas also feature on baldric mounts and brooches at Dura-Europos.⁶²⁰

They appear elsewhere in military contexts, such as the running swastika on the uniform worn by Antiochus IV Epiphanes, an ancestor of Antiochus I at Nemrud Dağı.⁶²¹ A small swastika decorates the shoulder of a young man, thought to be a soldier in a 2nd century CE double-portrait wall-painting from Fayum in Egypt.⁶²² A soldier on a mosaic at Villa del Casale Roman at Piazza Armerina, Sicily, sports a swastika above the hem of his tunic,⁶²³ **Fig. 1 – 15d**. Simon James proposed that the swastika's prominence in the Terentius painting indicates that such motifs represented some 'specific and significant meaning, perhaps denoting rank or office'.⁶²⁴ The Roman army was multi-ethnic and it functioned across a huge geographical area. This consistency in

⁶¹⁷ DINTSIS 1986, cat.57, p.220, pl.14-5.

⁶¹⁸ PICÓN AND HEMINGWAY 2016, cat.109, pp.188-189. The swastikas float above a stepped crenellation motif, and as noted above, roses appeared on real stepped crenellations at Surkh Kotal.

⁶¹⁹ JAMES 2010, p.60; pl.11; Fig.18, p.41.

⁶²⁰ JAMES 2010, p.60 and fig.26, p.75. Swastikas, non-sepalled four-petalled flowers (roses?) and crenellations with arrows all appear together in early 2nd century CE stucco-work at Parthian Qaleh-i Yazdigird, but the context is unknown, KEALL 1967, fig.8, p.118.

⁶²¹ SANDERS 1996, fig 515, p.256.

⁶²² *Rome the late empire* 128E

⁶²³ JAMES 2014, fig. 6.1c, p.92, deriving from the 'barbarian' style costume adopted during the 2nd century CE.

⁶²⁴ JAMES 2010, p.65.

the army's costume and the iconography of the motifs – a readily observable uniformity – reflected the need for a group identity.⁶²⁵

It is therefore proposed that the Tillya-tepe swastikas derived from Graeco-Roman art, and probably a specifically Roman source, since the Roman contexts included Dura-Europos. Because of the apparent similarity between the symbolic values of both the rose and swastika iconographies, one might further suggest that their joint, juxtaposed presence on the warrior's knife case was not an arbitrary one but reflected the active agency of the Tillya-tepe folk, especially in view of the other rose motifs on the warrior's possessions. Therefore, when considering *why* these roses and swastikas were selected, then we may postulate that it was because they embodied some specific meaning for the Tillya-tepe folk. Again, it is acknowledged that any proposals for symbolism is fraught with risk without directly relatable texts confirming the analysis. Nevertheless, there is a corpus of evidence showing that both roses and swastikas could be connected with military themes across a number of centuries. They were less common than, for example, Zeus's thunderbolts, but they were nevertheless present in sufficient numbers to be confident of their military association. And, as discussed, there is a range of textual evidence from various Graeco-Roman sources connecting roses with soldiers and the afterlife. The proposal that these motifs were a purposeful and meaningful choice - since they embodied either protective connotations or because they contained references to the afterlife - is a hypothesis which would explain their appearance together on the knife case.

The band of roses and swastikas surround an animal chase scene which is executed in the steppe nomadic style, an appropriately bloodthirsty motif for a warrior's possession; and indeed, such scenes only appear in his grave. This demonstrates the use by the Tillya-tepe folk of two different artistic languages to express compatible themes, both highly suitable for a warrior. The roses and swastikas are themselves surround by a border of hearts, so common at Tillya-tepe, and hearts were also found in a bold design on a Durene shield.⁶²⁶ However, they were such a popular motif it is difficult to affirm any specific associations on the basis of this evidence.

⁶²⁵ JAMES 2010, pp.253-254.

⁶²⁶ JAMES 2010, plate 8, p.xxviii; cat.617, pp.178-179.

1.4.4 Overview and discussion

The row of alternating rose and swastika decoration which surrounds the animal chase scenes on the warrior's knife case is an interesting juxtaposition of ornament: the roses and probably swastikas are both found in Roman art, and they are juxtaposed at Tillya-tepe with typical steppe animal imagery. The question arose as to whether this band of decoration was deliberately chosen for purposes beyond mere ornament. This possibility was reviewed in the light of evidence which indicated that images of roses featured in a range of military artistic contexts, particularly Bosporan and Parthian.

The epitome of a connection between roses and soldiers is illustrated in the Dura-Europos wall-painting of 'Terentius paying homage to the gods'. It is suggested that this scene represented the Roman military commemoration, the *Rosalia Signorum*, since the prominent presence in the painting of both a rose and the *vexillum*, a tasselled *signum*, using Richmond's term for this object,⁶²⁷ effectively embodied the name *Rosalia signorum*. This ceremony, which was listed in the *Feriale Duranum*, the Roman military festival calendar at Dura-Europos, was a supplication to the gods. At the very least the composition suggests some sort of symbolic relationship between the rose and the soldiers, in a ceremony which was perhaps to ensure the blessings of local deities in relation to death and the afterlife of soldiers from the 20th Palmyrene cohort.

Previously the comparanda were necessarily restricted to images of four-sepalled roses, as found at Tillya-tepe. In this section the typological criterion was extended to include roses without sepals to discover whether this version of rose imagery provided further evidence of the flower's emblematic status. Examples corroborating this association were as follows: the small rose on Ptolemy II Philadelphos's helmet; the Tillya-tepe type quadrilobe sword at Nemrud Dağı; the emblematic decoration in the Square Hall at Nisa; the Roman statuette of a soldier; armour worn by the emperor Nero; and the helmet of a Bosporan queen. At least three of these examples pre-date Tillya-tepe, and they all demonstrate that the symbolic content of rose imagery accompanied the flower even when this non-sepalled convention was employed. In the case of the Nisa metopes, the motifs are associated with Seleucid-Hellenistic precedents, and thus the soldierly association of roses was not exclusively a Roman iconographic construct but had its roots in an earlier period. It would be interesting to know how far back this notion could

⁶²⁷ RICHMOND 1943.

be traced, but this would involve a detailed study of possible conventions for roses from earlier periods which are outside the scope of this research.

The material evidence may be correlated with a small but significant body of literary sources supporting the notion of an association between roses and military situations, and the circumstances of soldiers after their death. In one unusual instance, in Plutarch's *Life of Brutus*, the scent of rose oil was considered to be a harbinger of Brutus's defeat in battle which then was followed by his death. The literature demonstrates the association between roses and soldiers, perhaps connected with rose's status as an 'immortal' plant with an innate ability to protect heroes and warriors, a concept rooted in the *Iliad's* description of Aphrodite's using ambrosial rose oil to preserve Hector's corpse. It is argued here that the idea was taken up more energetically under the Romans and it is notably illustrated in art from the periphery of the empire.

Therefore it is possible to assert that there was a correlation between text and image in the iconography of the rose, specifically in relation to soldiers. The military connotations of rose imagery may also be extended to the depiction of roses at Tillya-tepe – that is to say, the roses on the Tillya-tepe knife case were not arbitrary motifs but were especially selected because of these military associations. There is also the four-petalled flower on the warrior's quiver top, and although we do not know which convention it observed, sepalled or unsepalled, it may have represented a rose and therefore carried the same connotations as the knife case.

The Tillya-tepe roses alternated with swastikas, and the emblematic role of the swastika was also discussed. On the basis of the evidence, this too was associated with military contexts which would explain its presence on the Tillya-tepe knife case.

Therefore, there is sufficient evidence to suggest that the transfer of rose motifs eastwards as far as Tillya-tepe entailed a corresponding transmission of at least a thread of meaning. This notion is supported by the fact that almost all the roses were found in the warrior's grave – in particular on this bi-lobed knife case and, possibly, the quiver top.

This is not to suggest that the Tillya-tepe warrior or his craftsmen had a well-developed understanding of the Homeric and successive literature connecting roses and soldiers. It is more likely that they were familiar with the protective connotations of these roses which had acquired an amuletic status. It may be possible that they also recognised that

rose motifs denoted more complex ideas such notions of immortality or a blessed afterlife for military heroes, although this latter interpretation cannot be proven conclusively.

In this circumstance, it seems that the rose motifs on the warrior's knife case represent a credible example of the convergence of image, text and meaning. Furthermore, they demonstrate that the Tillya-tepe folk participated in the wider concept of plant iconography which fulfilled an emblematic role across societies influenced by Graeco-Roman culture.

2 CASE STUDY II: THE FLOWER WITH FIVE CORDIFORM PETALS

2.1 The five cordiform petalled flower at Tillya-tepe

Introduction

There is a second category of flowers at Tillya-tepe with cordiform petals which is typologically distinct from the four-petalled and sepalled roses discussed in Case Study I. This case study examines flowers with five heart-shaped petals which are the most abundant category of floral decoration on Tillya-tepe artefacts. They conform to the characteristic Tillya-tepe type, generally featuring as free-standing florals, with some items, such as the brooches and appliqués entirely shaped as flowers. This exploration will review these flowers at Tillya-tepe, identify them, and then consider the way in which they are employed in the visual arts in the hope that this information will throw some light on their significance at Tillya-tepe.

Morphology

Five-petalled blooms are present in two different but closely related forms. The variation in shape is due to the properties of the chosen materials and techniques, which dictate the way in which the plant is represented:

1. Flowers which consist of five meandering, overlapping petals executed in cast gold. The technique of casting allows a fluidity of line and sinuosity of surface which contributes to a fairly naturalistic bloom. This version features on heavier objects which are either unique or produced in pairs. Each brooch shown in **Figs. 2 – 1a, b and c** represents a variation on this theme.⁶²⁸ Hereafter these undulating blooms will be referred to as ‘meander-edged’.
2. A more conventionalised version of this flower with simplified, heart-shaped petals, **Figs. 2 – 2a and b**.⁶²⁹ This modification of petal shape is more appropriate for the technique of turquoise inlay. Although the workmanship is skilful and the turquoise is carefully cut to render three-dimensional shaping, it is difficult to reproduce the fluency of form and outline achieved by moulding molten gold. This type of five-petalled flower is also replicated in ornamentation using mass production techniques such as

⁶²⁸ SARIANIDI 1985, cat.1.4, p.226; cat.2.32, p.235; cat.2.32, p.235.

⁶²⁹ SARIANIDI 1985, cat.2.20, p.233; cat.6.20, p.256.

stamped and hand-cut gold-sheet items. The hearts are always clearly delineated and on no occasion has the craftsman resorted to the simpler, rounded flower petals which are widely found in the decorative arts. The care and consistency exhibited in the execution of this motif suggest that precise shaping was considered important. This is not haphazard, arbitrary decoration.

2.1.1 Catalogue of the five-petalled flower at Tillya-tepe

Grave I

I-i. A cast gold, meander-edged flower brooch, **Fig. 2 – 1a**, described as ‘massive’ by Sarianidi.⁶³⁰ It was found beneath the woman’s jawbone close to her neck. Sarianidi wrote that it was either pinned to the front of her robe with loops on the reverse providing the means of attachment, or was fastened to a pectoral chain.⁶³¹ The brooch is inlaid with turquoise commas, a characteristic steppe nomadic ornament, and a central ring of turquoise enclosing a pearl, one of many pearls found at Tillya-tepe. The tiny tip of a sepal is present at the junction of each petal, the only instance of this botanical structure on these five-petalled flowers.⁶³² Faint signs of wear indicate that it was used during the lifetime of the woman and was not manufactured solely for her burial.

I-ii. Seven cast gold round appliqués, comprising turquoise cloisonné petals surrounding a round centre fitted with a garnet-like material.⁶³³ Each appliqué has four hollow tubes on the reverse to enable attachment.

I-iii. Twelve round appliqués, mould-stamped to create five-petalled flowers with a round centre.⁶³⁴

I-iv. Seven stamped gold appliqués with their centres ringed by minute granulation; and fixed to an undecorated disc.⁶³⁵

Items I-ii, iii and iv, may have been sleeve embellishments on the woman’s dress.

⁶³⁰ SARIANIDI 1985, p.20.

⁶³¹ SARIANIDI 1985, p.21.

⁶³² This latter addition casts some doubt means that this flower represents the same species as the other five-petalled flower to be discussed, but it is included here because this brooch is typologically close to the other two brooches.

⁶³³ SARIANIDI 1985, cat.1.12, p.227.

⁶³⁴ SARIANIDI 1985, cat.1.24, p.229.

⁶³⁵ SARIANIDI 1985, cat.1.25, p.229.

Grave II

II-i. A cast gold, meander-edged floral brooch, **Fig. 2 – 1b**, described as ‘massive’ by Sarianidi.⁶³⁶ Its depth is a substantial 0.5cm. Like the brooch in grave I it was found near the jawbone, below the nape of the neck. It has a loop on the back for attachment. Heavy signs of wear confirm its use before burial.

II-ii. An ensemble comprising a central band of ‘pearl’ roundels enclosing five-petalled flowers inlaid with turquoise and addorsed crescent dividers.⁶³⁷ Undecorated discs are attached by hearts to the crescents. Sarianidi reconstructs these as a pair of shoulder ornaments. **Fig. 2 – 2a** shows a short section.

II-iii. Two roundels hand-cut from gold sheet and pierced with five radiating petals.⁶³⁸ These were found alongside four six-rayed roundels (see Case Study III) decorating a braided basket which lay at the woman’s feet and contained an iron pickaxe and two ‘Siberian-style’ daggers or knives.⁶³⁹

Grave III

This grave had been disturbed, possibly by rodents, and many items were displaced.

III-i. A pair of elaborate and substantial gold repoussé ornaments,⁶⁴⁰ one found to the left of the woman’s skull, the other displaced within the grave, **Fig. 2 – 3a**. Sarianidi believed that they were attached to the woman’s temples. The decoration is a composite-flower, a six-axis design comprising superimposed layers of radiating leaves, with a central meander-edged, five-petalled flower which was perhaps once inlaid. Tiny loops at the tips of the outer leaves preserve traces of twisted wires from which discs were probably once suspended. A silver shaft was fitted to the reverse of each pendant.

III-ii. A pair of large, heavy five-petalled flowers hand-cut from sheet gold,⁶⁴¹ **Fig. 2 – 3b**. Each petal has an impressed pair of bosses, and the round centre of the flower is emphasised by a ring of granulation. Two discs are suspended from each flower by wires. The two tubes were soldered to the reverse of each flower, an unusual means of

⁶³⁶ SARIANIDI 1985, cat. 2.32, p.235; p.23.

⁶³⁷ SARIANIDI 1985, cat.2.20, p.233 .

⁶³⁸ SARIANIDI 1985, cat.2.12, p.235.

⁶³⁹ SARIANIDI 1985, p.23.

⁶⁴⁰ SARIANIDI 1985, cat.3.51, p.242; p.28

⁶⁴¹ SARIANIDI 1985, cat.3.33, p.240.

attachment. See below for discussion regarding the possibility that these flowers decorated the incumbent woman's crown.

III-iii. Twenty flowers, handcut from thin sheet gold, each petal with a pair of grains soldered to the tip. Each flower has a raised circular centre framed with minute granulation. A plain disc hangs from each flower.⁶⁴² They are virtually identical to the flowers, III-ii, above, only smaller.

Grave VI

VI-i. A substantial cast gold, meander-edged flower brooch, similar to those at the throats of the women in graves I and II,⁶⁴³ **Fig. 2 – 1c**. It has a central turquoise roundel, from which radiate five narrow leaves, each with a serrated margin and veining.

VI-ii. A necklace consisting of ten eight-sided, seed-shaped beads, with a pointed terminal at either end,⁶⁴⁴ **Figs. 2 – 4a, b and c**. Each bead has eight granulated ridges, and four of the eight longitudinal compartments enclose a five-petalled flower, outlined with granulation and inlaid with turquoise. The entire necklace is a weighty 154.19 grams and it shows signs of considerable wear.

VI-iii. A bell-shaped object with strigillated decoration on its body.⁶⁴⁵ Soldered to the base is a concave roundel with an impressed five-petalled flower which has a small central hole surrounded by sixteen minute perforations. The shoulder of the bell is inlaid with heart-shaped turquoises. It is surmounted by a 'tall annular projection with a wide hole in the middle', **Fig. 2 – 11c**. As discussed below, this may be a 'censer'.

VI-iv. Two re-curved flowers, handcut from thin sheet gold,⁶⁴⁶ **Fig. 2 – 3c**. Each flower has a granulated centre. Two plain discs are suspended from each of the flowers by pearl-threaded chains.

⁶⁴² SARIANIDI 1985, cat.3.34, p.240.

⁶⁴³ SARIANIDI 1985, cat.6.27, p.257.

⁶⁴⁴ SARIANIDI 1985, cat.6.20, p.256.

⁶⁴⁵ SARIANIDI 1985, cat.6.7, p.255.

⁶⁴⁶ SARIANIDI 1985, cat.6.21, p.256.

Table IV Tillya-tepe flowers with five cordiform petals

Grave no.	Object type	Cat. no.	Qty.	Material & Technique	Signs of wear	Size	Weight
I-i	Meander-edged brooch	1.4	1	Cast gold, pearl, turquoise inlay	Faint wear	5cm diam.	19.98g
I-ii	Appliqués	1.12	7	Gold, garnet, turquoise cloisonné	Missing stones	1 cm diam.	3.112g for all 7
I-iii	Round appliqués	1.24	12	Stamped-mould gold	Heavy deformation	0.7 cm diam.	1.33g for all 12
I-iv	Pendants with disc	1.25	7	Stamped gold, granulation	Deformation	1.4 cm diam.	7.5g for all 7
II-i	Meander-edged brooch	2.32	1	Cast gold	Heavy wear	3.1 cm diam.	9.99g
II-ii	Composite appliqués	2.20	12	Sheet gold, turquoise inlay, granulation	Some wear	1.5 cm diam.	2.0g ea. roundel
II-iii	Appliqués	2.12	2	Pierced sheet gold	Faint wear	1.6 cm diam.	0.35g ea.
III-i	Composite -flower ornaments	3.51	2	Cast gold	Broken shafts	7.5cm diam.	50.69g pair
III-ii	Large rosettes with discs	3.33	2	Sheet gold	Part deformed	4.4cm diam.	12.65g pair
III-iii	Appliqués with discs	3.34	20	Sheet gold	Part deformed	1.5cm diam.	13.39g for all 20
IV	None						
V	None						
VI-i	Meander-edged brooch	6.27	1	Cast gold		3.2 cm diam.	6.4g
VI-ii	Seed and flower necklace	6.20	1	Hollow gold seeds, inlaid turquoise flowers	Heavy wear	Each bead: 2.8 cm long	14 gm each bead
VI-iii	Censer (?)	6.7	1	Cast gold, turquoise inlay		2.9 cm high	13.25g
VI-iv	Pair large pendants with discs	6.21	2	Sheet gold, granulation, pearls		3.0 cm diam.	6.8g for pair

In summary, these five-petalled flowers appeared in fourteen different contexts exclusively in four of the six Tillya-tepe graves: I, II, III and VI which were occupied by richly bejewelled females. Not only do these four burials contain many instances of five cordiform-petalled flowers, but, as discussed in 0.4 TILLYA-TEPE BURIALS, they also included a number of artefacts in common which were absent from both the warrior's burial and the simpler burial occupied by the lower status female in grave V.⁶⁴⁷

Furthermore, the greatest range of items were found in the highest rank woman in grave VI, and this will be discussed further in 1.2.3 MORE ON TILLYA-TEPE AREFACTS WITH POPPIES. The repeated presence of the five-petalled flower in these senior women's graves implies that this motif was deliberately chosen and had particular significance for these Tillya-tepe women.

This proposal is reinforced by the conspicuous manner in which these flowers featured as cast brooches in three of the graves, representing variations on the same theme. They are relatively large and were designed as 'stand-alone' jewellery. Furthermore, the pair of hand-cut flowers in grave VI were also substantial enough to stand out amidst all the decoration. No other single motif, floral or otherwise, featured so prominently within the Tillya-tepe burials.

As outlined in 0.3 METHODOLOGY, the next stage is to establish the botanical identification of this flower since its significance for the Tillya-tepe folk may be connected to its specific species.

2.1.2 Identification of the flower with five cordiform petals

Introduction

A large number of flowers in nature have five cordiform petals, therefore careful observation of the way in which this plant is depicted on several items of Tillya-tepe jewellery is required in order to provide vital clues to its identity. This exploration commences with the distinctive seed-pods on the necklace from grave VI.

⁶⁴⁷ See Table I: Differentiation of key grave-goods in the female burials at Tillya-tepe.

Seed necklace (VI-ii)

This ten-bead necklace is the key to identification, **Figs. 2 – 4a, b and c**. The beads are fairly naturalistic reproductions of seed-pods and it is proposed that this shape is adapted from the capsules of the opium poppy, *Papaver somniferum*, which hold the tiny poppy seeds familiar in kitchens both ancient and modern. These capsules are also the source of opium. The shape and size of *Papaver somniferum* capsules differentiate them from others within the genus *Papaver*, as summarised by Pliny who stated: ‘All kinds of cultivated poppies are larger than in the wild. The heads are round, while those of the wild poppy are long and small’.⁶⁴⁸

These beads are more symmetrical than real poppy capsules. In order to create the required symmetry the serrated stigma at the top of the seedhead has been removed. The capsule ridges are emphasised by granulation and these beads manifest with admirable accuracy the crumpled shrinkage of the capsule surface within the ridges, rendering the dry, papery quality of a desiccating poppy pod, **Fig. 2 – 5a**. The delicacy and precision of execution suggests that the craftsman knew the plant in nature and did not just copy it from imported media or pattern books. This artistic adaptation was part of a long tradition of man-made recreations of poppy capsules in jewellery. The progression from nature to art is shown by a silver Lydian pinhead, a gold bead from a cist burial at Sardis, and a gold pendant from Cyprus, **Figs. 2 – 5b, c and d**.

The explicit affiliation of this modified seedhead with five-petalled flowers is demonstrated by this flower’s appearance four times on each seedhead. **Figs. 2 – 4a and b**. Therefore the five-petalled flower features forty-eight times on the necklace, an emphatic association between the poppy capsule bead and the flower. The inclusion of this bloom – which we may therefore infer represents a schematised poppy flower – provided the means of introducing the characteristic turquoise inlay much favoured at Tillya-tepe.

Looking elsewhere within the Tillya-tepe corpus we find a further example of elongate, ribbed poppy seedheads in grave II, **Fig. 2 – 6a**. Ten gold, double-ended poppy capsules, described as keg-shaped beads by Sarianidi, were stitched onto the neck opening of the woman’s gown. ‘Conspicuous amidst which were a pair of identical musician figurines that had been arranged on the right and left shoulders’.⁶⁴⁹ In this case

⁶⁴⁸ PLINY XX: lxxvi.202.

⁶⁴⁹ SARIANIDI 1985, pp.22-23 and cat.2.28, p.234.

a stigma is depicted at *both* ends, another means of creating a symmetrical bead. As apparent confirmation that these flared ends are stigma, Sarianidi mentions that the ‘protruding ends are covered with minute incisions’.⁶⁵⁰ Small holes are to be found in botanical specimens of dehiscent poppy capsules, providing additional evidence for this identification. Another possible set of poppy capsules with this double-stigma configuration was found in grave I, where sixty-six perforated, smooth gold beads, described as both ‘kegs’ and ‘barrel-shaped’, were arranged in a heart design on the stomacher of the interred woman,⁶⁵¹ **Fig. 2 – 6b.**

Artists applied other modifications to fulfil the requirement for symmetry. One example is a double-ended poppy capsule dating to late Bronze Age Egypt, in which a turquoise-blue faience sphere whose rounded shape represents a plump unripe capsule, before it dries out and acquires ridges, has an elaborate, serrated poppy stigma at each end, **Fig. 2 – 6c.** A 6th century gold bead, a votive offering in the Artemision at Ephesus, manifests a similar form, **Fig. 2 – 6d.**

Finally a ripe, rounded poppy head forms the small handle of a gold cylindrical vessel in grave III at Tillya-tepe.⁶⁵² Sarianidi’s description of this knob as a pomegranate, although possible, seems less likely since he mentions an embossed ornamental design along the rim, which would be suggestive of a poppy stigma.⁶⁵³ The underside is inscribed in Greek and therefore it is probably not produced in the same workshop as most other Tillya-tepe artefacts. However, we may speculate that the Tillya-tepe folk acquired this vessel because of the presence of the poppy capsule.

To some degree these poppy capsules, especially on the Tillya-tepe necklace, represent a continuation of a long history of using replicas of nuts, seeds and fruit as naturalistic decoration in jewellery. This tradition goes back as far back as the mid-3rd millennium BCE date clusters on necklaces at Ur;⁶⁵⁴ acorn pendants from early 2nd millennium BCE Ebla;⁶⁵⁵ mid-2nd millennium BCE hardstone poppy pendants from Egypt,⁶⁵⁶ the Levant,⁶⁵⁷ and Crete;⁶⁵⁸ and many examples in Graeco-Roman jewellery.⁶⁵⁹ The origin

⁶⁵⁰ SARIANIDI 1985, cat.2.28, p.234.

⁶⁵¹ SARIANIDI 1985, p.20; cat.1.18, p.228.

⁶⁵² SARIANIDI 1985, cat.3.41, p.241.

⁶⁵³ However, pomegranates are present at Tillya-tepe: pins from grave VI black, and a pendant with three heart-shaped turquoise-colour inlays in grave II, SARIANIDI 1985, cat.6.40, p.259 and cat.2.14, p.232.

⁶⁵⁴ MILLER 2000, 2013.

⁶⁵⁵ MATTHIAE 2008, cat.15, pp.40-41.

⁶⁵⁶ Tell al-Amarna: the Petrie Museum, London: UC24532 and UC64948

⁶⁵⁷ Mari, modern Syria: CAUBET 2012, p.148 and fig.2, p.157; Tell Fara, Palestine: University College, London, UCL EVI.13/6.

of such practices presumably derived from the custom of arranging real produce into personal adornments. Many of these species would have been valued for their intrinsic beauty and the fact that they were small enough to wear as naturally-sourced beads; and of course nuts and seeds themselves would endure for many weeks or months before deterioration. Doubtless they were sometimes chosen too because the plants were connected with specific cults or had symbolic values attached to them.

Brooch (VI-i)

Another major clue towards the poppy identification is provided by the heavy cast brooch from grave VI, **Fig. 2 – 7a**, which comprises five lightly re-curved convex petals with an undulating outer edge in imitation of *Papaver somniferum* flowers, **Fig. 2 – 7b**. Real poppies have four to six petals but the species consistently appears with five petals at Tillya-tepe. The turquoise domed centre may be an allusion to the top of the seed capsule. Within each petal is cast a single prominently veined leaf with a serrated edge close in shape to its counterpart on a real poppy. This brooch captures the botanical reality of the various parts of *Papaver somniferum*, although the decorative placement of the leaves within the petals is idiosyncratic.

With the *Papaver somniferum* identification in place, the poppy capsules at Tillya-tepe are listed in Table V. To sum up, there were fourteen instances of objects with poppy flowers, and four sets of poppy capsules (the necklace appears in both lists since it has both flowers and capsules), so there are now seventeen artefacts depicting poppies, all from the same four female burials, I, II, III and VI.

⁶⁵⁸ Knossos: CRETE 2000, cat.184, pp.190-191.

⁶⁵⁹ WILLIAMS and OGDEN 1994, pp.41-42.

Table V Poppy capsules at Tillya-tepe

Grave no.	Object type	Cat. No.	Qty.	Material & Technique	Signs of wear	Size	Weight
I-v	Double-ended smooth beads	1.18	66	Gold	Faint wear	0.8cm	23g all 66
II-iv	Double-ended ribbed beads with incisions	2.28	10	Sheet gold, turquoise inlay	Faint wear	1.3cm long	0.5g each
III-iv	Vessel: lid finial	3.41	1	Cast gold	Faint wear	0.65cm approx.	Unknown
VI-ii	Necklace of gold beads - <i>also Table IV</i>	6.20	1	Sheet gold, turquoise inlay	Heavy wear	Bead: 2.8 cm long	14g per bead

Therefore it seems that both meander-edged and simple cordiform petals are representations of *Papaver somniferum*. *Papaver somniferum* is one of a number of poppy species, but it is the only one which yields opium latex.⁶⁶⁰ The flower usually has purple or white petals surrounding a green ribbed capsule with multiple stamens. The pale green leaves, which emerge from the base of the stem, are serrated with pinnate venation. The Tillya-tepe flowers are not identical to poppy plants since poppy petals are not precisely heart-shaped but have an undulating edge which, nevertheless, may be convincingly represented as a heart.

Looking beyond Tillya-tepe to test this proposal, there is further corroboration of the identification in broadly contemporary sources from other cultures which were active along the trans-Eurasian communication routes. Images of five-petalled flowers are found in 1st century Roman marble sculpture in which the virtuosity of the craftsmen is apparent in the realistic renditions of plants with finely-wrought botanical detailing. It was sometimes the convention to show the poppy capsule emerging at the centre of the flower, as on the frieze of the Ara Pacis, Rome, **Fig. 2 – 8a**, in which poppies with slightly ragged petals feature among ornamental scrolling tendrils and leaves.⁶⁶¹ Similar flowers appear on the entablature of a round tomb from Falerii, **Fig. 2 – 8b**. In fact there is no point in the lifecycle of the when the capsule looks precisely like this while the petals are still on the flower, but it is a convention which presumably developed to ensure that the flower was recognisable. The outline of the petals does not precisely delineate a heart because the sculptural quality of the marble allows a more nuanced recreation of the undulating margin of tissue-paper-thin poppy petals.

⁶⁶⁰ MERLIN 1984 discusses the taxonomy and origins of the opium poppy.

⁶⁶¹ Ara Pacis, commissioned 13 BCE.

A terracotta relief from the Campana collection illustrates the combination of poppy capsule, five-petalled flowers and poppy leaves, all discernible on the same plant **Fig. 2 – 8c**. However, to demonstrate that there were sometimes deviations from established conventions, elsewhere at the Ara Pacis on the so-called ‘Tellus’ panel, a bouquet comprising wheat, irises and opium poppies appears behind the infant on the goddess’s lap, **Figs. 2 – 8d and e**. The poppy plant is a single fully-formed *six*-petalled flower with slightly frilled petals, a flower emerging from a part-closed bud (lower right), capsules and two leaves. The combination of wheat and poppies had long been associated with Greek Demeter (Roman Ceres) indicating her status as goddess of fertility and the harvest.⁶⁶²

Papaver somniferum

Poppies are easily propagated from their seeds and are a highly adaptable species which tolerates a wide range of climates and soils, including poor soils. Archaeobotanical studies confirm the existence of poppies in middle and late Neolithic central Europe,⁶⁶³ and they were present in Bronze Age Greece and the Balkans, the former evidenced by their images on Minoan and Mycenaean seal rings of the mid-2nd millennium⁶⁶⁴ and the ‘poppy’ goddess at Gazi, Crete, discussed below, **Fig. 2 – 23b**. It is thought that opium poppies were domesticated in the western Mediterranean and travelled east thereafter.⁶⁶⁵ The discovery of a single opium poppy capsule in a late 15th century tomb at Deir el-Medina, along with the *Ebers* Papyrus listing, reinforces arguments that the Egyptians were aware of opium.⁶⁶⁶

There is archaeobotanical evidence for opium residues and raw opium have been discovered in a range of contexts between the 4th century BCE and the 5th – 6th century CE in the Black Sea area. These will be explored further in 2.4 POPPIES AND THE TILLYA-TEPE WOMEN.

Dioscorides, whom John Scarborough considers to the most representative authority on the use of opium, discussed a range of poppy species.⁶⁶⁷ Poppies were not only cultivated for their opium latex, but provide a nutritious foodstuff for humans and

⁶⁶² LIMC, 5th century Corinthian plate, vol.IV-II pl.121, p.571 and vol.IV-I, p.858; Roman copies of Greek statues, vol.VI-II pls.142 and 143, p.572 and vol.IV-I, p.859; MERLIN 1984, pp.219-20.

⁶⁶³ ZOHARY and HOPF 2002, p.137.

⁶⁶⁴ EVANS 1925, Fig.12, p.11.

⁶⁶⁵ ZOHARY and HOPF 2002, p.138.

⁶⁶⁶ GABRA 1956; MERLIN 1984, pp.278-279; THORWALD 1962, p.61. See also 1.3 A SHORT CULTURAL HISTORY OF THE OPIUM POPPY.

⁶⁶⁷ SCARBOROUGH 2010, VII.

animals, their copious quantities of seeds could be used in cooking or crushed to produce oil for lamps.

The cultivation of opium poppies in Afghanistan, a source of great controversy in the 20th and 21st centuries CE, therefore has a legacy which reaches back at least as far as Tillya-tepe.

Interim summary

Images of the five cordiform-petalled flower featured repeatedly on items in burials I, II, III and VI occupied by the four senior women. It is proposed that this selective presence was an indication that poppies had a special importance for these women. Following a methodical study of the components of the plant - flowers, foliage and seedheads - these flowers were identified as opium poppies, *Papaver somniferum*. On the basis of this analysis, it became apparent that there are seventeen distinct examples of poppies in these graves.

To reinforce this proposal, these Tillya-tepe flowers have been shown to be comparable to naturalistic five-petalled flowers from 1st century CE Roman art. These are more botanically detailed than the Tillya-tepe flowers, due both to their artistic style and the media used. They demonstrate that the Tillya-tepe convention for the depiction of poppies was an established part of the artistic repertoire.

In the light of this identification there follows a more detailed scrutiny of four of these sets of items with opium poppy decoration.

2.1.3 More on Tillya-tepe artefacts with poppies

Composite-flower ornaments (III–i)

This pair of ornaments is very unusual among the Tillya-tepe floral repertoire, since they are the only instance in which the five-petalled flower features in conjunction with other vegetal decoration, **Fig. 2 – 9a**. The floral design comprises a distinctive multi-layered calyx of radiating leaves with six axes centering on a five-petalled flower. These leaves consist of an outer row of lanceolate leaves with a central midrib alternating with lush acanthus leaves, each of which has a well-defined serrated margin, a notched midrib and a scrolled tip. Superimposed on these leaves are six ‘lotus’ leaves with

notched midribs and rolled tip,⁶⁶⁸ and within these, leaves with rounded serrations; and they are all superimposed by the five-petalled flower, albeit a very small bloom with a round centre.

One searches in vain for exactly comparable items of jewellery. The concept of a multi-level plant design is illustrated by two items from the Taman peninsular. The first is a set of seven elaborate gold rosettes, probably costume appliqué, originally decorated with colourful inlays, found at the 4th century BCE kurgan at Bolshaya Bliznitsa in the Kuban, **Fig. 2 – 9b**,⁶⁶⁹ and the second is a 3rd or 2nd century BCE pierced gold fibula from Razdol'naya, Krasnodar, **Fig. 2 – 9c**.⁶⁷⁰ Layered plant designs also featured on Hellenistic earrings.⁶⁷¹ However in these cases the techniques are different from the Tillya-tepe pieces.

In fact, the design of these Tillya-tepe ornaments is more closely related to calyx medallions found on Hellenistic-Seleucid style metalwork vessels.⁶⁷² Many unprovenanced bowls survive with central medallions comprising a range of floral decoration, as discussed by Michael Pfrommer.⁶⁷³ More specifically, the Tillya-tepe ornaments have a similar range of leaves to the lid of a silver *pyxis* from the important metalworking area of Taranto in southern Italy,⁶⁷⁴ **Fig. 2 – 10a**, including the Egyptian 'lotus' motif. The general design of these bowls was already known in Bactria in the 2nd century BCE since mould-made terracotta bowls were found at the Graeco-Bactrian city of Ai Khanoum, thought to be locally produced.⁶⁷⁵

Many examples were small scale, such as a part-gilded silver hemispherical boss, allegedly from Nihavand, Iran, **Fig. 2 – 10b**.⁶⁷⁶ The acanthus is windblown, and instead of the multi-petalled rosette at the centre there is a five-petalled flower similar to the Tillya-tepe poppy. A part-gilded silver bowl in the British Museum has a medallion centre with lanceolate leaves, alternating with acanthus leaves across six axes like the

⁶⁶⁸ The customary term 'lotus' is employed here, as used in BURN 2004, PFROMMER 1993, POLLITT 1977, RAWSON 1984, denoting *Nymphaea lotus* which originated in Egyptian art and appears as Hellenistic decoration on glass bowls from Ptolemaic Egypt.

⁶⁶⁹ WILLIAMS and OGDEN 1994, cat.130, p.195.

⁶⁷⁰ TOKYO 1991, cat.52, p.53.

⁶⁷¹ For example, WILLIAMS and OGDEN 1994, cat.63, pp.110-111; cat.70, pp.120-121.

⁶⁷² See: 0.6.3 GREEK AND HELLENISTIC PLANT ORNAMENT.

⁶⁷³ PFROMMER 1993, pp.21-46, and 'Treasure I' cats.5-8, pp.118-125. Many of these flowers also featured in tendrilled friezes. For calyx medallions on the underside of a bowl associated with a Graeco-Bactrian atelier, see PFROMMER 1993, cats.75 and 76, pp.194-197. For details on related ornament on the underside of bowls in the al-Sabah collection, see fn.293 in this thesis.

⁶⁷⁴ WUILLEUMIER 1930, pl. 2,2. Rothschild collection, now missing.

⁶⁷⁵ MAIRS 2014b, pp.180-181.

⁶⁷⁶ PFROMMER 1993, p.34.

Tillya-tepe brooch and converging on a differently shaped five-petalled flower, **Fig. 2 – 10c**. Although there is no provenance, the rim has a partially legible inscription in Parthian.⁶⁷⁷

On the basis of inscriptions and comparative evidence, including the Nihavand boss and the British Museum medallion bowl, Pfrommer judged comparable bowls to be from west and northwest Iran, dating from the 2nd – 1st centuries BCE. He places many of them in the context of the formerly Seleucid areas of Parthia. Some of these have flowers with five heart-shaped, meandering petals like the Tillya-tepe examples.⁶⁷⁸ These five-petalled blooms sit somewhat incongruously at the centre of calyces with emphatic four-axial or six-axial symmetry.

Multi-levelled leaf medallions also appeared on 2nd and 1st centuries BCE ‘Sarmatian’ phalerae, particularly from sites in the north Pontic area: Uspenskaja, Vasjurina Gora, Starobel’sk, Bulachovka, Jančokrak.⁶⁷⁹ **Fig. 2 – 10d** shows a silver phalera from elaborate chariot-fittings in a grave at Vasjurina Gora which is similar to its Parthian counterparts, featuring the six radiating acanthus and lanceolate leaves also seen on the Tillya-tepe piece. Generally, however, these layered calyces are simpler in design and cruder in execution than Hellenistic-Seleucid and Parthian examples, and there are no free-floating blossoms between the outer leaves. Such flowers are also absent from the Tillya-tepe pieces.

It was stated above that these ornaments are exceptional among the Tillya-tepe floral designs. And they are also different from Parthian and north Pontic medallions, since although they have a similar configuration of layered flowers, they are not enclosed within roundels, but are free-standing with a unique outline which is shaped by the leaves. I would therefore suggest that these Tillya-tepe pieces were created locally in imitation of Hellenised floral calyx designs, but the craftsmen improved upon the originals, which may have even been Graeco-Bactrian productions, enhancing the pieces with the complex outline which emphasises the refined workmanship and sculptural qualities of the pair. The resulting silhouette is closer in design to the many naturalistic ‘cut-out’ shapes of other Tillya-tepe flowers, for example, **Fig. 2 – 1a** and **c**,

⁶⁷⁷ British Museum, Inv.134303, available at: http://www.britishmuseum.org/research/collection_online/collection_object_details.aspx?objectId=367687&partId=1&searchText=134303&page=1 (accessed March 2015).

⁶⁷⁸ PFROMMER 1993, cat.72, pp.188-189 and cat.76, pp.196-197.

⁶⁷⁹ MORDVINCEVA 2001, pls. 4, 9, 30, 31, 38, 39, 40. SÎRBU and BÂRCA 2009, cats.18, 22, 23, p.266, cat.8, p.264. Other designs are simplified, debased versions.

and **Fig. 2 – 3c**, and is therefore a distinctively Tillya-tepe variation of an established design. Finally, the tiny loops at the tips of the leaves, perhaps for tiny discs, are typical of Tillya-tepe artefacts.

Poppy appliqués (III-ii, III-iii)

In his commentary on grave III, Sarianidi noted that fragments of latticework originally constituting a crown were found on the gold vessel under the woman's head,⁶⁸⁰ as well as 'several pendants with repoussé lion faces plus a five-petalled rosette; the second of the pair was unearthed by the side of the coffin',⁶⁸¹ **Fig. 2 – 11a**. Since this grave had suffered post-mortem disturbance resulting in the displacement of smaller objects, it is possible that the lion-heads and flower had fallen from behind the woman's head into the bowl.

It is possible that both these two large poppies, 4.4cm in diameter, and the pug-faced creatures which Sarianidi identifies as lions were originally attached to the lattice crown. In addition there were twenty other smaller poppies sharing the same mode of attachment as the pair which might enable all these flowers to hang at right angles to the crown, **Fig. 2 – 11b**. Sarianidi does not mention the location of these smaller poppies, so this proposal remains speculative. There is certainly sufficient space to fit all twenty-two poppies and fifty-two 'lion-heads'. If this argument is accepted, then this 'poppy' crown would be an equivalent to the folding crown with numerous flowers in grave VI.

This proposed conjunction of gold crown and shallow dish is comparable to the two other burials which contained dishes under the incumbent's head: the miniature tree attached to the gold bowl under the warrior's head in grave IV, and the folding crown with its proliferation of flowers worn by the woman in grave VI. As discussed earlier, these three people were doubtless of superior rank. The crowns will be investigated further in 3.4 CROWNS AND HAIRPINS.

The bell-shaped object (VI-iv)

Grave VI contained a small campanulate artefact with a detailed image of a poppy on its base with a perforated centre and minute holes around outer edge, **Fig. 2 – 11c**. The presence of the holes prompts the speculation that this curious object might have been an incense dispenser for burning pieces of raw opium, and indeed, such opium has been

⁶⁸⁰ SARIANIDI 1985, cat. 3.24, p.239 and p.28.

⁶⁸¹ SARIANIDI 1985, p.28.

found elsewhere, in graves in the Kuban discussed below. The presence of the poppy flower at the base would therefore go some way to illustrate the function of this censer. But, unfortunately, without access to the object itself, it is not possible to confirm this.

The scrutiny of these objects reveals that poppies were present in a diversity of objects at Tillya-tepe. Our new understanding of these artefacts described enables us to assert that the presence of poppies in these graves was related to the rank of the women. The woman in grave VI, the most senior woman, had the most varied poppy imagery, including two important objects, the poppy capsule necklace and the possible censer, which may have been used to dispense opium 'incense'. She also owned a substantial poppy-flower brooch with inset poppy-leaves, and a pair of large poppies close to her crown. Grave III was occupied by the woman who was second in rank, and it was hypothesised here that she owned a poppy crown, which would be a high status possession. At the other end of the scale, the incumbent of grave V, the lowest rank woman, owned no objects with poppy imagery.

In order to contextualise our understanding of the poppy imagery at Tillya-tepe, both in terms of style and iconography, there now follows an examination of typologically similar examples which have been sampled from relevant historical and geographical contexts.

2.2 Comparanda for poppy imagery beyond Tillya-tepe

The comparanda are derived from those cultures which have a cultural affinity with Tillya-tepe, as defined in 0.4 TILLYA-TEPE BURIALS, thereby limiting the quantity of material in terms of time-scales and geographical reach. The poppy *flower* will be considered first as it is the most common motif, followed by a study of the poppy *capsule*. The typology of the poppy capsule will be discussed at greater length than the flower since the latter has already been explored in detail.

2.2.1 Typology and chronology: flowers and capsules

In this study the emphasis is on flowers with five *cordiform* petals as these are closest in form to the Tillya-tepe examples. However, flowers with five *rounded* petals exist which may be related: there are elegant gold rosettes from a diadem at Maikop, a late 4th millennium BCE burial site in the Kuban, part of a diadem,⁶⁸² and gold flowers decorating Scythian and Sarmatian gold jewellery, but they are not included. On the other hand, there are also images of poppies at Palmyra in which both the petal number and shape are different from Tillya-tepe, indicating that they represented a different poppy convention, but they are still reviewed within their contexts because of the unambiguous identification, based on the presence of poppy capsules.

Depictions of poppy capsules have a far longer history in art – reaching back to at least the mid-2nd millennium, most notably in the eastern Mediterranean, Mesopotamia and Egypt. They appeared more regularly as the 1st millennium progressed, particularly from the 7th century BCE onwards across the Mediterranean world.⁶⁸³ The subject of poppies in art has already been researched elsewhere,⁶⁸⁴ albeit with some omissions, therefore the examples here are largely concentrated between 4th century BCE and the 2nd century CE.

Poppy capsules are sometimes misidentified since their appearance in art is easily confused with that of pomegranate fruit, species *Punica granatum*. Since pomegranates are better known they are often the default identification. Therefore, it is helpful to compare poppy capsules with pomegranate fruits in order to help differentiate the two species.

⁶⁸² PIOTROVSKY 2003, fig.195, p.295.

⁶⁸³ See KRITIKOS and PAPADAKI 1967.

⁶⁸⁴ KRITIKOS AND PAPADAKI 1967; MERLIN 1994; MERRILEES 1979, 1962.

The immature form of the poppy capsule is bulbous and smooth. It has this appearance at the time when the petals first fall, the moment when the poppy latex is ready for harvesting. **Fig. 2 – 12a** shows a highly naturalistic poppy capsule from a 5th century BCE shrine dedicated either to Greek goddesses Hera, or Demeter. The most common practice for piercing bulbs to enable opium extraction consists of parallel cuts, **Fig. 2 – 12b**, but alternative methods include concentric rings and diagonal slashes.⁶⁸⁵

Later on in the poppy's lifecycle – within days or weeks, depending on the weather – the plump round bulb dessicates, becoming elongated and ridged. If shaken, seeds can be heard rattling around inside. The beads of Tillya-tepe necklace show this ridged and sunken state with impressive realism, **Figs. 2 – 4b** and **c**.

The rounded shape of a pomegranate fruit is similar to an immature poppy capsule, although pomegranates are far larger. Then, when the pomegranate itself is shrunk with age it becomes knobbly and squat in shape, somewhat different from the elongated, ridged, dried poppy capsule.

A closer look at the plant morphology provides further means of differentiation, **Figs. 2 – 13a** and **b**. Poppy capsules have a flaring stigma at one end which lies flat against the bulb (i.e. there is no 'neck'). The diameter of this stigma is often almost as wide as the capsule bulb, although there is some variation. The mound where the stigma forms is occasionally shown emerging from the centre of the flower before the petals drop, particularly in Roman sculptural representations. **Figs. 2 – 8a, b, d** and **e**.

The pomegranate sports a narrower calyx at its top which emerges trumpet-like and upright from the fruit (i.e. it has a 'neck'). This calyx is both longer and narrower in relation to the fruit than the poppy stigma, **Fig. 2 – 13b**. In the mid-2nd millennium an enduring artistic convention developed whereby this trumpet calyx was depicted as crowned by a triple or quadruple-pointed crest.⁶⁸⁶ This latter detail is often an important aid in differentiating the two species.

As the poppy plant dries out its capsules stand rigidly on the stem. At the point where the capsule joins the plant's stem is a swelling called the thalamus, which strengthens the stem so that it can support the heavy seedhead. Therefore the capsule does not fall

⁶⁸⁵ MERLIN 1994, figs 32, 33.

⁶⁸⁶ As seen on a gold dish from Ugarit, dated to the 14th century BCE, MUTHMANN 1982, Figs 6, 7, pp.16-17.

naturally but has to be snapped off. The thalamus is sometimes represented in art,⁶⁸⁷ but is rarely, if ever, seen on jewellery. Its presence unequivocally identifies a plant as a poppy. On the other hand, pomegranates have no thalamus and their fruits hang downwards until they ripen, at which point hormones cause them to drop from the plant.

Despite these differences between poppies and pomegranates, craftsmen themselves did not always identify the plant clearly enough in their depictions so a definitive identification is not always possible. There is no ambiguity in the Tillya-tepe poppy capsules.

2.2.2 Artefacts with poppy flower imagery

2.2.2.1 Hellenistic-Seleucid style five-petalled flowers

Meander-edged, five-petalled flowers feature in Greek art from the 4th century Greek BCE, as seen in the rolled headgear of two terracotta bearded males from a Taranto banqueting scene, *ca.*400-350 BCE, **Fig. 2 – 14a**,⁶⁸⁸ although in the absence of corroborative botanical details, we cannot be sure they are poppies. Aspects of Greek art penetrated the Bosphoran cultures of the Taman peninsular in the 4th century BCE, where a terracotta shows a female deity, customarily identified as Demeter or her daughter Persephone, with similar undulating flowers in her hair.⁶⁸⁹ Because of the connection of Demeter with poppies, then it is possible that these are indeed poppies. However, the motif becomes more popular in the 2nd century BCE to 1st century CE and this era will be the focus here.⁶⁹⁰

Five-petalled flowers were a relatively popular motif on Hellenistic-style jewellery, particularly on pieces which have attributes associated with the Greek goddess Aphrodite, such as doves, swans and perhaps also campanula flowers. A dove and campanula flowers hang from a simple five-petalled flower on 4th century BCE earrings, **Fig. 2 – 14b**.⁶⁹¹ Later flowers were often more elaborate, as exemplified by late 2nd

⁶⁸⁷ For example, an 8th century wall relief of a male figure carrying poppies, Sargon II's palace, Khorsabad, British Museum, inv. no. 118814. KRIKORIAN 1975 pp.104-105 discusses such images. Although he argues against their identification as poppies, the presence of a thalamus is a strong indicator of a poppy identification; faience amulet, Tell al-Amarna, 14th century BCE, Petrie Museum, UC24532.

See also **Fig. 2 – 12a**.

⁶⁸⁸ See also KARAGEORGHIS 2000, cat.335, p.209.

⁶⁸⁹ ROSTOVTZEFF revised SCHILTZ 2004, Pl. IX, 3-4.

⁶⁹⁰ See also PFROMMER 1993, pp.33-34.

⁶⁹¹ MARSHALL 1911, pl.XXXI-1682.

century BCE gold earrings from Taranto, **Fig. 2 – 14c**.⁶⁹² The jewellery fashion also travelled eastwards into Parthian territories,⁶⁹³ and to Syria, as shown by the tiny gold five-petalled flower worn around the neck of Venus (Greek Aphrodite) on a bronze statuette from Tartus, **Fig. 2 – 14d**.

Single five-petalled flowerheads appear on the underside of typologically similar (but not identical), hemispherical bowls in the Getty, al-Sabah and Miho collections,⁶⁹⁴ **Figs. 2 – 15a and b**. Bands of bound trefoils with inlaid berries decorate the rims of these unprovenanced bowls.⁶⁹⁵ The al-Sabah bowl is described as ‘Seleucid empire/Parthian western Asia’ and it is dated to the late 2nd or early 1st century BCE, while the origin of the Miho Museum example was considered to be 1st century BCE and Bactrian.

There is an interesting example of a five-petalled flower and a multi-petalled flower, on a pair of medallions in the al-Sabah collection which feature small Erotes in their midst, reflecting the explicit influence of Hellenistic motifs.⁶⁹⁶ They are described as ‘Seleucid Bactria/Bactrian kingdom’, and are dated to the 3rd – 2nd centuries BCE. More generally five-petalled blooms feature on silver vessels, including among the complex tendrilled floral patterns deriving from Hellenistic designs on a stag rhyton, which is dated to around the Common Era.⁶⁹⁷ But in none of these circumstances are there poppy capsules which would enable a definitive identification of these flowers as poppies.

2.2.2.2 Sirkap-Taxila

Five-petalled flowers were present in the 1st century CE Saka-Parthian layers at Sirkap-Taxila. This era at Sirkap-Taxila is especially relevant to Tillya-tepe in the light of the comparison between Gondophares’s necklace and that belonging to the Tillya-tepe warrior.⁶⁹⁸

⁶⁹² DE JULIIS 1984, pl.11, p.47. Examples of five-petalled flowers are illustrated in MARSHALL 1911, pl.179: 66, 67, 83. See also a pair of Nike earrings with five-petalled flowers, <http://search.getty.edu/gateway/search?q=hellenistic+gold+earrings+nike&cat=&rows=10&dir=s&img=0&dsp=0&pg=1> (accessed March 2015).

⁶⁹³ MARSHALL 1911, illustrates a gold earring, pl.XXXI – 2345 and pl.XXXI.

⁶⁹⁴ Getty: PFROMMER 1993, cats.69-70, pp.184-185. Al-Sabah: CARTER 2015, cat.7, pp.72-75. Miho: MIHO MUSEUM 2002, pl.32, p.47.

⁶⁹⁵ PFROMMER 1993, pp.37-38, discusses these trefoil bands.

⁶⁹⁶ CARTER 2015, cat.39, pp.176-179.

⁶⁹⁷ PFROMMER 1993, cat.74, pp.192-193, Getty Collection. He lists all the flowers with five heart-shaped petals in his catalogue in columns 54 and 55 in a chart at the end of the publication.

⁶⁹⁸ BERNARD 1987, p.764.

Five-petalled flowers form part of figurative compositions, such as a cast gold brooch from the Saka-Parthian layer, enriched with granulation, **Figs. 2 – 16a and b.**⁶⁹⁹ The decoration consists of several layers: a four-petalled bloom surmounted by a six-point star, and a centrepiece consisting of an Eros-type figure sprawling upon the five-heart flower, **Fig. 2 – 16b.** This is interesting in the light of Erotes on multi-petalled flowers decorating gilt-silver bowls, described at ‘Indo-Greek/Indo-Scythian era, south Asia’, as well as the al-Sabah medallions noted above. A pendant below this flower consists of confronted girlish figures riding a kind of *ketos*. The pendant amphora had long been a decorative element in Hellenistic art but is not found at Tillya-tepe. Tear-shaped blue inlays are used to highlight the wings of both riders and beasts. The use of turquoise, real or imitation, as widely found at Tillya-tepe and further north and east in steppe nomadic art, are indication of local rather than Mediterranean production. They *Ketos*-type creatures are found in both Gandharan and north Pontic art, while the central amphora indicates Hellenised origins. A gold Eros in similar pose was found in the same area and layer on another five-petalled flower, although the petals are not heart-shaped,⁷⁰⁰ **Fig. 2 – 16c.** His hairstyle, heavy necklace, bracelets and anklets, all render him a distinctively Indian air. Both the style and spirit of these Erotes find echoes in the winged Erotes who frolic astride the ‘dolphins’ from graves II and III at Tillya-tepe.⁷⁰¹

Another five-petalled flower decorates the clasp of an earring, **Fig. 2 – 16d.** Granulation encloses a centre which, like the petals, probably once held an inlay. Below this flower is the bust of a girl, stylistically resembling several Tillya-tepe figures,⁷⁰² looking out from a rosette of indeterminate identity. As Rosen Stone observes, the figurative style of the Taxila jewellery, plus some individual figurines from the site such as a small gold ‘Aphrodite’ and the ‘Eros and Psyche’,⁷⁰³ share characteristics with figurative images from Tillya-tepe. The most obvious Tillya-tepe comparisons are: sets of Erotes on dolphins,⁷⁰⁴ the single ‘Aphrodite’ figurines from graves II and VI,⁷⁰⁵ and the Eros earrings from grave VI. These characters, common to both Tillya-tepe and Sirkap-Taxila, all appear to derive from the Graeco-Roman world but the canons of

⁶⁹⁹ For a discussion of Sirkap-Taxila and Tillya-tepe, see ROSEN STONE, 2008, pp.80-81.

⁷⁰⁰ ROSEN STONE, 2008, cat.30, p.99.

⁷⁰¹ For remarks on the Tillya-tepe ‘dolphins’, see 0.4 TILLYA-TEPE BURIALS.

⁷⁰² SARIANIDI 1985, Ariadne in cat.6.2, p.254, ‘Bactrian’ Aphrodite, cat.6.3, p.254.

⁷⁰³ ROSEN STONE, 2008, Cats.28 and 29, p.98.

⁷⁰⁴ SARIANIDI 1985, cat.2.5, p.23, cat.3.2, p.236.

⁷⁰⁵ SARIANIDI 1985, cat.2.6, p.231, cat.6.3, p.254

proportion reflect a different aesthetic: the personages have squat bodies, rounded hips emphasised by a relatively narrow waist, short limbs and broad faces.⁷⁰⁶

However, despite the similarities between the Sirkap-Taxila and Tillya-tepe imagery, we cannot be sure that the Sirkap-Taxila and the earlier Hellenistic five-petalled flowers represent poppies as there is no corroborative detailing such as poppy capsules.

2.2.2.3 Buddhist Contexts

As discussed, flowers were generally popular in Gandharan Buddhist art, and although many artefacts apparently manifest generic rosettes, since *Nelumbo nucifera* flowers and pipal leaves are often readily identifiable in images, then other plants including flowers may represent real species too. Five-petalled flowers with a distinctly wavy edge are one of three gold floral types found in a stupa reliquary, **Fig. 2 – 17a**, possibly from Eastern Afghanistan and dating from the Apracas era, ca.15–30/40 CE.⁷⁰⁷ A similar range of flowers decorates the base of Buddha Śakyamuni's throne in a stela depicting 'The Great Miracle at Shravasti' from Shotorak, near Begram in Afghanistan, **Figs. 2 – 17b** and **c**. A row of five-petalled cordiform flowers decorates another Buddha Shakyamuni throne, at Shotorak, in a scene of 'Buddha flanked by Kashyapas and donors', **Fig. 2 – 17d**.

In the al-Sabah collection is a gold reliquary casket in the shape of a stupa, decorated with five-petalled flowers enclosed within a beaded trellis on its upper section and within scrolling on the lower half,⁷⁰⁸ **Fig. 2 – 17e**. It is catalogued as 'Indo-Scythian/Kushan era, 2nd century CE. There are two types of flowers. Closest in design to Tillya-tepe are blooms with five symmetrical undulating petals, although they have the additional detail of a double outline. The lower flowers have a large garnet at their centres. Twenty-three Kushan-era coins were found inside, including a gold coin of Huvishka (ca. 150-180 CE), and 1st century CE Roman coins from the reigns of Nero and Domitian.

In the following centuries, five-petalled flowers occasionally embellished Buddhist architectural sculpture, such as a stupa staircase from the 2nd – 3rd century monastery of

⁷⁰⁶ See also earring with granulated detailing: <http://collections.vam.ac.uk/item/O17694/earring-unknown/> (accessed February 2015).

⁷⁰⁷ Another five-petalled flower features on a small gold reliquary container, SALOMON 2005, p.389, fig. 6.2.b.

⁷⁰⁸ CARTER 2015, cat.73, pp.262-263.

Chakhli-i-Ghoundi at Hadda.⁷⁰⁹ In a similar sculptural vein, five-petalled flowers form part of a garland with heart-shaped motifs, and pipal leaves from the bodhi tree, **Figs. 2 – 17f and g**. These images presumably imitated the use of real floral decoration as part of religious rituals. Plants such as pipal leaves and both lotus leaves and flowers were frequently chosen for sacred contexts and are thought to have carried an iconographical significance.⁷¹⁰ Again, although the flowers are similarly shaped to the Tillya-tepe poppies, it is not clear whether these Buddhist flowers denoted poppies since additional botanical details are absent. The *Papaver* genus is certainly attested in the Indian subcontinent, but like ivies and grapevines it thrives only in the temperate coolness of certain places like mountain foothills, including the Himalayas.⁷¹¹

2.2.2.4 The Roman Empire

At the turn of the 1st century BCE, five-petalled flowers appeared on Roman luxury glassware, silverware and funerary sculpture, although they were never as common a motif as acanthus, anthemion or grapevines. One important item for this study is a small blue glass vessel decorated with cameo-work,⁷¹² a Roman technique which was particularly in fashion in the decades around the Common Era,⁷¹³ **Fig. 2 – 18a**. On its base is a five-petalled flower, **Fig. 2 – 18b**, which appears to be a poppy since the bloom sits within a radiating calyx of poppy foliage.⁷¹⁴ This flower is very close in shape to the Tillya-tepe brooch in grave VI, **Fig. 2 – 1c**, except the serrated leaves are correctly-placed on the outside of the flower petals. Two scenes on the body of this receptacle reflect an Egyptianising taste: an Egyptian pharaoh with symbols and meaningless hieroglyphics on one side, and Horus approaching Thoth's altar on the other.⁷¹⁵ Egyptian themes were a favourite choice for cameo glassware and there are twenty-six extant examples.⁷¹⁶ There has been some debate about what the subject-matter here might signify but the results have been somewhat generalised and inconclusive.⁷¹⁷

⁷⁰⁹ MUSEE GUIMET, MG17191. <http://depts.washington.edu/silkroad/museums/mg/hadda.html> (accessed February 2015).

⁷¹⁰ See pp.76-77 in this thesis for references.

⁷¹¹ DAR *et al.* 2010, p.57.

⁷¹² GETTY MUSEUM, Inv. no. 85.AF.84, <http://www.getty.edu/art/gettyguide/artObjectDetails?artobj=12918> (accessed January 2015).

⁷¹³ ROBERTS *et al.* 2010, p.23.

⁷¹⁴ See below for further remarks on *Papaver somniferum* foliage.

⁷¹⁵ HARDEN 1987, pp.83-84.

⁷¹⁶ AERDE 2011, p.4.

⁷¹⁷ WIGHT and SWETNAM-BURLAND 2010.

I would propose that this decoration reflects more than fashionable whimsy and that the poppy image provides a definitive clue to this flask's purpose, which was to contain opium. In this regard, the altar scene and allusions to the two gods becomes meaningful, since not only was Thoth 'of central significance to Egyptian medicine and magic'⁷¹⁸ and in Egyptian mythology invoked his magical powers to bring Horus back to life, but he was also credited with teaching mortals how to prepare opium.⁷¹⁹

Moreover, *Papaver somniferum* was an important medicinal plant for the Egyptians,⁷²⁰ particularly so in the Roman period. The choice of Egyptian vignettes was apt since for the Greeks and Romans, Egypt was considered 'the most pharmaceutical' of all the lands and 'a "made in Egypt" label ...carried much medical weight'.⁷²¹ This is apparent from the lines in Homer's *Odyssey*, when Helen was given the drug *nepenthes* by the daughter of Egyptian Thon, Queen Polydamna.⁷²² *Nepenthes* is widely considered to be, or to contain, opium.⁷²³ The 'healing virtue' of this 'cunning' drug, when diluted in wine 'had the power to banish all painful memories',⁷²⁴ the etymology of *nepenthes* meaning 'no sorrow' as well as 'no pain'.

The outstanding quality of the cameo-work and its dedicated iconography jointly reflect the status of the opium contained within. Opium was regarded as valuable both in terms of cost and with regards to its purpose, as expressed by both Dioscorides and Pliny.⁷²⁵ The nature of the subject-matter offers several levels of interpretation: the presence of the gods might suggest a ritual context for the opium within; and/or the specific reference to Thoth's capacity to resurrect Horus may somehow connect the opium inside the bottle with rites connected with death and rebirth.

The association between the function of a vessel and its decoration is an established convention in Graeco-Roman art, most commonly demonstrated by *kantharoi* and other wine vessels decorated with Dionysiac themes. Furthermore, there was a long tradition of receptacles in the shape of poppy capsules, designed to hold opium in a solution,⁷²⁶ such as juglets exported from Cyprus to Egypt containing opium, **Fig. 2 – 18c**, as well

⁷¹⁸ NUNN 1996, p.102.

⁷¹⁹ SCHIFF 2002, p.186; KRITIKOS and PAPADAKI 1967: The poppy in Egypt.

⁷²⁰ For an account of *Papaver somniferum* and *Papaver rhoeas* in Ancient Egypt, see GABRA 1956.

⁷²¹ SCARBOROUGH 2010, VII, p.4.

⁷²² HOMER, *Odyssey*, IV, 243-246. <http://www.poetryintranslation.com/PITBR/Greek/Odyssey4.htm> (accessed March 2015).

⁷²³ MERLIN 1984, p.215.

⁷²⁴ ROSSO 2010, p.81.

⁷²⁵ See 2.3 A SHORT CULTURAL HISTORY OF THE OPIUM POPPY.

⁷²⁶ MERRILLEES 1979, 1962.

as small Cypriot Buccchero jugs with ridged bodies and flared bases, **Fig. 2 – 18d**, assumed to be for the same purpose.⁷²⁷

One final remark regarding this glass vessel concerns its production technique, in which the white detailing was either cut or moulded.⁷²⁸ A mould with a similar design, dated to around the mid-2nd century BCE, was found at Kyme in Anatolia,⁷²⁹ **Fig. 2 – 18e**. In this case the ‘poppy’ has six petals and is more generalised in design, but the leaves are clearly delineated. It is therefore possible that this represents a previous convention for poppies and the Tillya-tepe version developed in the period around the Common Era.

Naturalistic floral decoration was particularly popular on Roman silverware, glass and ceramics, and fine dining wares from the Roman Empire were present in Bactria. Glassware from Roman Alexandria was found among other precious items at Begram, which like Tillya-tepe had a range of objects with Graeco-Roman imagery, including Dionysiac subject-matter. Further south at Buner, (Khyber, Pakistan), a hoard of mixed silverware was found with Graeco-Roman and Parthian pieces including an Augustan-period Roman *kantharos* with a scene showing the Centaurs’ abduction of the Lapith women.⁷³⁰ There are other Roman vessels allegedly from the Pakistan-Afghanistan region but they lack a firm provenance.⁷³¹

And as noted previously, Indian ivory combs were discovered at Begram, Tillya-tepe, Koktepe, Dalverzin-tepe and Pompeii. This all attests to trading communications across great distances, from Italy to the Indo-Afghanistan region.⁷³²

In order to understand the significance of poppies in Roman art, one must look beyond prestigious, portable objects. Poppies were regularly present on Roman funerary and commemorative sculpture around the 1st century CE, whereas they were rarely found in other periods. In such cases, the number of petals was usually five but sometimes six,

⁷²⁷ COLLARD 2011, pp.141-142. Collard discusses the vessel evidence in the Bronze Age Mediterranean wares, pp.132-148.

⁷²⁸ LIERKE 2001, http://www.rosemarie-lierke.de/English/Cameo_glass/cameo_glass.html (accessed March 2015).

⁷²⁹ BOUZÉK 1975. There are several flowers on moulds from Kyme, but pl. 2.14, selected by Rosemarie Lierke, is the only one likely to be a poppy based on the flower and leaf.

⁷³⁰ BARATTE 2002, pp.15-18, p.48 Augustus died 14 CE.

⁷³¹ For example, a silver *kantharos* with scenes of musical Erotes in the al-Sabah collection, Kuwait, inv. no. LNS1355M.

⁷³² Isidore of Charax’s *Parthian Stations* discusses land routes from Antioch to India, ISIDORUS; and the *Periplus of the Erythraean Sea* records the extensive maritime and land-based trade between the Mediterranean and ‘the East’, PERIPLUS (anon), both ca. 1st century CE. ‘Their authors have some vague knowledge of the Hellenistic Greek kingdoms of Bactria, Arachosia and north-western India’, MAIRS 2012, p.3.

and very occasionally seven.⁷³³ Poppies appeared on *cippe*, *cineraria* and funerary altars. Two poppies, close in shape to the Tillya-tepe poppy brooches, are the sole decoration either side of a sad little portrait of the deceased Lucios Aelios Melitinos, aged 13 months and 9 days, on a small stela, **Fig. 2 – 19a**. On a *cinerarium* containing the ashes of Tiberius Claudius Victor, **Fig. 2 – 19b**, six-petalled poppies feature in their commonest position as scroll terminals at either end of the pediment, while a smaller five-petalled poppy sits within each pediment. Flowerheads with frilled petal margins, a botanical variation of the opium poppy, appear on an elaborate band of poppy rinceaux decorating the architrave of a tomb erected for Cartinia, priestess of Juno at Falerii, **Fig. 2 – 19c**. The images include an emerging poppy capsule at the centre of the petals and realistic foliage. Another poppy appears in the lower register of the acanthus frieze on the Ara Pacis, Augustus's monument to peace in Rome, **Fig. 2 – 19d**.

This naturalism diminishes through time at the fringes of the empire. A stylised flower, perhaps a poppy, is the sole decoration on a 2nd century funerary altar dedicated to Cecilia Artemisia at Tomis (modern Constanța, Romania) on the west coast of the Black Sea, **Fig. 2 – 19e**.

The relative frequency of the motif suggests that for the Romans of the early Empire, contemporary with Tillya-tepe, the poppy plant often embodied sepulchral associations. Such interpretations accord with the poppy's recognised narcotic properties as a drug to induce sleep and, if taken in quantity, to procure a painless death. These properties led to the use of poppy capsules as symbols of deities specifically associated with sleep and death in the Graeco-Roman world, discussed in 2.3 A SHORT CULTURAL HISTORY OF THE OPIUM POPPY.

2.2.2.5 Palmyra

Echoes of the funerary connotations of poppies are visible further east at Palmyra, on pedimented gables above entrances to tower tombs, as seen on the tombs of Iamlikû of 83 CE,⁷³⁴ **Fig. 2 – 20a**, and Nebuzabad of 120 CE,⁷³⁵ **Fig. 2 – 20b**. But in both cases the

⁷³³ See for example a marble *cinerarium*, ca. 20-40 CE, with six-petalled flowers carved on the end of volutes flanking the lid pediment. GETTY MUSEUM, 72.AA.113.

<http://www.getty.edu/art/collection/objects/6963/unknown-maker-cinerarium-with-lid-roman-about-20-40/> (accessed July 2015).

⁷³⁴ HENNING 2013, p.51.

⁷³⁵ HENNING 2013, p.52. Identical flowers, but lacking capsules as corroboration, also appear on two other tomb pediments, HENNING 2013, tower tombs no. 39, pl.38c and no.74, pl.64d.

flowers differ from the Roman convention with five heart-shaped petals. The Palmyrene poppies are presented within broad scrolls and comprise six re-curved, rounded petals. Their identification is made explicit by the accompanying ridged poppy capsules. Six rounded petals have been noted above on the Kyme poppy mould, **Fig. 2 – 18e**. Identical flowers also appear *inside* the tomb of Iamlikû, flanking winged Erotes in the diamond-shaped coffering, and along the dentil cornice.⁷³⁶ Poppies are also present on the dentil cornice in the tower tomb of Elahbel;⁷³⁷ and four large poppy flowers are the sole decoration on an altar or block of carved masonry, identifiable by the emerging capsule at their centres.⁷³⁸ The Erotes and dolphin iconography of these tombs broadly recall the Tillya-tepe repertoire, all reflecting the shared influence of Graeco-Roman visual imagery in the Roman East and just beyond the empire. However the application at Palmyra of this different convention, shown within scrolling (i.e. unlike at Tillya-tepe) demonstrates that the use of Graeco-Roman conventions is more nuanced.

Furthermore, poppies consisting of six rounded petals are not readily discernible at later Palmyra. An undulating plant with poppy capsules, serrated leaves, and both four- and five-petalled flowers with gently wavy margins, decorates the costume of the principal male in the family funerary relief in the *hypogeum* of Malku, *ca.* 200 CE.⁷³⁹ And morphologically related four-, five- and six-petalled flowers with re-curved petals and round centres occasionally appear on figurative grave reliefs; but without the corroborative presence of poppy capsules, identification is difficult.⁷⁴⁰ So there is only limited consistency in the petal-count on Palmyrene poppies. Whereas the 1st and early 2nd century tower tombs poppies are identifiable, the many 2nd and 3rd century funerary reliefs have entirely stylised flowers. It is hypothesised that when poppies are found on funerary sculpture they partake of broadly the same sepulchral symbolism as Roman examples.

Finally, poppies are also present among the lavish carved floral ornament found in the early 2nd century CE Baths of Hadrian at Aphrodisias, Tralles in Asia Minor.⁷⁴¹ They appear above the figure of the infant Hercules strangling serpents. The flowers have five petals which are slightly ragged at the edges, and an emergent poppy capsule at their

⁷³⁶ DEGEORGE 2001, pp.236-7.

⁷³⁷ DEGEORGE 2001, p.278.

⁷³⁸ DEGEORGE 2001, pp.144-145.

⁷³⁹ TANABE 1986, vol. I, pl.412, p.443.

⁷⁴⁰ For example, five-petals: TANABE 1986, vol. I: Baalshamin Sanctuary, p.124 and *hypogeum* of Sasan, p.334; both early 2nd century CE.

⁷⁴¹ ERIM 1986, p.144.

centre, similar to the Ara Pacis poppy. The capsules themselves, always providing definitive confirmation of the identification, are striated and have a rather elongate stigma and a clearly marked thalamus.

2.2.3 Artefacts with poppy capsule imagery

Although there are only a few instances of poppy capsules at Tillya-tepe, they form part of the ensemble of poppy imagery alongside the flowers and are found in the same four tombs. The following section reviews representations of poppy capsules in a variety of media, especially jewellery, but also textiles and wall-paintings.

2.2.3.1 North Pontic Jewellery

Images of poppy capsules feature on jewellery from the north Pontic area, from the 4th century BCE onwards, but they have gone unnoticed until now. **Fig. 2 – 22a** shows a necklace from a female burial in kurgan VIII at the Elizavetovski necropolis, part of the network of ‘Five Brothers’ burials in the Lower Don.⁷⁴² It shows an ingenious and highly ornamental way of adapting poppy capsules to the structural and decorative requirements of a necklace.⁷⁴³ The tiny spheres strung between the capsules may represent seeds. The owner of this necklace wore a *kalathos* (tall crown) and a veil edged with large appliqués depicting a female head, usually described as Demeter or Kore.⁷⁴⁴ Similar pendant appliqués were worn by an elite woman, the so-called ‘priestess of Demeter’ from a kurgan at Bolshaya Bliznitsa in the Taman Peninsular.⁷⁴⁵

Indeed, poppies also appear at Bolshaya Bliznitsa (although not in the ‘priestess’ grave) on an openwork, crescent pectoral dated to ca.330-300 BCE,⁷⁴⁶ **Fig. 2 – 21b and c**. The giant poppies are part of a bucolic scene of frolicking goats and rams, terminated with lion-head finials. Each capsule is realistically depicted as a ridged bulb with a thalamus connecting to the stem and a stigma at the outer end. These capsules are shown in pairs emerging from a serrated poppy leaf above schematic flowers. These blooms have variable numbers of petals, but are mostly six-petalled and are rounded not heart-shaped. One must presume that they represented poppies. Unsurprisingly they do not

⁷⁴² Artamonov considers this site to be Sarmatian, ARTAMONOV 1969, p.82.

⁷⁴³ TOKYO 1991, pl.35, p.64.

⁷⁴⁴ SCHILTZ 2001, cat.81, pp.115-116.

⁷⁴⁵ MINNS 1913, pp.423-429, named thus because her grave-goods included items considered appropriate for Demeter’s cult.

⁷⁴⁶ SCHILTZ 1994, pl.310, p.385. For further details of the site and finds, see: MINNS 1913, pp.423-429; ARTAMONOV 1969, pp.73-79; WILLIAMS AND OGDEN 1994, pp.180-196.

conform to the five-cordiform petal configuration outlined above since it was not developed at this early date. However, this identification raises the likelihood that there are other poppies with six rounded petals on jewellery from this area, although without capsules or leaves as corroboration.

As remarked, in some instances there is confusion between poppy capsules and pomegranate fruits, and this is exemplified by the following objects, which, I would suggest, present examples of poppy capsules but which have been hitherto misidentified as pomegranates.

The first is an amphora-shaped pendant earring with a red glass body, from a 'Sarmatian' burial located near Sladkovski Farm in the Lower Don area, dated to the late 1st or early 2nd century CE,⁷⁴⁷ **Fig. 2 – 22a**. Jeannine Davis-Kimball described this as a burial of a high status female.⁷⁴⁸ Treister considered that its design originated from a 1st century CE north Pontic workshop, largely due to the late Hellenistic-style amphorae, although it also incorporates Parthian characteristics.⁷⁴⁹ Turquoise-coloured spheres with simplified gold stigma hang from the amphora. Edith Porada identified these pendants as pomegranates,⁷⁵⁰ but this is questionable because the spheres have a flaring stigma rather than a trumpet calyx and therefore they are more likely to represent poppies. To confirm the differentiation of species, there are other examples of north Pontic or Parthian amphora earrings which do indeed display pomegranates, such as a similarly dated Parthian pendant, **Fig. 2 – 22b**.⁷⁵¹ These pomegranates consist of a gold sphere and trumpet with clearly defined triangular protrusions.⁷⁵²

Porada describes a second piece of jewellery of the same period, allegedly from the southwest Caspian region of Iran,⁷⁵³ **Figs. 2 – 22c and d**. It is a pendant consisting of a cigar-shaped agate bead with golden finials at either end in the form of a deer's head. From this bead hang flat bells and what seem to be poppies because of the shape of the stigma, although these too are described as pomegranates. Porada notes that the spheres were made from two halves of a gold ball and that there are 'slight horizontal grooves between the middle of the ball and its top or bottom'. She wonders whether this

⁷⁴⁷ TREISTER 2004a.

⁷⁴⁸ DAVIS-KIMBALL 1997-98, p.20.

⁷⁴⁹ TREISTER 2004a.

⁷⁵⁰ PORADA 1967.

⁷⁵¹ <http://www.metmuseum.org/art/collection/search/328744> (accessed February 2015).

⁷⁵² PORADA 1967, p.109.

⁷⁵³ PORADA 1967, p.99. A thorough description is provided, pp.99-105.

‘articulation of the plain surface’ might be due to aesthetic or technical reasons.⁷⁵⁴ An alternative proposal is that this grooving is a stylised allusion to one method of piercing poppy capsules to extract opium: using one or more horizontal slashes, including cuts which circumscribe the entire epidermis of the capsule.⁷⁵⁵

The flat bells are also distinctive and very similar to examples in Tillya-tepe graves I and III.⁷⁵⁶ Porada notes that these bells do not occur before the 1st century BCE.⁷⁵⁷ Other similar bells are found on earrings from Parthian Seleucia, in an ensemble which also includes either poppies or pomegranates,⁷⁵⁸ dated to the early 2nd century CE. Grooved capsules also appear on a 3rd – 2nd century BCE necklace from a female burial in a kurgan excavated near Kerch,⁷⁵⁹ **Fig. 2 – 22e**. Again the six-petal flowerheads (along the edge of the band) may be poppies, using the non-cordiform convention for this flower. The twisted wire attachments for the capsules is a more elaborate version of the attachment on the above Caspian pendant and is also found on many objects from Tillya-tepe.

2.2.3.2 The Roman Empire

Poppy flower imagery on Roman funerary sculpture has been discussed above, and poppy capsules were even more common.⁷⁶⁰ Bunches of capsules are clasped in the plump hands of slumbering Erotes on sarcophagi, probably representing Hypnos (‘Sleep’, Roman Somnus).⁷⁶¹ Young boys with capsules attend funerary scenes, such as that of Claudia Fabulla where Hypnos acts as a psychopomp, the conductor of departing souls to the underworld.⁷⁶² Capsules also appear in various funerary paintings and sculptural reliefs. On an early 3rd century CE sarcophagus depicting *The Death of Endymion*, Nyx, goddess of the night and mother of Hypnos and his twin-brother Thanatos (‘Death’, Roman Mors), holds a leafy cluster of poppy capsules while she pours liquid, maybe opium to deliver eternal sleep, over the dying youth.⁷⁶³

⁷⁵⁴ PORADA 1967, p.102.

⁷⁵⁵ MERLIN 1994, figs. 32, 33, pp.94-95.

⁷⁵⁶ SARIANIDI 1985, cats.1.29 & 3.42.

⁷⁵⁷ PORADA 1967, p.108.

⁷⁵⁸ ACKERMAN 1965-67, p.137, image too indistinct to identify the species.

⁷⁵⁹ TREISTER 2010.

⁷⁶⁰ ALTMANN 1905 illustrates a range of funerary imagery including both poppy flowers and capsules, figs.107, 108, 140, 203A.

⁷⁶¹ LIMC vol. V-2, pls. 12-31a, pp.404-407; vol. V-1, pp.606-607.

⁷⁶² LIMC, vol.V-2, pl.153, vol. V-1 text, pp.608-609.

⁷⁶³ LIMC, vol.III-2, pl.81, p.558; LIMC vol. III-1, p.734. Nyx had earlier appeared on a cameo distributing poppy capsules, MERLIN 184, fig.70, p.212.

2.2.3.3 The Tomb of Anthesterius, Kerch

The influence of Roman art is clearly evident in 1st century CE tomb paintings at Kerch, although some aspects, such as the linearity of the compositions and frontality of the figures may be attributed to the influence of Parthian art.⁷⁶⁴ Both aspects may be seen in the underground tomb of Bosporan grandee Anthesterius, which has a compartmentalised wall-painting with male figures mounted on horseback approaching a woman seated *en face*, and a yurt and a tree hung with a bow-case beyond, both linked together by a long spear.⁷⁶⁵ Ustinova identifies the seated woman as the Bosporan goddess, Aphrodite *Ourania*.⁷⁶⁶ The style of this tomb broadly compares with other wall-paintings around Kerch such as the Tomb of Alcimus, and burials at Gorgippia (Kuban), and the tomb at Vasjurina Gora,⁷⁶⁷ discussed in Case Study I apropos the roses on the chariot.

Of special interest here is the pair of figures standing within rusticated panelling, **Fig. 2 – 23a**. In the hair of each figure are three objects which Minns describes as foliage, although they do not particularly look like leaves. They may have been identified as such because they are green.⁷⁶⁸ Based on their shape, with a crest or stigma protruding from the top, a better attribution might be pomegranates or poppies. However, pomegranates are heavy fruit which hang downwards, they are not green, and they seem less suitable for hair decoration than poppy capsules fixed by short stalks onto a diadem or directly into their hair, as worn many centuries earlier by the Gazi ‘poppy goddess’, **Fig. 2 – 23b**. With regard to the colour, Dioscorides states that the optimum time for harvesting opium from poppies is while they are still green.⁷⁶⁹ His account of the process remains one of the most comprehensive and accurate and is believed to be based on sound science.⁷⁷⁰ I have tested his account and it is indeed correct. In fact, the *Papaver somniferum* seeds which are commercially available in England have a very low opium yield and the only time it was possible to extract any latex at all was precisely in accordance with Dioscorides’s instructions.

⁷⁶⁴ MORITZ 2006, p.103.

⁷⁶⁵ ROSTOVITZEFF 1913-1914, pl. LI-2, and text pp.181-181. Long spears were associated with non-Greek Iranian peoples, including the Sarmatians.

⁷⁶⁶ USTINOVA 1999, p.148.

⁷⁶⁷ MORITZ 2006, p.135.

⁷⁶⁸ I have considered and rejected an option that the headdress comprised tulips, proposed in TANABE 1999, p.52.

⁷⁶⁹ DIOSCORIDES IV: 64.2; see also PLINY XX: lxxvi.198-199.

⁷⁷⁰ SCARBOROUGH 2010, p.15 details the excellence of Dioscorides’s understanding of the ‘biogenesis of opium alkaloids’.

The figure on the left carries a *kerykeion* (caduceus), a staff intertwined with a pair of snakes, and a small rounded vessel, an *aryballos*.⁷⁷¹ This *aryballos* is virtually identical to examples in a *trompe-l'oeil* painting in an earlier Kerch tomb, late 4th – early 3rd century BCE, where they hang from nails alongside garlands and floral diadems, all representing funerary ritual paraphernalia.⁷⁷² The continuity of certain imagery in Kerch tombs from the 4th century BCE to the 1st century CE has been demonstrated by Regina Moritz.⁷⁷³ *Aryballoi*, vessels for precious substances, may represent a container for oils to anoint the corpse, or alternatively, in both the early Kerch tomb and the tomb of Anthesterius – the latter in view of the poppy headdresses – as receptacles for opium. The *kerykeion* is another reminder of the Graeco-Roman artistic milieu which prevailed among the Bosphorans in the 1st century CE. The implement was associated with Hermes (Mercury) symbolising his role as psychopomp, or metaphorically: ‘a magical staff with which Hermes puts people to sleep and awakens them again’.⁷⁷⁴ Hermes/Mercury appeared on Roman tombs and his ability to awaken the dead was sometimes connected with the power of resurrection.⁷⁷⁵ He is also present on other Kerch tomb paintings, sometimes wearing his characteristic helmet.⁷⁷⁶ The woman on the right, perhaps Hecate or another chthonic deity,⁷⁷⁷ also wields a *kerykeion*.

Earlier, Hermes himself was connected with poppies: he had been called ‘the Kyllenian’, with reference to the place Kyllene which was also called Mekone, from *mekon* the Greek word for poppy, and possibly where Demeter first discovered poppies.⁷⁷⁸ 1st century CE Roman literary sources mention a potential association between Hermes’s staff and opium. The poet Ovid refers to the staff as *medicata*, steeped in drugs,⁷⁷⁹ which remark prompted Milton’s famous reference to it as an ‘opiate rod’.⁷⁸⁰ This relates to opium’s association with sleep and death. And perhaps one should note here that during this period Hermes and Thoth were conflated; and Thoth, as discussed with regard to the Roman cameo vessel, had connections with both opium and the afterlife.

⁷⁷¹ ROSTOVTZEFF revised SCHILTZ 2004, pp.231-232.

⁷⁷² ROSTOVTZEFF revised SCHILTZ 2004, vol. I, p.109; vol. II, pls. XXXVI and XXVII-5; MORITZ 2006, cat.5, pp.142-143.

⁷⁷³ MORITZ 2006.

⁷⁷⁴ KERENYI 1987, p.10.

⁷⁷⁵ RETIEF and CILLIERS 2005, p.194.

⁷⁷⁶ ROSTOVTZEFF revised SCHILTZ 2004, pl.LXXXIX, Hermes wearing winged helmet and boots on a wall-painting in the tomb excavated by A.B. Ašik.

⁷⁷⁷ KERENYI 1987, p.15 identified both Hecate and Iris as psychopomps.

⁷⁷⁸ MERLIN 1984, p.211.

⁷⁷⁹ OVID, *Metamorphoses* I: 716 in the tale of Syrinx.

⁷⁸⁰ LOEWENSTEIN 1993, p.619, fn. 132. English poet, John Milton (1608-1674).

In the context of the information above - the presence of the poppy capsules, an *aryballos* perhaps containing opium, and the *kerykeion* - these figures may be performing the role of psychopomp for Anthesterius.

As mentioned previously, the function of *Papaver somniferum* to render a painless death is borne out by 1st century Roman literature (discussed below). The association of poppies with death – both in terms of the function of opium itself and as represented in imagery here - corresponds to the presence of poppies on Roman funerary sculpture. Likewise, during this era, Hermes (Mercury) with his psychopomp's staff became an enduring presence in many such commemorative contexts. Realistically, the proposition that this painting represents psychopomps and poppies is only an hypothesis. However, as we attempt to interpret the Anthesterius fresco, we might say that the presence of poppies and the *kerykeion* in conjunction with these two figures strongly implies that within the Bosphoran cultural milieu of the 1st century CE, as in Roman examples, poppies were associated with the transition to death – perhaps becoming a symbol of the journey to the afterlife, or of immortality.

An interesting example of poppy capsules is found on an unprovenanced Gandharan incense burner lid, **Fig. 2 – 24a**. It is one of several closely-related pieces which imitate architectural forms, some of which have finials recalling the design of *amalakas*, the discs which crown Hindu and Buddhist sacred buildings.⁷⁸¹ Several in this series have smoke stains and although there is no proof that these pieces were actually used to burn opium, it remains a possibility.⁷⁸²

The furthest east travelled by poppy imagery was to the Kondrat'ev kurgan, ca. 1st century CE, at Noin Ula.⁷⁸³ From this burial came a woven textile depicting a motif which may be identified as a poppy capsule rather than a pomegranate since it is topped by a broad stigma rather than a narrow calyx. **Fig. 2 – 24b**. These capsules emerge from leaves which have loosely dentate margins quite unlike simple ovate pomegranate leaves. Other textiles, such as those found in kurgan VI (early 1st century CE) do indeed feature pomegranates with a schematic two or three-point calyx.⁷⁸⁴ Pomegranates and poppies are both alien species in this remote region with its severe climate and this accords well with the theory that this textile originated from Bactria, western Central

⁷⁸¹ LINENTHAL AND JÄGER 2016, cat. 146. With many thanks to Peter Linenthal and Ulf Jäger for the use of their research and photograph before publication.

⁷⁸² Evidence of raw opium is discussed in 2.4 POPPIES AND THE TILLYA-TEPE WOMEN.

⁷⁸³ RUDENKO 1969, p. 97, p. 114, pl. LXIX.

⁷⁸⁴ TREVER 1932 pls. 3.1 and 3.2, p. 30.

Asia or Iran.⁷⁸⁵ Woollen textiles are one of the archaeologically attestable goods which travelled eastwards from such Central Asian sources, also discussed in 1.2.2.6 ROSES TRAVELLING FURTHER EAST.

2.2.4 Overview and Discussion

2.2.4.1 Poppies at Tillya-tepe

There were seventeen different objects or sets of objects with poppy ornament at Tillya-tepe – both flowers and capsules - and they all belonged to the four principal female burials. Not only do these poppies appear repeatedly but they also occur in considerable quantity – some 118 in total. They feature on some prominent objects, including the poppy capsule necklace, the large cast brooches, the proposed opium censer, and perhaps as decoration on the lattice crown from grave III. The most important items with poppies belonged to the highest rank woman in grave VI, the poppy crown to the second most senior woman, while the lowest status woman in grave V had no poppy imagery at all. These circumstances suggest that poppies were of particular significance to the Tillya-tepe folk and were indications of rank. Therefore their decision to depict these poppies on a range of objects is likely to have been both deliberate and purposeful.

2.2.4.2 Identification

The identification of the Tillya-tepe five-petalled flower was dependent on the presence of corroborative details, in particular, the large opium capsule beads on a necklace and the poppy flower brooch with inset radiating leaves, both in grave VI. This proposal was reinforced by comparison with naturalistic Roman imagery in which morphologically similar poppy flowers were present. The poppy on the Getty Museum cameo vessel, probably used for opium, provided explicit proof of this Roman identification.

There was another convention for poppies, comprising six rounded petals (although the number is sometimes variable), depicted earlier at Bolshaya Bliznitsa, and later at Palmyra.

⁷⁸⁵ TREVER 1932, p.13.

2.2.4.3 Range and Media

Looking at the comparanda, poppies were a relatively common subject-matter in art, occurring in many media, although in the majority of cases the image consisted of a poppy capsule rather than a flower. Poppy capsules were present on north Pontic jewellery between the 4th century BCE and 2nd century CE. The Elizavetovski gold poppy capsule necklace is a different design solution to the Tillya-tepe capsule necklace, but it is interesting to find another opium capsule necklace worn by a woman Elizavetovski with a steppe nomadic heritage who also owned a crown. A woman at Bolshaya Bliznitsa also had poppies on a gold necklace, set in a more naturalistic context.

The Tillya-tepe convention for poppy flowers specifically appears in Roman sculpture, on funerary and commemorative architecture, including emperor Augustus's Ara Pacis. As discussed at length, a single poppy flower also features on a small glass-cameo balsamarium. The presence of the five-petalled flower in Hellenistic-influenced jewellery and silverware was also discussed.

2.2.4.4 Transmission

The specific configuration of five heart-shaped petals was found among a range of cultures from the Graeco-Roman world eastwards. The earliest comparable images were from Hellenistic art, including unprovenanced artefacts which have been described as Bactrian. However, other plant parts which definitively confirm the opium poppy identification are absent. The same question hangs over imagery from Sirkap-Taxila. On the other hand, the flowerheads on Roman objects may be confidently identified as representing *Papaver somniferum*. It is acknowledged that the differentiation of influences is controversial and difficult: as John Boardman remarked in his review of Graeco-Roman influences in this part of Central Asia: '...how slim the margins are upon which decisions about Bactrian or Roman influences depend.'⁷⁸⁶

One Tillya-tepe item which definitely reflected Hellenistic precedents (and which also occurred in both Parthian and Sarmatian art) was the pair of composite-flower ornaments from grave III. It was proposed that these Tillya-tepe ornaments were

⁷⁸⁶ BOARDMAN 1994, p.146.

adapted from such Hellenised roundels into the taste of the Tillya-tepe folk by a unique and distinctive adaption, in which the outline is shaped by the leaves themselves.

2.2.4.5 Gender

As stated, the Tillya-tepe poppies were only found in female burials. Many of the poppy objects from other sites were found in graves but often the gender of the interred is not recorded. We do know that the Bolshaya Bliznitsa pectoral and Elizavetovski necklace came from female burials, as did the earrings from the Sladkovski cemetery and the Kerch necklace with pendant poppy capsules, and therefore there is a case to suggest that opium poppies were frequently associated with women. However, this survey has been restricted to a limited chronological framework. If the scope of the search is extended, one might find more poppies in female burials. Two examples which come to mind are both from the 7th century, a period in which plant imagery was both prolific and naturalistic. The first is a group of poppy capsule pendants from a woman's tomb in southern Italy, where they were thought to have been hung on a belt,⁷⁸⁷ which might suggest a ritual or functional role as they are not especially decorative, **Fig. 2 – 25a**. The second is a set in which some of the poppy capsules are shown in open cage form representing the slits for opium extraction, from a female burial in Axiopolis, Macedonia, **Fig. 2 – 25b**. This topic is discussed further in 2.4 POPPIES AND THE TILLYA-TEPE WOMEN.

2.2.4.6 Context and Iconography

A review of the five-cordiform petalled flower in the art of various cultures which had contact with Bactria during the centuries around the Common Era revealed several themes. The five-petalled flowers which were part of the multi-floral calyces on Parthian and north Pontic metalwork may have been part of a purely ornamental, Hellenistic-Seleucid design. In the case of Hellenistic and Sirkap-Taxila jewellery, the flower often appears alongside emblems of Aphrodite.

Greek influences were also apparent in earlier 'Scythian' pieces. At Bolshaya Bliznitsa a pectoral presents poppies in conjunction with a pastoral scene. Iulia Ustinova considers the iconography of the Bolshaya Bliznitsa grave-goods to be related to local worship of a 'Great Goddess', reflecting: '...a syncretistic religious phenomenon which

⁷⁸⁷ Louvre Museum Inv. BR4652–4655.

is basically indigenous in its major components...In this cult the features of the local goddess are interwoven with allusions mainly to Aphrodite, but also Demeter'.⁷⁸⁸ She proposed that this religion continued into the 1st century of the Common Era, and that this goddess was embodied in the persona of Aphrodite *Ourania*, the chief Bosporan deity.

Naturalistic Roman poppies, which provided strong precedents for the Tillya-tepe poppies, particularly appeared around the 1st century CE, where they featured the poppy flower as a distinctive, perhaps emblematic motif and not usually part of an ornamental pattern. In many contexts Roman opium poppies exhibited strong sepulchral associations, becoming one of the commonest flowers depicted on funerary architecture. These resonances are also apparent in the context of the psychopomp figures wearing poppy capsule crowns in Anthesterius's tomb. At this time too we find poppies in images of Hypnos, personification of sleep, who also played the role of Psychopomp in some scenes.

Despite the fact that the opium poppies on the Palmyrene tower tombs, dated 83 and 120 CE, exhibit a different floral convention to the Roman and Tillya-tepe versions, they also reflected a connection with death. This all indicates that opium poppies denoted an iconographical allusion to death across several cultures in this period.

Since opium poppies seemed to be so important to these Tillya-tepe women, we will now investigate their wider cultural significance as revealed in texts, in order to discover whether there are any correlations between the social functions of opium and the presence of opium poppies in art.

⁷⁸⁸ USTINOVA 1999, p.59.

2.3 A short cultural history of the opium poppy

The purpose of this section is to review the various cultural and functional aspects of opium poppies in order to provide context to the art historical study. It will be useful to discover whether the medical and ritual uses of poppies and the accounts of opium in general literature might, firstly, inform our understanding of why poppy imagery might be deployed in art, and secondly, offer specific clues towards the potential iconographical role of opium poppies at Tillya-tepe.

2.3.1 Introduction

Papaver somniferum is widely considered to be a valuable plant because of its extensive range of pharmacological properties. The earliest alleged reference to opium may have occurred among the Sumerians in the 3rd millennium BCE, in medical inscriptions on clay tablets dated to ca.2100 BCE found at Nippur, but the Mesopotamian evidence is disputed.⁷⁸⁹ There is a greater degree of agreement that the word ‘špn/ špnn’ means opium poppy in the Egyptian manuscript, the *Ebers Papyrus* (ca.1550).⁷⁹⁰ Opium poppies were well-known to the Greeks,⁷⁹¹ Romans,⁷⁹² and Iranians.⁷⁹³

Opium contains alkaloids whose bio-chemical attributes render it a formidable remedy for many afflictions. It has long been a staple source of medicine for many communities since it grows across much of temperate Eurasia as both a cultivated and a wild plant. The opium latex itself is easily extracted using simple tools and techniques and it is therefore readily available to all categories of cultures: sedentary, semi-nomadic and nomadic.

2.3.2 Medical uses of opium

Opium is the white latex extracted from *Papaver somniferum* capsules. It contains forty alkaloids including the principal constituents morphine, codeine, narcotine, papaverine and thebaine. These substances are the source of its potency and affect the brain and

⁷⁸⁹ See MERLIN 1984, pp.153-155. CAMPBELL THOMPSON 1949, pp.224-227 argues in favour of a textual identification, while Krikorian robustly challenges this view, KRIKORIAN 1975.

⁷⁹⁰ MERLIN 1984, pp.273-277; THORWALD 1962, p.61; GABRA 1956; contra: MANNICHE 1999, p.131.

⁷⁹¹ DIOSCORIDES IV: 64; MERLIN 1984, pp.148-149.

⁷⁹² MERLIN 1984, pp.148-151.

⁷⁹³ SHAHNAVAZ 2011 (accessed February 2015).

central nervous system.⁷⁹⁴ The role of opium has been researched at length and the following account is a short summary of its applications from around the 8th century BCE onwards when Greek literary sources become available.

Homer's *Odyssey* provides an early reference to opium.⁷⁹⁵ It appears later in the writings of Theophrastus (*ca.*371-287 BCE)⁷⁹⁶ and Hippocrates (*ca.*460-370 BCE), in which twenty-one out of twenty-five references concern gynaecological uses.⁷⁹⁷ But of greatest interest here are the 1st century CE sources, and John Scarborough presents a detailed discussion of Dioscorides followed by a shorter analysis of Pliny's contribution.⁷⁹⁸ In book IV of his *Materia Medica*, Dioscorides details the medical uses of opium and gives an entirely accurate description of the extraction of opium from a poppy capsule. Much of this information was also recorded by Pliny who discussed the scope and merits of opium and expanded on the social context of its use.⁷⁹⁹ In the 2nd century CE, Galen created a *theriaca*, a concoction of drugs suitable for many illnesses and a general antidote to poisons, in which opium was a key component.

Opium was used to treat a wide variety of afflictions and there is only space to summarise its most important applications. As a narcotic it can be dangerous for several reasons: due to its psychoactive effects and since it is toxic, even fatal, when taken in excess. In 1st century CE Rome, opium was certainly used to procure a painless death by suicides.⁸⁰⁰ In addition to the toxicity of opium, its addictive aspects were also known, with ever-increasing doses required to sustain its various effects over a period of time. Galen, as doctor to Marcus Aurelius, recorded the emperor's tremendous consumption of opium, but Scarborough discards any notion that he implies that the emperor was addicted.⁸⁰¹ In general, Greek and Roman writers were far more interested in the benefits of the drug.⁸⁰²

Opium was widely recognised as a soporific, either on its own or as part of a compound with other plants. In greater concentrations opium affects the nature of sleep which may

⁷⁹⁴ For a detailed explanation of the biochemical action of opium alkaloids, particularly on the brain, see KENNEDY 2014, pp.87-90; also SCHIFF 2002, p.189.

⁷⁹⁵ Discussed below.

⁷⁹⁶ THEOPHRASTUS IX: 16.8, on its use with henbane.

⁷⁹⁷ KING 1998, p.120.

⁷⁹⁸ SCARBOROUGH 2010, VII, pp.4-16.

⁷⁹⁹ PLINY XX: lxxvi.198-200; discussed in: SCARBOROUGH 2010, VII, p.4;

⁸⁰⁰ PLINY XX: lxxvi.199-200; discussed in: SCARBOROUGH 2010, VII, p.10.

⁸⁰¹ SCARBOROUGH 2010, VII, pp.17-18.

⁸⁰² For remarks on the addictive aspects of opium and its derivatives, SCARBOROUGH 2010, VII pp.10-12.

be accompanied ‘by alluring dreams and visions’.⁸⁰³ Such psychotropic effects have prompted a wide belief that opium was used during rituals, whether in relation to religious rites or other ceremonial activities,⁸⁰⁴ although there is limited explicit confirmation of this in ancient texts. The *Orphic Hymns* (3rd century BCE to 2nd century CE), record that opium was burnt for the personification of sleep, Hypnos, who was: ‘king of Gods, and men of mortal birth, sov’ reign of all sustain’d by mother Earth’, for Death (Thanatos), and for the River Lethe in the Underworld whose waters rendered oblivion to those who drank from them.⁸⁰⁵ In his *Georgics*, Virgil too conflates opium with the River Lethe.⁸⁰⁶

The proximity of sleep and death was well-recognised by the Greeks and Romans. Pliny remarked of opium: ‘This juice not only acts as a soporific, but if taken in large doses induces death through sleep’.⁸⁰⁷ And as discussed, Hypnos carried poppies and on occasion acted as psychopomp to guide the dead. His twin brother, Thanatos, representing Death, was ‘the giver of eternal sleep’.⁸⁰⁸

The conceptual association of sleep and death is also reflected more widely, including in biblical passages such as Psalm 13.3: ‘...O Jehovah my God: Lighten my eyes, lest I sleep the sleep of death’.⁸⁰⁹ However, neither poppies nor opium were named in biblical texts.

Memory loss too was a side-effect or even an intentional objective of opium consumption, which explains its above-mentioned association with the River Lethe. This connection has led to the suggestion that the ‘Lotus eaters’ encountered by Odysseus consumed opium poppies rather than lotuses since their memories faded away and all they craved was more fruit.⁸¹⁰

Importantly, opium was used to suppress emotional pain. In Homer’s *Odyssey*, Helen of Troy dropped opium into wine, creating nepenthes to: ‘quieten pain and strife’.⁸¹¹ Opium’s power is so great that, as Homer notes, someone might remain calm drinking

⁸⁰³ SCARBOROUGH 2010, VII, p.10.

⁸⁰⁴ See particularly COLLARD 2011; MERLIN 2003, 1984.

⁸⁰⁵ *Orphic Hymn to Hypnos*, verse LXXXIV.

⁸⁰⁶ VIRGIL, *Georgics* I: 78 and 4: 545.

⁸⁰⁷ PLINY XX: lxxvi.199. See 2.3 A SHORT CULTURAL HISTORY OF THE OPIUM POPPY.

⁸⁰⁸ LIMC Vol.VII-1, p.904, citing Sophocles’s *Oedipus of Coloneus*, 1577

⁸⁰⁹ See COLLARD 2011, p.247, fn. 1220.

⁸¹⁰ GOODY 1993, p.33, fn.15.

⁸¹¹ HOMER, *Odyssey*, IV: 243-246 <http://www.poetryintranslation.com/PITBR/Greek/Odyssey4.htm> (accessed February 2015).

opium in wine even: ‘though his mother and father lay there dead...though they put his dear son or his brother to the sword, before his very eyes’.⁸¹² This capacity to vitiate the effects of grief and horror makes opium a useful aid to mourners during funerary rites, and this may be one of the explanations for the many small vials which were left in tombs.⁸¹³

Opium is a remedy for many other ills, including for gynaecological problems, as an anti-tussive for coughs, and a treatment for boils, skin problems, eye inflammations and diarrhoea.⁸¹⁴

The universality of these remedies is apparent in the writings of later authors such as the Persian scholar and doctor, Avicenna (980-1037). In his influential textbook, *Canon of Medicine*, Avicenna included additional uses of opium but expressed considerable reservations concerning its use due to the potential toxicity of opium and the risk of accidental overdose and death.⁸¹⁵

Research into psychoactive substances is always popular and modern scholars have scrutinised the ancient sources, testing their assertions by means of biochemical analyses and in relation to current pharmacological uses.⁸¹⁶ These studies have substantiated the accuracy of many of the earlier claims for opium.

2.3.3 Opium in cult and ritual

There is a fairly widespread assumption that psychotropic plants in general were important in religious ceremonies and the development of religion.⁸¹⁷ Extracts from psychoactive plants might be exploited for their entheogenic qualities, whereby substances such as opium could ‘engender an altered state of consciousness, either in a trance or a hallucinatory state that serves as a gateway to a spiritual or religious experience and/or communication with the spirit worlds.’⁸¹⁸ This is still regarded as a controversial area of study in which unsubstantiated statements are tossed around as if they were facts, and therefore only mainstream sources are considered here.

⁸¹² HOMER, *Odyssey*, IV: 248-251. <http://www.poetryintranslation.com/PITBR/Greek/Odyssey4.htm> (accessed February 2015).

⁸¹³ COLLARD 2011 provides evidence for this in late Bronze Age Cypriot tombs, pp.241-246.

⁸¹⁴ SCARBOROUGH 2010, VII, pp.8-10; JULYAN and DIRCKSEN, pp.83-87. CELSUS V:18-25 gives many remedies including those combining ‘poppy tears’ with other plants and exotics such as myrrh.

⁸¹⁵ HEYDARI *et al.* 2013.

⁸¹⁶ JULYAN and DIRCKSEN 2011 p.87 and ROSSO 2010, p.83 give good summaries.

⁸¹⁷ KENNEDY 2014 provides a concise and credible introduction to this subject; see also MERLIN 2003 and 1984. COLLARD 2011 offers a measured summary.

⁸¹⁸ KENNEDY 2014, p.5.

Merlin cites authors who have investigated the potential association between psychotropic drugs and ritual activity,⁸¹⁹ and goes on to summarise the possible circumstances of ritual activity for various substances including opium, from the 6th millennium BCE to the Roman period.⁸²⁰ However, as noted above, ritualised use of opium is often difficult to establish with any precision. The identification of the seeds of *Papaver somniferum* at a site merely proves the presence of the plant which may have been harvested for its seeds to be used in cooking or processed into oil. It is only when opium latex is detected that we have real evidence of opium use, and even then it may have been for medicinal purposes, unless there are contextual clues to ceremonial use. When samples of different psychoactive substances are found together then this implies a conscious effort to create a mind-altering compound and it becomes more feasible that its purpose was related to ceremonial or ritual activity rather than medication.⁸²¹ For the sake of brevity only a few examples of possible ritual circumstances are remarked upon here.

As early as 5000 BCE cultivated *Papaver somniferum* seeds were found in the apparent context of a religious/cult room in a Neolithic settlement at La Marmotta, Italy, which has been related to a ‘Great Mother’ goddess.⁸²² But such suggestions involve a large measure of speculation which cannot be fully corroborated. Sarianidi thought he had found evidence of the ritual drink *haoma* containing traces of opium in Bronze Age Bactria-Margiana, at both Togolok and Gonur Depe,⁸²³ but subsequent scientific analysis has contradicted his findings and they are no longer accepted.⁸²⁴

Evidence for the ritualised consumption of opium in the Bronze Age cultures of the Eastern Mediterranean is more substantial, investigated by David Collard in his PhD study of late Bronze Age Cyprus. He showed that: ‘Vessels associated with opium consumption are almost exclusively restricted to cult sites’.⁸²⁵

Collard’s detailed study of the circumstances of opium and alcohol at these sites gives valuable insights for which he provides ample interpretation. Hundreds of juglets in the shape of poppy capsules were found in a tomb which contained multiple burials in the

⁸¹⁹ MERLIN 2003, p.295.

⁸²⁰ MERLIN 2003, p.302-311; MERLIN 1984, pp.207-280, partly on rituals.

⁸²¹ MERLIN 1984, pp.226-230 discusses possible ‘cocktails’ of psychoactive drugs, including opium.

⁸²² MERLIN 2003, p.302.

⁸²³ SARIANIDI 1994, pp.391-192; 2003:

<http://www.heritageinstitute.com/zoroastrianism/merv/sarianidi.htm> (accessed February 2015).

⁸²⁴ HIEBERT 1994, p.146; and remarks in BRYANT 2001, p.213.

⁸²⁵ COLLARD 2011, p.297.

Kazaphani-Ayios cemetery in northern Cyprus, continuously used between 1700 and 1200 BCE. These juglets probably reflected the consumption of an opium solution during rites and activities partaken around the tombs.⁸²⁶ As discussed, opium might be consumed by the grieving entourage as gentle sedation to relieve their emotional pain. The presence of the juglets so close to the corpse gives a hint that opium may have even provisioned the deceased.⁸²⁷ Collard encapsulates the prevalent opinion on the liminal qualities of opium:

‘...the consumption of opium (and perhaps alcohol) may have been designed to initiate direct contact with the world of the dead in order to ensure that the spirit/soul of the deceased was finally accepted into this realm...perhaps the deceased needed to be guided to the underworld by the living, perhaps the ancestors needed to be present at the mortuary feast or perhaps the living needed access to the underworld in order to pay appropriate homage to the deceased as a newly established ancestor’.⁸²⁸

Collard also noted indications that opium was used in non-mortuary circumstances, whereby small numbers of opium vessels were found alongside ‘votive vessels’ and at cult sites, which he connects with divination,⁸²⁹ although this latter hypothesis is difficult to verify.

There is a certain body of material evidence from elsewhere suggesting that poppies possessed a sacred status: the Minoan ‘poppy goddess’ from Gazi with her crown of opium poppy capsules, **Fig. 2 – 23b**; a female figure with poppies on a Mycenaean signet ring;⁸³⁰ and a scene of a male figure carrying a sprig of poppies on an 8th century BCE Assyrian bas-relief from Khorsabad.⁸³¹ At Dauni, Italy, anthropomorphic female stelae from the 7th – 6th century BCE were found accompanied by poppy pendants in what may be ritual circumstances,⁸³² and these will be contextualised further in 2.4 POPPIES AND THE TILLYA-TEPE WOMEN. Later, around the Common Era, poppy seeds played a ceremonial role at Pompeii, thought to be associated with the fact that

⁸²⁶ COLLARD 2011, pp.196-204.

⁸²⁷ COLLARD 2011, p.242.

⁸²⁸ COLLARD 2011, p.203.

⁸²⁹ COLLARD 2011, p.262-264 and pp.273-275, p.281, pp.297-99.

⁸³⁰ MARINATOS 1960, cats. 128-131, p.153; EVANS 1925, Fig.12, p.11.

⁸³¹ British Museum, inv. 118814.

⁸³² LEONE 2002-3.

poppy-seed cakes were given as votive offerings as part of rites associated with the Isis-Demeter cult.⁸³³

Furthermore, opium has been found from time-to-time in Scythian and Sarmatian burials between the Kuban and Pontic area, from the 4th century BCE onwards (discussed below).⁸³⁴ The incidence of raw opium in tombs at the Sarmatian-Alan site of Klin-Yar in the Kuban is particularly important evidence of its funerary role.⁸³⁵ There is also possible evidence for the burning of opium in the aforementioned lid for a Gandharan incense burner with poppy chimneys, **Fig. 2 – 25a**,⁸³⁶ and there are suggestions for images of ritual activity on Sogdian ossuaries.⁸³⁷ All these examples are explored in 2.4 POPPIES AND THE TILLYA-TEPE WOMEN.

2.3.4 Opium poppies in religion and mythology

Poppies feature in the iconography of the Greek goddess Demeter and they also occurred in her mythology. The first instance is described by Ovid,⁸³⁸ when Ceres (Roman counterpart to Demeter) wandered the earth in grief for her lost daughter, Persephone, and broke her self-imposed fast when she picked and tasted a ‘slumbrous’ poppy. Soon afterwards she stayed at a house and gave a child there, Triptolemus, poppies in warm milk to make him sleep.⁸³⁹

The worship of Demeter and Persephone centered on the Eleusian Mysteries, which had their origins in agricultural fertility rites, and the presence of opium poppies in her imagery has provoked suggestions that opium was taken as part of the cult experience in the *kykeon* potion.⁸⁴⁰

The deployment of opium by priestesses is also mentioned in Virgil’s *Aeneid*, when Aeneas recounts how a priestess in the Garden of Hesperides drugged with honey and slumbrous poppies the dragon protecting the sacred tree bearing golden apples.⁸⁴¹

⁸³³ CIARALDI and RICHARDSON 2000.

⁸³⁴ KORYAKOVA 2014, p.249; HÄRKE and BELJINSKI 2012.

⁸³⁵ HÄRKE and BELJINSKI 2012.

⁸³⁶ LINENTHAL and JÄGER 2016, forthcoming.

⁸³⁷ ABDULLAEV 2010.

⁸³⁸ OVID, *Fasti*, IV: 531-532. The tale of Persephone is discussed in 3.3 A SHORT CULTURAL HISTORY OF NARCISSI.

⁸³⁹ OVID, *Fasti*, IV: 547-548.

⁸⁴⁰ KERENYI 1976, pp.23-24; MERLIN 1984, pp.223-225, p.228. SAMORINI 2000, p.24, p.50.

⁸⁴¹ VIRGIL, *Aeneid*, IV: 485.

2.3.5 Overview and discussion

Poppies, the plant producing potent opium latex played a notable role in both literature and medicine. Opium was easily extracted and it provided a readily accessible source of remedies with many useful functions related to its psychoactive properties. Its role as a soporific, as a salve for pain both physical and emotional, and *in extremis*, a means of procuring death were all attested by writers in the Graeco-Roman world.

Texts demonstrate that this association of opium with death arose from its ability to induce sleep, which might offer temporary oblivion followed by a return to the living world; or it might deliver a deeper sleep which migrates into death. According to Collard, this latter stage enabled the initial process of the soul leaving the body prior to full death, for the soul's journey to the underworld.⁸⁴² This connection between opium and death is marked in the archaeological record at several historical points. The strongest evidence is provided by the many opium juglets found in Bronze Age tombs in Cyprus, and the raw opium in burials in the north Pontic area many centuries later. These both may be construed as either indications of ritualised consumption of opium during funeral ceremonies, or some sort of offering relating to the afterlife.

Therefore, it is proposed that the capacity of opium to fulfil several critical functions in funerary circumstances and its particular liminal association with death provide the sub-text for the imagery on funerary monuments in the Roman Empire, not only at its heart in Rome but also as far east as Palmyra, described in the previous chapter.

The relationship of poppies and goddesses, which is discernible in Minoan art and later in relation to Demeter, also persists in the literature.

Cumulatively, the textual evidence for opium correlates with many of the findings from our study of opium poppy imagery. This apparent confluence of imagery and text, both in the context of death and to some degree with particular regard to women, will be borne in mind when we consider the potential significance of poppy imagery at Tillyatepe in the next section.

⁸⁴² COLLARD 2011, pp.247-249.

2.4 Opium poppies and the Tillya-tepe women

2.4.1 Introduction

The repeated and significant presence of poppy imagery in the graves of the four senior Tillya-tepe women has been discussed. The greatest concentration of poppy imagery was in grave VI, and it has been argued that the woman in grave III wore a poppy crown. The distribution of poppies seems to be related to rank. We will now revisit the Tillya-tepe burials and then consider evidence relating to opium and poppies from other sites, looking for clues to explain why these women might have chosen to decorate their possessions with this flower.

2.4.2 The Tillya-tepe women's burials

One area of special interest are the caches of small vessels and implements which are most noticeably present in the richest graves III and VI. Henri-Paul Francfort remarked on these vessels, 'described as "for cosmetics" of which we know nothing without analyses, whether they were destined to contain unguents or plants more for medicine than aesthetics.'⁸⁴³

Sariandi noted many fragments of round ivory vessels just outside the coffin in the grave III burial pit, as well as seven long-necked silver vials, a hemispherical silver utensil, gold lidded pots, a spatula and other containers,⁸⁴⁴ but this burial was disturbed so the information is less precise than for grave VI. In his drawings of grave VI, **Fig. 0 – 3**, small metal tools such as miniature knives and receptacles are visible, again just outside her coffin.⁸⁴⁵ Tiny balsamaria lay at head level,⁸⁴⁶ one of which is very similar in shape and scale to the Getty opium vessel, whose narrow necks indicate their exclusive use for liquids. Boardman notes that the small containers in grave VI were imports from the Mediterranean world.⁸⁴⁷ The position of these vessels echoes the arrangement of the 'warrior's' grave, whereby some of the 'tools of his trade', his

⁸⁴³ Translated from FRANCFORT 2011, p.308. Francfort considers these in the context of the wands and diverse pendants associated with apotropaic or medical functions.

⁸⁴⁴ SARIANDI 1985, pp.33-34; SARIANIDI 1989, fig.24, p.68.

⁸⁴⁵ SARIANIDI 1989, p.115; also SARIANIDI 1985, p.47 and cat.6.35, p.258.

⁸⁴⁶ SARIANIDI 1989, p.115.

⁸⁴⁷ BOARDMAN 2007, p.13.

weaponry, the horse bones, and other objects denoting his status were arranged outside the coffin.⁸⁴⁸

Francfort's reference to the knives in several of the graves is also revealing, as he considers them not as weapons, but hesitates: 'between a purely utilitarian domestic or sacrificial function.'⁸⁴⁹ Such implements were not only found in grave VI, but also in grave II, where a small pickaxe and two Siberian sickle-shaped knives were found in a basket decorated with poppies, and flowers identified in Case Study III as narcissi. This is the only instance of two plant motifs featuring together on the same object and may reflect the fact both plants were recognised as narcotics in the 1st century CE.⁸⁵⁰ A basket in grave I contained pincers and tweezers,⁸⁵¹ and there was also a gold-mounted 'dagger' handle in grave III.⁸⁵²

It is feasible, based on the presence of these containers and implements, that the incumbents of the four graves all fulfilled some sort of medical or sacral role. We might speculate that these women functioned as healers or priestesses. As discussed, opium was a potent drug, effective for many ills and important for its use in rituals, so perhaps at Tillya-tepe it was under the control of these elite women. The basket containing implements and decorated with opium poppies and narcissus may encapsulate this role.

When we look to Graeco-Roman literature, both mythological and medical, there is ample evidence of women who understood the properties of plants and used them to produce medicine and poisons: to cure, enchant or kill.⁸⁵³ There may be a natural link between opium and women arising from opium's use for the treatment of gynaecological conditions, which were often attended to by female midwives. As noted, Hippocrates mentions opium remedies largely in female contexts. We even read of the goddess Demeter consuming opium, to provide restorative sleep during her search for her daughter, Persephone.⁸⁵⁴

Women of high status were specifically associated with the administration of healing and harmful drugs in mythological literature. As mentioned, Homer states that Queen Polydamna hands down her wisdom concerning the dispensing of opium in wine to

⁸⁴⁸ See 0.4 TILLYA-TEPE BURIALS.

⁸⁴⁹ FRANCFORT 2011, p.308.

⁸⁵⁰ See Case study III: THE SIX-PETALLED FLOWER.

⁸⁵¹ SARIANIDI 1985, p.21, as well as various compounds.

⁸⁵² SARIANIDI 1985, cat.3.49, p.242.

⁸⁵³ SCARBOROUGH 2010, VII. RETIEF AND CILLIERS 2005, pp.165-188.

⁸⁵⁴ Discussed in 2.3 A SHORT CULTURAL HISTORY OF THE OPIUM POPPY

Helen, Queen of Troy.⁸⁵⁵ Medea and Circe were members of the royal house of Colchis on the east side of the Black Sea and were poisoners under the guidance of the goddess Hekate, who was an expert in dispensing magical herbs.⁸⁵⁶

During the first centuries BCE and CE there were notorious, accomplished Roman female poisoners who were commissioned to murder members of the imperial family and other prominent figures.⁸⁵⁷ They largely employed plant-derived drugs such as yew, henbane, opium,⁸⁵⁸ again emphasising the social importance of plant knowledge.

In view of Tillya-tepe's putative cultural commonalities with the Sarmatian-Alans, we should recall that Dioscorides considered that the Sarmatians to be particularly skilled in medicine.⁸⁵⁹ Furthermore, in her informative but sometimes speculative articles on 'Sarmatian' women, Jeannine Davis-Kimball suggested that there was a whole class of priestesses and other elite status women who fulfilled prominent positions within society.⁸⁶⁰ Her theory is based on specific objects found within female burials.⁸⁶¹ In relation to Tillya-tepe, she wrote that: '...the artifacts...indicate that females in burials 1, 5 and 6 had been priestesses, and females in burials 2 and 3 were warrior-priestesses.'⁸⁶² However, although the evidence provided by Davis-Kimball does not sufficiently corroborate her assertions, there is perhaps more than a germ of truth in the theory that women in nomadic and ex-nomadic society played prestigious and useful roles within their communities.

Factored into this proposal, we should consider: '...the common association of cult and healing in pre-industrial societies.'⁸⁶³ Therefore the medical role of the Tillya-tepe women may well have been a hybrid one, combined with religious functions, equivalent to that of a priestess. Certainly the Magi in Iran included classes of both priests and healers.⁸⁶⁴ The conflation of these two activities reflects a compatibility which is rarely found nowadays because of the modern, artificial separation of physical remedies from ritual applications.⁸⁶⁵ In fact, cures which are scientifically proven on the basis of

⁸⁵⁵ HOMER, *Odyssey*, IV: 243-246. <http://www.poetryintranslation.com/PITBR/Greek/Odyssey4.htm> (accessed February 2015).

⁸⁵⁶ APOLLONIUS RHODIUS, *Argonautica*, III: 249-251; III: 528.

⁸⁵⁷ CILLIERS AND RETIEF 2000, p.90.

⁸⁵⁸ CILLIERS AND RETIEF 2000, pp.91-93.

⁸⁵⁹ DIOSCORIDES 'Introduction', p.lxviii.

⁸⁶⁰ DAVIS-KIMBALL 2000, 1997-98, 1997.

⁸⁶¹ DAVIS-KIMBALL 1997-98, pp.6-8.

⁸⁶² DAVIS-KIMBALL 1997-98, p.24.

⁸⁶³ COLLARD 2009, p.76.

⁸⁶⁴ ELGOOD 1934, p.12, p.19.

⁸⁶⁵ MERLIN 2003, p.296.

demonstrable results might be augmented and made more effective with the benign intervention of the gods.⁸⁶⁶

Therefore, it is possible that the reason for the prolific presence of poppy imagery in the female burials was related to the Tillya-tepe women's role as medical and/or religious practitioners, utilising their knowledge of plant remedies manufactured from herbs, roots, capsules and bulbs, an expertise which was historically in the hands of women.

2.4.3 Opium and rituals: archaeological evidence beyond Tillya-tepe

In 2.3 A SHORT CULTURAL HISTORY OF THE OPIUM POPPY the evidence for the use of psychoactive substances was discussed in relation to cultic activities. From around the 7th – 6th centuries BCE iconic female anthropomorphic stelae were discovered at Dauni, south-east Italy, with many poppy pendants worn on a belt in what appear to be ritualistic and/or medical contexts.⁸⁶⁷ No poppies were present on their male counterparts. Laura Leone suggests that the important spiritual role of opium poppies may have restricted their use to a priestly class. In this regard we recall the 7th century BCE Italian iron poppy capsules which hung from a woman's belt, **Fig. 2 – 26a**, and the cluster of bronze poppy capsules from a female burial of the same date at Macedonia, **Fig. 2 – 26b**, which both may have denoted some sort of role connected with opium.

As has been observed, art historical sources illustrate the funereal associations of opium poppies in the Roman world, and archaeological discoveries also provide evidence of both ritual and mortuary functions of opium. From an earlier era, opium and cannabis residues were identified inside two tiny gold cups from a 4th century BCE Scythian tomb chamber at Sengileevskoe-2 near Stavropol between the Black and Caspian seas.⁸⁶⁸ Raw opium also appeared around the 1st century BCE in the north Pontic area, which Ludmila Koryakova discusses in the context of objects found at Tillya-tepe and Lower Don sites such as Khokhlach and Kobiakovo.⁸⁶⁹

⁸⁶⁶ For example, the notion of 'religious medicine' in the 2nd century CE is discussed in HORSTMANSHOFF 2004.

⁸⁶⁷ LEONE 2002-3.

⁸⁶⁸ <http://news.nationalgeographic.com/2015/05/150522-scythians-marijuana-bastard-wars-kurgan-archaeology/>; http://www.archaeology.org/issues/220-1607/features/4560-rites-of-the-scythians#art_page3 (both accessed July 2016).

⁸⁶⁹ KORYAKOVA 2002, p.276; KORYAKOVA 2014, pp.249-250, though she does not specify which site yielded the opium.

Furthermore, opium resin was found in a tomb at the ‘Sarmatian-Alan’ necropolis at Klin-Yar in the Kuban, a burial-site used by generations of nomadic horsemen. Grave 351 was occupied by a man with a long sword, and a woman with an artificially deformed skull⁸⁷⁰ (like the incumbent of Tillya-tepe grave VI), whose grave-goods included gold earrings, ornamental dress appliqué, a mirror, and interestingly, two pieces of opium resin. Admittedly the date is later than Tillya-tepe: the presence of 2nd or 3rd century CE pottery provides a *terminus post quem*, although the burials may be dated to the 4th or 5th century CE.⁸⁷¹ Opium resin was found in two other graves at Klin-Yar from the Alan period (5th – 6th century CE).⁸⁷² The purpose of this opium is unknown but there are a number of possibilities. Resin is suited to burning in a similar way to incense for ritual purposes. It might be used to please the gods who savoured such attentions. Opium fumes might render their sedating effects to the attendant mourners, since inhalation enabled the opium to enter the bloodstream more quickly than when taken orally in solution. Or it may have been dissolved in a host solution like wine. Finally it might have represented a purely symbolic function as an offering for the afterlife, since some remained in the tombs.

There is limited evidence of paraphernalia for the consumption of opium, including a possible silver opium pipe found in a grave at Sidorovka in the Altai, tentatively dated to the 1st centuries BCE.⁸⁷³ There may be evidence for the burning of opium resin in the aforementioned Kushan terracotta incense burner, enabling the smoke, presumably from opium, aptly to rise up through the poppy capsule-shaped chimneys. I have also suggested that the woman in grave VI owned a censer decorated with the image of an opium flower-head.

Finally, although it is beyond our period, we note Kazim Abdullaev’s proposal that images of opium poppies feature on two Sogdian artefacts and these might relate to the use of opium in the ritual drink, *haoma*: on an ossuary from Ishtykhan, near Samarkand,⁸⁷⁴ and a terracotta object from Koshtepa dated to the 5th – 7th centuries CE.⁸⁷⁵ Finally, I would mention a 5 – 6th century CE ossuary from Mizdakhan, close to

⁸⁷⁰ HÄRKE and BELINSKIJ 2012, Fig 3, p.140; Burial 351B. Other women with artificially distorted skulls were found in several other Sarmatian-Alan burials, including grave 342, *ca.* 1st-2nd century CE and several later graves, BELINSKIJ and HÄRKE 2000, p.196 and p.198.

⁸⁷¹ HÄRKE and BELJINSKI 2012, p.141; BELJINSKI and HÄRKE 2000, p.196.

⁸⁷² Grave 373 occupied by a woman in the Sarmatian-Alan excavations; grave 1 (female and male) in the Alan tombs in the northern cemetery area, BELJINSKI and HÄRKE 2000, pp.199 and 203.

⁸⁷³ TREISTER 2012a, p.91; KORYAKOVA 2006, pp.107-108.

⁸⁷⁴ ABDULLAEV 2009, pp.60-63; pls. 27 and 28; ABDULLAEV 2010, pp.337-338.

⁸⁷⁵ ABDULLAEV 2009, pp.64-72; pl.30; ABDULLAEV 2010, pp.338-340.

Gyaur Kala the source of the ‘Merv’ vase,⁸⁷⁶ in which sprigs of opium capsules with strongly serrated foliage appear flanking a lion on the front and rear,⁸⁷⁷ presumably indicating opium’s association with death.

In view of this evidence and the ritual role of opium discussed above, if the women from Grave VI, and perhaps also graves III, II and I, were dispensers of opium, this role may well have included ritualised practices combined with medical activities, the dispensing of cures perhaps accompanied by religious activities such as opium burning, incantations or prayers.

2.4.4 The divine context

A general conjunction between women and poppies is evident to some degree in relation to deities and cultic practices. The Gazi poppy deity is the earliest example demonstrating this concurrence, **Fig. 2 – 24b**, and there is the additional connection of poppies with a goddess-figure on Mycenaean rings.

In the Graeco-Roman world, clusters of poppies and wheat were part of the goddess Demeter’s core iconography because of her status as an agricultural and fertility goddess, and as a symbol of her Eleusian Mysteries;⁸⁷⁸ and poppies occur twice in her mythology, as discussed above. Broadly contemporary with Tillya-tepe, the tomb of Anthesterius in Kerch presents us with both the Hermes-type figure and a woman, with poppies in their hair, in the role of psychopomps, **Fig. 2 – 24a**. We have already noted the poppy seeds found in a ritual context at Pompeii, probably votive offerings related to an Isis-Demeter cult.⁸⁷⁹

In the 2nd century CE, poppy plants decorated the Temple of Bacchus (Greek Dionysos) at Baalbek, depicted alongside wheat sheaves, a pairing of plants more usually associated with Ceres/Demeter. This perhaps reflects the combination of ritual imagery alluding to both Dionysos and Demeter, as an expression of ‘the longstanding and intimate association’ between the two deities.⁸⁸⁰ The connection between Dionysos and

⁸⁷⁶ See 1.2.2 ARTEFACTS WITH ROMAN IMAGERY: Post-Roman roses.

⁸⁷⁷ GRENET 1984, p.144 and pl.XXXIII. This is the third reference in this thesis to poppies and lions, the others being the ‘lion-heads’ on the proposed poppy crown in grave III and the lion-head finials on the Bolshaya Bliznitsa pectoral.

⁸⁷⁸ KERENYI 1976, pp.23-24; MERLIN 1984, pp.223-229.

⁸⁷⁹ CIARALDI and RICHARDSON 2000.

⁸⁸⁰ CASTRIOTA 1995, p78. Iacchus, later called Bacchus, was sometimes described as Demeter’s son, RICHARDSON 1979, fn.3, p.27.

Demeter or other fertility goddesses is not only discernible in artistic contexts but was also found more widely in terms of joint cults.⁸⁸¹

The personification of sleep and death, closely associated with opium poppies, are however male, although their mother Nyx also carries poppies. This emphasis on the chthonic echoes the regular presence of poppies in Roman funerary art from the 1st to the early 3rd centuries CE.

Therefore although opium poppies feature in conjunction with some male divinities, the association is nuanced and in the majority contexts there is a persistent connection between women and opium poppies, even if the evidence is a little fragmented.

2.4.5 Overview and discussion

Since it was proposed that the images of *Papaver somniferum* imagery on the possessions of the four principal Tillya-tepe females represented something more meaningful than the simple desire to decorate, this section entailed a closer look at these women's graves against the background of an apparently widespread association of opium poppies with women, including to a lesser degree, female deities.

In addition to the implied association of these Tillya-tepe women with opium, based on the multiple examples of poppy imagery, the distinctive depositional character of receptacles and metal implements placed in a designated location within their burials – especially in Graves III and VI - prompts the possibility that these women may have handled opium in some professional capacity. The medical, narcotic characteristics of the opium poppy and its ritualistic associations have endowed this plant with a special status which endured through millennia. It is hypothesised that an important drug like opium was perhaps retained under the aegis of elite women, in the role of priestesses or figures with religious authority, who controlled its use for medical, funerary and other ritual activities. Of course these proposals are circumstantial and theoretical. Nevertheless, one might postulate that the incumbent of Tillya-tepe grave VI, the highest rank female, was the senior practitioner, which would explain why she owned the greatest number and most important objects with opium poppies imagery. This would explain why the poppy flowers and capsules denoted the respective ranks of these females. Therein we might have a manifestation of Davis-Kimball's 'women of status' axiom. This proposal will be revisited in 3.4 CROWNS AND HAIRPINS, which

⁸⁸¹ CASTRIOTA 1995, especially pp.83-86.

involves a close study of the folding crown belonging to the woman in grave VI and offers further insights into her potential status at Tillya-tepe.

3 CASE STUDY III: THE SIX-PETALLED FLOWER

3.1 The six-petalled flower at Tillya-tepe

Introduction

This final case study considers a typologically different plant, a flower with six *pointed* petals and no cordiform elements. It is clearly important since it appears in great quantity on an important and iconographically rich item, the Tillya-tepe folding headdress in grave VI. For that reason alone the six-petalled flower demands attention.

Morphology

In all but one circumstance this flower consists of six ray-like petals. The examples catalogued below vary in their formation from slightly stylised naturalistic blooms to simplified geometricised versions. The more realistic-looking flowers have a shallow central corolla indicated by granulation. Despite these variations, it is apparent that they represent the same flower.

3.1.1 Catalogue of the six-petalled flower at Tillya-tepe

Grave I

I-i. A pendant hairpin comprising several elements of decoration hand-cut from cast gold,⁸⁸² **Fig. 3 – 1a**. The main element is composed of what Sarianidi calls a quatrefoil, but it is proposed here that the arrangement of these four petals suggests that there were originally six, and the two missing petals would create a symmetrical six-petalled flower-head. This flower is large – 6.5cm in diameter – and it dominates the design of the hairpin. Tiny rings are soldered to the surviving petals through which thin wires are threaded. Hanging from these wires are a pair of discs and a crescent. Suspended from the crescent are three lobed leaves with veined detailing, previously identified as ivy leaves.⁸⁸³ The tube fitted at the rear would have connected to a rod, enabling the flower to lie at right angles to the pendant section (see also VI-ii). There are indications of wear on this piece.

⁸⁸² SARIANIDI 1985, cat.1.3, p.226.

⁸⁸³ 0.6 PLANT IMAGERY.

I-ii Thirty-two relatively large flowers – with a diameter of 3.5 cm, far bigger than other appliqués which generally have a diameter or length of 1cm or less, **Fig. 3 – 1b**.⁸⁸⁴ Sarianidi describes them as ‘conspicuous amidst the appliqués disposed on the skeleton’s chest’⁸⁸⁵, and still in situ in a chequerboard arrangement at chest level on the woman’s dress. They are crudely cut and vary slightly in shape. There are two possible methods of attachment, a stamped perforation at the tip of each petal and a loop on the reverse centre of each appliqué. They show faint signs of wear.

Grave II

II-i Four pierced, hand-cut, sheet gold roundels,⁸⁸⁶ **Fig. 3 – 1c**. Each roundel comprises a six-petalled flower, its centre defined by a ring of granulation and turquoise inlay. The outer ring is pierced with triangles. Along with two poppy roundels these flowers originally decorated a braided basket which contained a small pickaxe and two daggers.⁸⁸⁷ These roundels show faint signs of wear.

I-iii A pair of hairpins, each comprising a bronze shaft attached to disc with a raised hemispherical centre which is decorated with a six-petalled flower,⁸⁸⁸ **Fig. 3 – 1d**. The petals are pointed and have a single central vein, and they all converge on a turquoise-inlaid disc. Gold wires, threaded with pearls and terminating in a pyramid of tiny gold balls, are fixed around the circumference of the disc. From these wires hang small discs in the upper tier, while a large crescent and small discs are suspended below.

Grave III

III-i A single flower, manually cut from gold sheet, with a central hole,⁸⁸⁹ **Fig. 3 – 2a**. The tips of the petals are gently re-curved towards the outer edge, seemingly a deliberate effort at creating a naturalistic bloom. It measures a substantial 5cm in diameter. The centrepiece is missing, presumably because this grave had been disturbed and most objects were displaced.

⁸⁸⁴ SARIANIDI 1985, cat.1.5, pp.226-227.

⁸⁸⁵ SARIANIDI 1985, p.20.

⁸⁸⁶ SARIANIDI 1985, cat.2.12, p.232.

⁸⁸⁷ SARIANIDI 1985, p.23.

⁸⁸⁸ SARIANIDI 1985, cat.2.31, p.235.

⁸⁸⁹ SARIANIDI 1985, cat.3.44, p.241.

Grave IV

IV-i A miniature gold tree which is created from a long, hammered shaft with a square section raised on a four feet, each pierced with a hole.⁸⁹⁰ Wire branches are arranged in five tiers, with their ends beaten flat and wrapped around the trunk. These branches are looped at their outer ends and hung with chains, each of which has a pearl and a suspended disc, **Fig. 3 – 21c**. Sarianidi noted that the trunk is crowned by a six-petal rosette, with discs hanging from the tip of each petal.⁸⁹¹ It is just possible to discern the flower in the horizontal plane at right angles to the main tree, **Fig. 3 – 2b**. The individual petals are elongated rays, lightly re-curved, and with the same proportions as the other six-petalled flowers at Tillya-tepe. This tree was attached to a large cast gold dish, its weight inscribed in Greek, just above the warrior's forehead.⁸⁹² A finely modelled figurine of an ibex was also attached by means of rings on his hooves.

Grave VI

VI-i The folding crown is hand-cut from thin sheet gold and comprises five stylised trees (four identical, the fifth taller with different detailing) and a band diadem, which all slot together to form a crown,⁸⁹³ **Figs. 3 – 20a, b and c**. This unique folding mechanism consists vertical rolled gold tubes which are soldered to the reverse sides of both the trees and the diadem. The crown elements can be attached by means of thin rods inserted into these tubes.⁸⁹⁴ When the crown is assembled, thirty-three six-petalled flowers are attached by wires to the trees (six to each of the four identical trees, nine to the central element) and a further twenty rosettes to the diadem, giving a total of fifty-three flowers. The four identical trees are flanked at their bases by stylised fish or reptiles while pairs of birds sit on their upper branches. Each tree is pierced by two hearts and a crescent. The central tree has a spade-shaped element at its pinnacle. Each flower is lightly re-curved, **Fig. 3 – 2c**, and at its centre is a granulated roundel enclosing imitation turquoise inlay.⁸⁹⁵ A small disc originally hung from each petal.

VI-ii A pair of pendant hairpins, similar in scale and conception to I-i, **Fig. 3 – 2d**. This flowers has five petals only: the use of five petals rather than six presumably reflects an oversight by the craftsman since the numbers of petals on specific plant types were

⁸⁹⁰ SARIANIDI 1985, cat.4.31, p.251.

⁸⁹¹ SARIANIDI 1985, p.36.

⁸⁹² SARIANIDI 1990-92, p.107.

⁸⁹³ SARIANIDI 1985, p.48 and cat.6.1, p.254.

⁸⁹⁴ HICKMAN 2012, p.84 and fig.13, p.85.

⁸⁹⁵ SCHILTZ 2008, cat.134, pp.284-285.

occasionally varied in error (illustrated further below). Each hairpin comprises a large flower-head – 6.5cm in diameter – with a corolla soldered to its centre. This corolla is framed by granulation enclosing a cell which was perhaps originally inlaid. Two discs hang by wire from two petals, and a crescent hangs from two other petals. Three discs are suspended from the crescent. A single, poorly preserved pearl is threaded onto one of the chains. All elements are constructed from handcut sheet gold. Evidence of wear is visible on one of the petals, which had been mended.⁸⁹⁶ In Sarianidi's reconstructed image of the woman, these hairpins are shown connected to the folding crown.

VI-iii A poorly preserved sceptre or baton of fine gold sheet wrapped around a wooden core.⁸⁹⁷ The decoration includes annular projections along the length. One end is rounded with three indentations. The upper end is pierced in the middle and according to Sarianidi its pommel is decorated with a six-petalled rosette.⁸⁹⁸

Table VI Six-petalled* flowers at Tillya-tepe

Grave no.	Object type	Cat. no.	Qty	Material & Technique	Signs of wear	Size	Weight
I-i	Hairpin, 4 petals extant	1.3	1	Gold sheet, gold wire	Faint wear	6.5cm diam. flower	4.72g
I-ii	Appliqués	1.5	32	Sheet gold	Faint wear	Diam 3.5cm	60g all 32
II-i	Roundel enclosing flower	2.12	4	Sheet gold and turquoise	Faint wear	2cm and 1.4cm diam.	0.35g each
II-ii	Hairpins	2.31	2	Sheet gold and turquoise	Deformation	Disc diam. 2.7cm	50.3g each
III-i	Single flower	3.44	1	Thin sheet gold	Deformation	Diam. 5cm	1.68g
IV-i	Pinnacle of tree	4.28	1	Sheet gold, pearls	Deformation	Ht of tree: 9cm	
VI-i	Crown with 53 flowers	6.1	1	Sheet gold, turquoise inlay	?	Ht of tree: 13cm	214.14 g
VI-ii	Hairpins 5-petalled	6.17	2	Thin sheet gold, pearls	Repaired	Rosette diam. 7cm	36.74g pair
VI-iii tentative	Sceptre	6.19	1	Sheet gold, wooden core	Poor preservation	Ht. 45cm approx.	

⁸⁹⁶ SARIANIDI 1985, cat.6.17, p.256.

⁸⁹⁷ SARIANIDI 1985, cat.6.19, p.256.

⁸⁹⁸ Although not visible, SARIANIDI 1989, p.129.

In total, these flowers were present on eight or nine different objects, and in every burial except grave V, so their presence is not gender-specific. In all cases these flowers are relatively large and their scale means they stand out among the many thousands of appliqués and pendants. It is significant that these flowers formed part of the two surviving crowns: the folding crown from grave VI and the headdress finial belonging to the warrior, and in both cases the flowers ‘grow’ on a tree. The folding crown exhibits the greatest conceptual and stylistic complexity of any Tillya-tepe objects. The three sets of pendant hairpins are significant because they too were head ornament. All these items are discussed further in 3.4 CROWNS AND HAIRPINS. In the belief that all the six-petalled flowers represented the same plant, and before discussing these objects any further, we will consider what actual plant they represented.

3.1.2 Identification of the six-petalled flower

Unlike the study of opium poppies, there are no plant parts such as seed capsules or foliage to aid the process of identification. Therefore, in order to decide which plant is represented, it is necessary to consider the shape and physical characteristics of the flower-head itself. This methodology is standard practice, since for many centuries the identification of plant types on morphological grounds has constituted the basis of plant taxonomy and classification.⁸⁹⁹

The primary characteristics are as follows:

1. The blooms consist of six pointed petals, swelling towards the centre of the flower and narrowing at the outer tip.
2. At the centre of the petals is a corona which appears to consist of a shallow trumpet, as indicated in **Figs. 3 – 1c, 2c and 2d**.
3. Three examples have pointed petals with an undulating, slightly re-curved surface. **Figs. 3 – 2a, b, and c**. This re-curved shaping is an important characteristic which narrows the options for identification, since many species of real flowers have cupped or flat petals.

The quest for identification will commence with the lily, a bloom with six pointed petals which alongside roses and violets was the most frequently mentioned flower in Roman literature⁹⁰⁰ – an indication that it was culturally important. *Lilium candidum* is a typical

⁸⁹⁹ A practice which has only recently been augmented by data from DNA sequencing.

⁹⁰⁰ JASHEMSKI 1979, vol. I, p.271.

shape among the lily genus, **Fig. 3 – 3a**, but its six petals are in reality far more strongly re-curved than the Tillya-tepe images. Lily blooms have six prominent stamens rather than the rounded corona on the Tillya-tepe flowers. In artistic representations lily species were frequently depicted in profile view to accentuate their trumpet shape, sometimes with exaggerated stamens, as seen in 16th century BCE Crete, **Fig. 3 – 3b**, where the lily's popularity is attested by its presence on a range of media: vases, dagger handles and frescoes.⁹⁰¹ The profile tradition re-emerges centuries later during another period of stylistic naturalism: a lily appears four times in the scrolling florals surrounding the Hellenistic 'Stag Hunt' emblema at Pella, northern Greece, capital of the Macedonian kingdom, **Fig. 3 – 3c** (bottom right). Here they are erroneously shown with five petals – demonstrating how craftsmen sometimes sacrificed botanical correctness for design purposes. A schematised profile of a *Lilium* trumpet with long stamens features in the fine mosaic border signed by 'Hephaestion' from the mid-2nd century BCE Attalid royal palace at Pergamon (modern Turkey), **Fig. 3 – 3d**, and the depiction of lilies continued in this manner into the 3rd century CE. There are occasional 'full frontal' images of lilies at Pompeii but these are greatly outnumbered by side-views.⁹⁰² Therefore it is clear that the convention for six-petalled lilies is different from the Tillya-tepe flowers.

Another possible candidate is the six-petalled *Crocus sativus*, which was an important commodity, a spice and a dye, from the 2nd millennium onwards,⁹⁰³ and was regularly mentioned in Graeco-Roman literature. A crocus is also present on the Pella 'Stag Hunt', **Fig. 3 – 3c** (top left) but again the convention is a profile view and the petals curve inwards. Asphodels and genus *Ornithogalum* are two other common flowers with six pointed petals, but both are rejected since they have prominent stamens rather than the round corona indicated on the Tillya-tepe flowers. None of these plants corresponds sufficiently to the Tillya-tepe images.

A far stronger contender is the narcissus flower, which exhibits all the characteristics listed above. The most relevant species are two spring-flowering narcissi, *Narcissus poeticus*, **Fig. 3 – 4a** and *Narcissus tazetta*, **Fig. 3 – 4b**.⁹⁰⁴ *Narcissus poeticus* flowers are borne singly on 20 – 40cm high stems. The flower-head comprises six white

⁹⁰¹ MARINATOS 1960, pls. XXII, p.54, XXV, p.60, pl.170.

⁹⁰² Both views of lilies appear on the garden painting on the East wall of Daieta, JASHEMSKI 1993, vol.II, p.12

⁹⁰³ SARPAKI 2001, pp.203-205.

⁹⁰⁴ For a definitive list of the entire Narcissus genus: <http://www.rhs.org.uk/Plants/Plant-science/Plant-registration-forms/daffalpha> (accessed January 2015).

perianth segments – what the layman calls petals, the term applied here. These petals have a lightly pointed shape and are re-curved, and they are marked with faint parallel veining. The centre of the flower consists of a round, ribbed corona forming a shallow trumpet, within which are six spade-shaped stigma. Its colouring is often distinctive: a green centre graduating outwards into yellow, and a narrow red rim. The 40 – 50cm stem of *Narcissus tazetta* bears umbels of up to twenty small flowers, whose petals are slightly more rounded than *Narcissus poeticus*, and the corona is a deep golden yellow.

Narcissus pseudonarcissus, known in England as the ‘wild daffodil’, **Fig. 3 – 4c**, is another common species, a small plant with yellow petals and a deep trumpet in darker yellow. A final species worthy of a short mention is the starry little *Narcissus serotinus*, a rare example of an autumn flowering species, **Fig. 3 – 4d**. It is mentioned by Pliny,⁹⁰⁵ but is perhaps least like the Tillya-tepe flowers since the corona is both smaller in proportion and triangular.

A number of the characteristics visible on both *Narcissus poeticus* and *Narcissus tazetta* are reproduced in the Tillya-tepe imagery. However, since the flowerheads of both species are similar, it cannot be assumed that an artist would differentiate between them in his artistic productions.

There are several unequivocal examples of narcissi in Hellenistic and Roman art which support the identification of the Tillya-tepe flowers as *Narcissi*. Fairly realistic depictions of narcissi appear in the mosaic border of the aforementioned Hephaestion mosaic from the Pergamon,⁹⁰⁶ **Fig. 3 – 5a**. The flower features several times as part of undulating polychrome ornament alongside naturalistically rendered grapevines, putti and locusts, against a black background. The flower is shown in two colours, the first has beige and white petals with an orange-red ring at the centre – similar to the single-bloomed *Narcissus poeticus* with its clearly-delineated shallow corona. Another flower has yellow petals and an orange centre, perhaps still representing *Narcissus*, as it stays within the colour range of the plant genus while moving away from any strict adherence to species. In all cases the flowers are shown erroneously with five petals, but as stated this was not uncommon. Botanically accurate plants, including narcissi, appear on Egyptian mosaic glass tiles, either from the late Ptolemaic or Roman era. They provide useful coloured evidence since the narcissi are shown with white petals and yellow

⁹⁰⁵ PLINY Book XXI: xii.25.

⁹⁰⁶ TOYNBEE AND WARD PERKINS 1950 Pl.III: 2, and p.7.

centres with red dots denoting the corona, **Figs. 3 – 5b and c.**⁹⁰⁷ The red corona implies that the species under investigation is *Narcissus poeticus*, although the central dot is a minor deviation from botanical accuracy.

Therefore, on the basis that the Tillya-tepe six-petalled flowers may be confidently identified as narcissi, we will now briefly consider the presence of the flower in nature.

Genus *Narcissus*

Narcissi are found widely throughout Europe and Asia. They are native to a broad area of the temperate and subtropical zones of Northern Eurasia, including the Mediterranean region, North Africa and western Asia.⁹⁰⁸ *Narcissus tazetta* and *Narcissus poeticus* currently have a wide distribution, *Narcissus tazetta* from the Mediterranean to Afghanistan,⁹⁰⁹ including Iran;⁹¹⁰ and *Narcissus poeticus* from Europe to the Black Sea (Ukraine).⁹¹¹

They are geophytes - growing from a bulb - and are adaptable to a great variety of habitats: grassland, scrub, woods, river banks and rocky crevices, in both lowlands and mountain sites.⁹¹² In Israel they even appear in the Negev desert.⁹¹³ Narcissi have a rapid life-cycle which is generally completed by early spring. They rise abruptly from the ground at the beginning of the growing season, and both flowers and leaves appear at almost the same time, a relatively unusual phenomenon. *Narcissus tazetta* is the most widespread of the species and it blossoms from November in Israel and the Levant, but by February it has entirely gone;⁹¹⁴ whereas further westwards, in Greece, it emerges in March.⁹¹⁵ Narcissi provide a dramatic but fleeting presence, dying back again quickly and disappearing down into the earth where they remain dormant, only to return just as swiftly the following year.

⁹⁰⁷ Christie's New York, 5th December 2012, sale 2605, part of lot 218. For further examples, see: Bonhams London, 28th April 2010, sale 17822, lot 39.

⁹⁰⁸ PRICE and NESBITT 2005, p.267.

⁹⁰⁹ Kew Botanical Gardens: http://apps.kew.org/wcsp/namedetail.do?name_id=282289 (accessed January 2015).

⁹¹⁰ Recorded more recently in Southern Fars, Kerman, Seistan and Iranian Kurdistan WENDELBO 1970, pp.7-8.

⁹¹¹ Kew Botanical Gardens: http://apps.kew.org/wcsp/namedetail.do?name_id=282063 (accessed January 2015).

⁹¹² HANKS 2005, p.2.

⁹¹³ ZOHARY 1982, pp.178-179.

⁹¹⁴ ZOHARY 1982, pp.178-179. He mentions two species native to Israel but shows only *Narcissus tazetta*.

⁹¹⁵ BAUMANN 1993. As noted, *Narcissus serotinus* flowers in autumn.

Interim summary

These six-petalled Tillya-tepe flowers exhibit a characteristic form which provides sufficient information to identify them as narcissi, based on their close and realistic imitation of narcissus blooms in nature. The Tillya-tepe narcissi are not unique, since naturalistic images of the flower are found in Hellenistic and Roman art, even though there is often an inconsistency in the number of petals depicted - sometimes five rather than six. With this in mind, we will briefly revisit the most important objects which are decorated with narcissi.

3.1.3 More on Tillya-tepe artefacts with narcissus imagery

The Tillya-tepe crowns

The presence of fifty-three narcissi on the folding crown and the single narcissus at the top of warrior's headdress finial may imply a special association of narcissi with crowns. In view of the importance of the folding crown and the fact that crowns in general often possess a special status, they will be discussed in greater detail in 3.4 CROWNS AND HAIRPINS.

Narcissus and crescent hairpins

Narcissi appear on three sets of hairpins and according to Sarianidi's reconstruction, the hairpins in grave VI were hung directly from the folding crown. The narcissi on the hairpins were probably intended to hang at right angles to the pendant crescents and discs, as in **Fig. 3 – 2d**. These and the hairpin from grave III, which lacks a flower,⁹¹⁶ all include a large pendant crescent as part of their design. Crescents have a long history on artefacts from the Ancient Near East and across many cultures thereafter. These hairpins are discussed in 3.4 CROWNS AND HAIRPINS.

The narcissus brooch

This large, single narcissus, **Fig. 3 – 2a**, is of interest because it is similar in size to the 'massive' poppy flower brooches discussed in Case Study II. It is less substantial than these poppies as it is executed in gold sheet gold rather than cast gold, nevertheless it is unusual to find single rosettes on this scale – its 5cm diameter would mean that it was a

⁹¹⁶ SCHILTZ 2008, cat 87, p.259.

dominant piece of decoration, especially as the hole at the centre probably held decoration which enhanced its distinctiveness.

The floral bodice appliqués

Thirty-two simply shaped narcissi decorate the woman's costume in grave I, **Fig. 3 – 1b**. Their diameter is 3.5cm which dwarfs the other costume appliqués. These narcissi were placed in rows across the woman's bodice, perhaps in imitation of a textile design, as seen also the arrangement of narcissi on Antiochus's headdress at Nemrud Dağı, discussed below, **Fig. 3 – 18**.

Following the pattern of the previous case studies, artistic representations of narcissi from other sources will now be reviewed with the objective of supplementing our understanding of this flower at Tillya-tepe.

3.2 Comparanda for narcissus imagery beyond Tillya-tepe

Images of narcissus flowers in art have been largely overlooked and consequently there is no available history of their iconographic presence. This survey is not intended to be comprehensive catalogue of every single image of narcissi, it merely aims to provide a sample of the most convincing examples in the Iranian world and western Asia, the eastern Mediterranean, territories, around the Black Sea, then as far west as Italy in the period around the Common Era.

3.2.1 Typology and Chronology

The star-like shape of these flowers is notable, and there is sometimes even an ambivalence about whether the motif represents a star or a flower, particularly when the shape is simplified. In many cases the corona of the flower-head is indicated, although it is not always as naturalistic as the Tillya-tepe versions which offer a particularly realistic imitation of the botanical realities of narcissus flowers.

Like poppies, narcissus images have a deep history. They were known in the eastern Mediterranean by the mid-2nd millennium since a cluster of narcissus flowers are painted in colour on a tripod ritual table from Palaikastro, Crete.⁹¹⁷ The comparanda here commences in the 7th century when there are several examples of Daedelic jewellery with narcissi. Although this might seem remote from Tillya-tepe in 1st century Bactria, two different sets of gold Daedelic-style pendants were found at Surkh Kotal, the 2nd – 4th century Bactrian Kushan site, which are mentioned below in 3.4 CROWNS AND HAIRPINS.

3.2.2 Artefacts with narcissus imagery

3.2.2.1 Lydia and the Eastern Mediterranean

From the 7th century BCE when realistic plant imagery flourished, narcissi may be identified with some confidence on gold jewellery. The earliest examples are from western Anatolia, part of the Lydian empire from 654 BCE and closely connected with rich Ionian cities such as Rhodes.⁹¹⁸ Gold was at the core of Lydian wealth and it was readily available in the form of electrum, the silver-gold alloy, in alluvial deposits in the

⁹¹⁷ ANDREADAKI-VLAZAKI 2008, cat.193, p.237.

⁹¹⁸ BOARDMAN 1994 pp.25-26.

Patoclus river which ran through its capital, Sardis.⁹¹⁹ Such wealth was memorably noted by Herodotus in his account of the riches of Croesus.⁹²⁰

Two six-petalled flowers which are morphologically close to the numerous *Tillya-tepe narcissi* on the folding crown in grave VI appear on pendants. They reputedly came from Tralles (modern Aidin, Turkey), on the south-western periphery of the Lydian Empire, **Figs. 3 – 6a** and **b**. Here the corolla of the flower is indicated by granulation, a technique recently imported from the East, and there is a hint of re-curving of the individual petals replicating the shape of the narcissus. The flowers flank a standing goddess executed in the Daedelic style reflecting orientalising influences, with a hairstyle deriving from north Syrian art.⁹²¹ She represents a figurative type which was descended from Anat-Astarte, a goddess worshipped in northern Syria, who regularly appeared on jewellery from Rhodes and Crete.⁹²² On other jewellery of this date she appears in the guise of *Potnia Theron* who was later associated with the Greek goddess Artemis.⁹²³

From Rhodes or nearby Melos came a gold, six-lobed rosette brooch with a snake protome at its centre,⁹²⁴ ca. 630-620 BCE, **Fig. 3 – 6c**. Each one of the six lobes encloses single narcissus-type flowers with a central corolla indicated by a cylindrical projection. ‘Of the six star flowers four have heavy petals and an inset in the middle; two are lighter and more elaborate’.⁹²⁵ This is one of a series of brooches with complex granulation exhibiting the style and ornamental repertoire – such as bees, griffin protomes, birds and female heads - which characterised the Daedelic style.

Three granulated seven-petalled flowers with centres defined by twisted wire, appear above another Daedelic female head on a gold appliqué, from Delos **3 – 6d**.⁹²⁶ Other typologically similar brooches in the British Museum depict a range of flowers and female heads seemingly representing Artemis.⁹²⁷

⁹¹⁹ MERIÇBOYU 2010, p.157.

⁹²⁰ HERODOTUS, Histories 1, 6-94.

⁹²¹ BOARDMAN 2006, p.4, and found widely on Syrian ivories.

⁹²² MARINATOS 2000.

⁹²³ MARINATOS 2000; LAFFINEUR 1978. See remarks on *Potnia Theron* in 3.4 CROWNS AND HAIRPINS.

⁹²⁴ JACOBSTHAL 1956, plate 152a, p.216.

⁹²⁵ LAFFINEUR 1978, cat.2, p.192 and pl.2-2.

⁹²⁶ JACOBSTHAL 1956, pl.298a and p.36.

⁹²⁷ See MARSHALL 1911, pls. 1229, 1230 and 1231; p.103.

Two similar delicately-wrought flowers with re-curved petals, were found in a 6th century tomb at Ephesus, also part of the Lydian empire at that time,⁹²⁸ **Fig. 3 – 6e**. Finally a small gold flower was found in the Artemision, the temple of Artemis, at Ephesus. Its petals are re-curved and its midrib is indicated with fine veining,⁹²⁹ **Fig. 3 – 6f**. Possibly these flowers were originally attached to a headdress, as seen on the gold diadem from the mid-7th – 6th century BCE burial site at Kelermes in the Kuban,⁹³⁰ which also exhibits a griffin protome similar in design to the aforementioned six-lobed brooch.

The similarities between gold jewellery designs from Lydia and the Eastern Mediterranean is well-recognised,⁹³¹ and the presence of floral and related iconographies, such as the Daedalic female, reinforces this connection. These flowers all resemble the narcissus flower since they variously have: six (occasionally seven) pointed petals with a corolla indicated, recurving petals and in one case, veining on the petals. The contexts here indicate a connection with a female goddess who is specifically depicted on the Tralles brooch and the Delos appliqué, probably identified with Artemis in the Greek world.

3.2.2.2 Cyprus

In contrast to this association with a goddess, in 5th century BCE Cyprus narcissi were incorporated into the crowns of male cultic statuary, the first time they definitively featured in headdresses. Cyprus had become part of the Persian Empire from around 526 BCE and a combination of Persian and Greek influences is discernible in these colossal statues. Their extravagantly curled hair and beards reflect Achaemenid conventions but they usually wear Greek-style costume.

The British Museum houses one such figure which was found at the centre of a group of statues in the Sanctuary of Apollo-Reshef at Idalion,⁹³² **Fig. 3 – 7a**. His composite wreath is composed of a row of narcissi with clearly defined corollas, below a band of oak leaves, which latter are typically represented with their lobed leaf margin and

⁹²⁸ JACOBSTHAL 1956 pl.152. He also notes another possible example on an ivory example, pl.127.

⁹²⁹ PULZ 2009, cat.248.

⁹³⁰ ARTAMONOV 1969, pl.25. A second Kelermes diadem also has flowers, including a six-petalled bloom, but its form is very elaborate.

⁹³¹ KERSCHNER 2010, pp.253-254. BOARDMAN 1994, pp.25-27.

⁹³² http://www.britishmuseum.org/research/collection_online/collection_object_details.aspx?objectId=464246&partId=1 (accessed January 2015).

rounded tip, although these details are more pronounced in nature, **Fig. 3 – 7b**.⁹³³ There is sometimes confusion between oak leaves (genus *Quercus*)⁹³⁴ as seen here, and leaves from the bay-laurel (*Laurus nobilis*).⁹³⁵ This statue enables one to differentiate between the two types of foliage since both are present and are realistically depicted. The sprig held in his right hand consists of bay-laurel leaves, **Fig. 3 – 7c**, which are lanceolate, both longer and narrower than the oak leaves, with a lightly undulating leaf margin clearly resembling *Laurus nobilis*, **Fig. 3 – 7d**.

A bearded male statue, allegedly from the temple at Golgoi in Cyprus, sports a wreath with the same combination of oak leaves and narcissi,⁹³⁶ **Fig. 3 – 8a**, although he holds a dove rather than a bay-laurel sprig. Another bearded man with stylised hair sports a band of narcissus flowers;⁹³⁷ and finally, a beardless youth with a simple hairstyle wears a wreath comprising three rows of narcissus flowers. **Fig. 3 – 8b**. Although the narcissus identification is secure, it is notable that the artist was careless with petals numbers and some flowers have five rather than six petals.

It is especially necessary to identify plants correctly here since this was an era of Greek ideology in which certain plants were associated with specific deities. As discussed, the half-figure from Apollo-Reshef's sanctuary carries bay-laurel leaves in his hand, a plant which was one of Apollo's primary attributes. The reason for the oak leaves is less clear because they were generally considered an attribute of Zeus.⁹³⁸ Zeus's presence in Cyprus is attested in a late 6th century statue, as Zeus Keraunios ('the Thunderer'), in the Temple of Melqart at Kition, Cyprus.⁹³⁹ But if these Cypriot bearded figures wear oak leaves as an allusion to Zeus, the combination of oak and narcissus is not attested in any surviving texts.

⁹³³ As confirmation of this identification, several statues have crowns with this type of oak leaves and attached pendant acorns: a bearded male in the British Museum GR 1873.3-20.9; and a similar head KARAGEORGHIS 2000, cat.340, p.211.

⁹³⁴ Maybe either *Quercus robur* or *Quercus petraea* as both are present in Southeastern Europe, <https://www.rhs.org.uk/plants/details?plantid=1587>, <https://www.rhs.org.uk/Plants/14280/i-Quercus-petraea-i/Details> (both accessed January 2015).

⁹³⁵ For example, oak leaves are catalogued incorrectly as bay-laurel leaves in the British Museum description, see weblink *supra*.

⁹³⁶ KARAGEORGHIS 2000, cat. 336.

⁹³⁷ Metropolitan Museum of Art, 74.51.2842. <http://www.metmuseum.org/collection/the-collection-online/search/242393?rpp=30&pg=1&ft=74.51.2842&pos=1> (accessed January 2015).

⁹³⁸ WILLIAMS and OGDEN 1994, p.41.

⁹³⁹ BOARDMAN 1984, cat.222.

3.2.2.3 Hellenistic period and later

Narcissus flowers were part of the floral repertoire of Hellenistic jewellery, including four fairly naturalistic items dated from late 4th – 3rd century BCE. The earliest is a richly decorated medallion disc with a winged bust of Eros, framed by leaves and flowers. Among these a narcissus flower can be seen, its central trumpet indicated in realistic fashion,⁹⁴⁰ **Figs. 3 – 9a and b**. Another bloom with a deeper cup, perhaps representing *Narcissus pseudonarcissus*, features on the fragment of a diadem from a tomb in Eretria, Northern Greece, **Figs. 3 – 9c and d**. It has multiple petals, again reflecting a certain carelessness of detail, and is part of a design comprising complex blossoms all attached to a trellis framework.⁹⁴¹ A further narcissus flower appears on a thigh band, on a Herakles knot decorated with flowers and a lion protome, **Fig. 3 – 9e** (right-hand side).⁹⁴²

A Macedonian gold wreath was found in a grave at Kassandreia, Chalcide, northern Greece, *ca.* 250 BCE, which features schematic oak leaves attached to a pair of flowers with six re-curved petals which probably represent narcissi, **Fig 3 – 9f**.⁹⁴³ Although they lack the central corolla, this may be due to the rather generalised rendition of the plants or the practical problems of inserting an additional piece. The conjunction of oak and narcissus recalls the combination on the wreaths worn by the Cyprus sculptures.⁹⁴⁴

Six-petalled flowers appear in tombs around the Black Sea. The earliest is painted onto a woman's coffin from a 3rd century BCE tomb at Vitjazevo, part of a sophisticated scrolling pattern of typical Hellenistic plants, mentioned previously in 0.6 PLANT IMAGERY, **Fig. 3 – 9g**. Similar flowers appear on later jewellery, particularly from the graves of various communities whose ancestry is generally considered to be from the eastern steppes, and who patronised Greek goldsmiths. These objects, dated to around the 1st century BCE, bring us closer to the potential orbit of Tillya-tepe. One example is on the so-called Loeb diadem from Kerch,⁹⁴⁵ **Figs. 3 – 10a**. The design is dominated by a knot of Herakles and it has nine pendants hanging from it, each featuring a narcissus-type flower-head with lightly recurved petals enclosed within a roundel. Seemingly

⁹⁴⁰ HOFFMANN and DAVIDSON 1965, cat. 93, pp.228-331, attributed to North Syria or Asia Minor.

⁹⁴¹ HOFFMANN and DAVIDSON 1965, cat.5, pp.60-62.

⁹⁴² HOFFMANN and DAVIDSON 1965, cat.88, p.220.

⁹⁴³ TSIGARIDA 2011, cat.11.

⁹⁴⁴ Six-pointed petal flowers appears on other Macedonian wreaths alongside identifiable flowers. However, they are not included here since the petals are flat and the centre is spherical and lacking a corolla, for example, TSIGARIDA 2011, cat. 6.

⁹⁴⁵ HOFFMANN and DAVIDSON 1965, cat.1, pp.51-54. PICÓN AND HEMINGWAY 2016, pp.223-224.

identical narcissus roundels appear on a dress-pin with very similar pendant beads and tassels from tomb I in the Artyukhov kurgan, occupied by a woman,⁹⁴⁶ **Figs. 3 – 10b**.

In addition to this narcissus pin, a second dress-pin and a ring were found at Artyukhov featuring a Tillya-tepe type rose, discussed in Case Study I. The Artyukhov rose dress-pin also has spherical bead tassels, **Figs 1 – 9a**, sufficiently close in design to both the Artyukhov narcissus dress-pin and the Loeb diadem to suggest the same workshop. The presence of narcissus flowers at both Kerch and Artyukhov demonstrates that they were part of the artistic repertoire in the north Pontic area, reinforcing the connection between workshops producing Hellenised and Roman jewellery for Sarmatian or ex-nomadic patrons from the east.⁹⁴⁷

Returning briefly to the Loeb diadem, the dominant knot of Herakles is crowned by a squat, winged Nike-type goddess wearing a belted *peplos* and holding a ring or wreath in her hand. This ensemble of goddess and dog- or wolf-headed *kētē*, a type of sea monster, is thought to be an addition to an otherwise Hellenised diadem, executed ‘in a provincial semi-barbaric style’,⁹⁴⁸ **Fig. 3 – 10c**. The roundness of her face with its shallow jaw and heavy-lidded eyes deviate from the classical norms of beauty and are perhaps closer in style to items from further east, such as an ivory Athena and a bronze Eros, 2nd to 1st century BCE, from Parthian Nisa (modern Turkmenistan);⁹⁴⁹ figurative bronzes from Nihavand;⁹⁵⁰ and Tillya-tepe characters such as the Nike in the Dionysos and Ariadne scene on clasps from grave VI, **Fig. 3 – 10d**. The Tillya-tepe ‘Nike’ sports a similar hairstyle, Greek-style *peplos* and wings, and she too holds a ring-shaped object. Similar facial features are discernible on the rather more crudely-executed ‘Kushan’ Aphrodite from Tillya-tepe grave II⁹⁵¹ and the Erotes riding dolphins from graves II and III.⁹⁵² It is possible that the Loeb diadem Nike may have originated in a workshop from further east, north-eastern Iran or close neighbour Bactria. Since this was an eastern addition - perhaps of later manufacture – to the diadem found in Kerch, its arrival indicates communications between the north Pontic area and that region.

⁹⁴⁶ JACOBSTHAL 1956, plate 328, p.169; details of site TROFIMOVA AND KALASHNIK 2007, p.287; TREISTER 2004b, p.192. The Artyukhov grave also contained a Herakles knot diadem, a variation of the ‘Loeb’ example, with extensive repairs indicating a long period of use.

⁹⁴⁷ TREISTER 2004b discusses the material evidence but does not mention the flowers.

⁹⁴⁸ HOFFMANN and DAVIDSON 1965, p.54.

⁹⁴⁹ INVERNIZZI 2005, pl.2-c; pl.4-b.

⁹⁵⁰ INVERNIZZI 2005, pl.4-a.

⁹⁵¹ SARIANIDI 1985, cat.2.6, p.231.

⁹⁵² SARIANIDI 1985, cat.2.5, p.231; cat.3.2, p.236.

3.2.2.4 Sirkap-Taxila

Narcissi appear twice at Sirkap-Taxila, both from the 1st century CE Saka-Parthian layers. Four flowerheads, rendered realistically in minute detail with a granulated corona, embellish earrings whose clasps were described in Case Study II, since they contain a five-petalled flower. These are stylistically close to the Tillya-tepe narcissi, **Fig 3 – 11a**.⁹⁵³ This seems to be an instance of an imported motif since, as noted, narcissi were native as far east as Afghanistan.⁹⁵⁴

Sirkap-Taxila was also the source of spherical containers, one of which has narcissus flowerheads arranged six times around its body, **Fig 3 – 11b**.⁹⁵⁵ Four almost identical small vessels with different flowers were also excavated, all executed in stone indicating local production.⁹⁵⁶ These Sirkap-Taxila items are among thirty small bottles decorated with flowerheads from northwestern Pakistan.⁹⁵⁷ Their ornament includes flowers which are probably roses, depicted in the convention comprising four cordiform petals but no sepals,⁹⁵⁸ **Fig. 3 – 11**. They were found in Buddhist contexts, where they have been classified as reliquaries.⁹⁵⁹

David Jongeward remarks: ‘As household objects prior to their use as reliquaries, they may have served as containers for cosmetics or incense’.⁹⁶⁰ More specifically, it is possible that they originally contained flower oils or pastes, including narcissi and roses, as illustrated here, and that their presence as relic deposits in stupas perhaps even indicated the use of these plant extracts for ritual purposes. Indeed, these vessels are typologically close to mid-2nd millennium Minoan globular stirrup jars and small jugs, which were decorated with irises, crocuses and lilies, used for perfumes and unguents.⁹⁶¹ Both Theophrastus and Pliny discussed the suitability of alabaster stone vessels for perfumed substances,⁹⁶² precious fine-grained materials for expensive contents. Simple four-axis roses of this type also appear on two stone phialae from

⁹⁵³ MARSHALL 1975, VOL.II, P.625.

⁹⁵⁴ Kew Botanical Gardens: http://apps.kew.org/wcsp/namedetail.do?name_id=282289 (accessed January 2015).

⁹⁵⁵ MARSHALL 1975, vol.II, p.499.

⁹⁵⁶ MARSHALL 1975, vol.III, pl.141: t, v, w, x, y (lid).

⁹⁵⁷ JONGEWARD *et al.* 2012, Table I, pp.254-255.

⁹⁵⁸ For discussion of this convention at Nemrud Dağı and elsewhere, see: 1.4 THE TILLYA-TEPE WARRIOR’S BI-LOBED KNIFE CASE.

⁹⁵⁹ JONGEWARD *et al.* 2012, pp.49-51, pp.117-118.

⁹⁶⁰ JONGEWARD *et al.* 2012, p.49.

⁹⁶¹ GEORGIU 1973, p.449. TZEDAKIS and MARTLEW 1999, cats.32-36, pp.59-61; cat.246, pp.254-255. Note also the aforementioned Cypriote ceramic opium capsule vessels which likely held opium, in Case Study II.

⁹⁶² PLINY XIII: iii.19; THEOPHRASTUS, II: 40.

Sirkap-Taxila, which may also indicate that they held rose extracts.⁹⁶³ In effect it may be that images of flowers functioned as floral ‘labels’ for all these vessels.

3.2.2.5 The Roman Empire

The earliest instance of a Roman narcissus features in the swag of spring flowers borne by Zephyrus, god of the West Wind, bearer of warm breezes whose gentle presence alludes to the awakening of spring, **Fig. 3 – 12a** and **b**. This relief appears on the Tower of the Four Winds, *ca.* 50 BCE, in the Roman agora, Athens, an octagonal monument incorporating a water clock and wind vane.⁹⁶⁴

A more botanically detailed narcissus flower is painted onto the portico of the peristyle garden at the House of Diomedes, Pompeii, **Figs. 3 – 12c** and **d**, a counterpart to a portrait of a multi-petalled rose.⁹⁶⁵ The flower has a trumpet-like corolla and is orange-toned, reflecting the deep, saturated colours of paintings at the villa. It may be identified as *Narcissus pseudonarcissus*,⁹⁶⁶ whose petals are bright yellow and whose trumpet is a rich golden-yellow, **Fig. 3 – 4c**.

Conventionalised six-petalled flowers dominate a geometric design on a Flavian era (69 – 79 CE) mosaic floor in Rome, **Figs. 3 – 12e** and **f**. There is a case for identifying these flowers as narcissi since the petals are white and the yellow circular disc at their centre is framed with orange. Each rosette sits within a hexagon and the emphatic six-axis geometry of the design reinforces the impact of these flowers. The spandrels contain images of pomegranates (identified by their narrow calyces), lilies, ivy vines and *kantharoi*. Formalised six-petalled rosettes were popular in Italy from the mid-1st to 2nd century CE, particularly on mosaic floors, but they are often monochrome and so defy confident identification.⁹⁶⁷

A further example of a formalised six-petalled flower appears on 1st century CE Roman funerary monuments, a *cinerarium* whose rich decoration has been analysed for its chthonic connotations by Cumont, **Fig. 3 – 13a**.⁹⁶⁸ This design was one of the commonest motifs on Jewish funerary and religious monuments, particularly ossuaries,

⁹⁶³ MARSHALL 1975, vol.III, pl.140: u, x. Note also the similar rose phialae at Nemrud Dağı, SANDERS 1996, vol.II, figs.334, 336, pp.185-186.

⁹⁶⁴ STUART AND REVETT 1762, vol.1, chapter 3.

⁹⁶⁵ JASHEMSKI 1993, Fig. 438, p.373.

⁹⁶⁶ The species is native to most of Europe. <http://www.kew.org/science-conservation/plants-fungi/narcissus-pseudonarcissus-daffodil> (accessed June 2015).

⁹⁶⁷ For example, RINALDI 2005, pls.XII and XIII.

⁹⁶⁸ CUMONT 1942, pl. XI; p.162.

usually present in this conventionalised form and sometimes combined with the ‘Star of David’ and palm trees. Although in many cases this rosette was compass-drawn and appears geometric rather than obviously floral, other vegetal images such as palm trees are also often presented in entirely schematic form.⁹⁶⁹ A six-petalled motif which may be identified as a flower features alongside a bunch of grapes and concentric circles on a 1st century CE tomb at Maqāti‘Ābūd, Roman Palestine, **Fig. 3 – 13b**.⁹⁷⁰ The presence of the rose flower alongside this narcissus is mentioned in Case Study I: 1.2.2 ARTEFACTS WITH ROSE IMAGERY.

We just mention here the epitome of naturalistic narcissus imagery which is found at Antioch, **Figs. 3 – 14a and b**.⁹⁷¹ In this case, the narcissus flowers are explicitly part of a narrative of life, death and return to earth – they participate in the story of *Echo and Narkissos* which is illustrated in the emblema of a large mosaic dated 210-220 CE. The scene of the doomed lovers is surrounded by this border of narcissus flowers, a satisfyingly literal concordance of plant image and mythology,⁹⁷² in which the protagonist, Narkissos, is transformed into a narcissus flower at the point of death. The flowers are white with yellow centres and they spring from human masks, all executed in glass tesserae against a black background. The foliage of these narcissi is depicted in a manner which compares with the earlier Pompeian image, although the species is probably *Narcissus poeticus* rather than the Pompeian *Narcissus pseudonarcissus*. These leaves are not entirely accurate and recall Dioscorides’s description of narcissus foliage as resembling a leek.⁹⁷³ Realistic narcissi also appear among other cultivated flowers, lily, irises, marigolds and water-lilies in a floriferous border around a scene of Orpheus on an early 3rd century mosaic at Tarsus.⁹⁷⁴

3.2.2.6 North Pontic stelae

The influence of Roman art is apparent on 1st and 2nd centuries CE funerary stelae at the margins of the empire. Six-petalled flowers featured far less frequently than staple

⁹⁶⁹ AVI YONAH 1981, pp.96-102, see images pls. 8:9, 10:9 (unusually shown between a bird and a palm tree), 14:1 – 14:7, with 14:2 a double rosette, 17:10, 17:11, 18:7, 18:9, 19:1-19:6, 20:5-20:8, 21:6-20:8, 21:1-20:2

⁹⁷⁰ AVI YONAH 1981, fig.25, p.70.

⁹⁷¹ CIMOK 2000, pp.115-116.

⁹⁷² For a summary of the myth, see 3.3 A SHORT CULTURAL HISTORY OF NARCISSI.

⁹⁷³ DIOSCORIDES IV: 101. It was not only Dioscorides who noted their similarity. The Welsh words for leek (*cennin*) and daffodil (*cennin pedr*) are clearly related, <http://www.museumwales.ac.uk/blog/2015-03-02/Daffodils-for-St-Davids-Day/> (accessed August 2015).

⁹⁷⁴ CIMOK 2000, pp.146-147.

funerary plants such as anthemion, roses and poppies. For example, they appear on only two out of fifty-seven or so funerary stelae uncovered at Kerch. The first shows a horseman called Kleon dressed in a cloak and trousers within a niche, **Figs. 3 – 15a**.⁹⁷⁵ The flowers are enclosed within a roundel in a manner similar to the above-mentioned Loeb diadem from Kerch and dress-pin from the Artyukhov kurgan. They ‘float’ above the pediment and are flanked by anthemion, while two multi-petalled cultivated roses appear below. Narcissi feature in the same position on a second stele which depicts a man beside a seated woman, both in Roman dress, **Fig. 3 – 15b**.⁹⁷⁶ The man’s warrior status is proclaimed by the quadrilobe dagger worn on his right thigh, and **Fig. 3 – 15c**. This dagger type is found on several funerary sculptures,⁹⁷⁷ and as discussed in 0.4 TILLYA-TEPE BURIALS real examples survive from graves, and all are broadly comparable to the quadrilobe parade dagger from Tillya-tepe, although the hilts vary.

3.2.2.7 Palmyrene and Parthian artistic contexts

Images of narcissi also exhibit funerary connotations at Palmyra. They feature on the coffered ceiling in the tomb of Elahbel and his brothers, built in 103 CE,⁹⁷⁸ **Figs. 3 – 16a and b**. There are several dozens of large narcissus flowers outlined in red - identifiable by their six white petals and yellow centre - surrounding busts. The use of floral ornament was common practice on coffered ceilings in tombs of this date, and was a type of decoration which, although originating from Hellenistic sources, was also popular in 1st century CE Roman buildings.

Elsewhere at Palmyra, a pair of stylistically identical motifs appear on a sanctuary wall relief in the agora, **Figs. 3 – 16c and d**. They float either side of a figure flanked by lions with eagles seated on their backs. He is described as either the sun god Malakbēl, or a military deity called Rabbasire ‘Master of the Enchained’, or Nergal god of the Underworld.⁹⁷⁹ At first glance these might be seen as stars in view of their position in the sky. However, there is another example of an over-scaled flower in this position,⁹⁸⁰ a large four-petalled flower, perhaps a rose, in the sky behind the god Arsu riding a camel

⁹⁷⁵ TREISTER 2010, pl.1:1.

⁹⁷⁶ TOLSTIKOV 2013, cat.1.7, p.222.

⁹⁷⁷ TREISTER 2010.

⁹⁷⁸ HENNING 2013, pp.60-61.

⁹⁷⁹ COLLEDGE 1976, p.33.

⁹⁸⁰ CHI *et al* 2011, cat.2-23, p.53.

on a relief at the caravan city, Dura-Europos.⁹⁸¹ This typological ambivalence - between flower and star - is discussed briefly below.

A small finger ring from Selucia-on the Tigris is decorated with a narcissus flower.⁹⁸² Stylised versions of the flower can also be found in the rich plasterwork at the Parthian sites of Aššur and Uruk in Mesopotamia.⁹⁸³ Typically, Parthian motifs persisted into the Sasanian era as exemplified by relatively realistic images of narcissi on stuccowork from Ctesiphon.⁹⁸⁴ Narcissi continued into the early Islamic period, when Sasanian art still held sway over the new Umayyad rulers, as show by naturalistic narcissi on stucco window screens at Qasr al-Hayr al-Gharbi (727 CE).⁹⁸⁵ These latter examples testify to the longevity of this floral decoration.

3.2.2.8 Nemrud Dağı

Bearing in mind the occurrence of the narcissi on two Tillya-tepe crowns, it is interesting to note the six-petalled flowers on a Persian-style tiara worn by Zeus-Oromasdes on stone sculptures erected at the royal sanctuary at Nemrud Dağı in the kingdom of Commagene. The Antiochos and Zeus-Oromasdes *deixosis* shows an enthroned Zeus-Oromasdes wearing a headdress embellished with an all-over pattern of six-petalled rosettes on both cap and cheek-pieces. **Figs. 3 – 17a and b.** These flowers are distributed in what Sanders calls a ‘free field manner’.⁹⁸⁶ Without doubt the design of this headdress, worn by the most important deity, would have been considered carefully. Typically for narcissi, these flowers are star-like with plump petals, typologically distinct from the long, narrow points of the eight-rayed *stars* on Antiochos’s own clothing in this relief, or the spindly astral symbols which spangle the body of the lion horoscope.⁹⁸⁷ Unlike the fields of eight-point stars the rosettes are not enclosed within circles. These characteristics differentiate the motif from stars, confirming that they do indeed represent flowers.

Although Zeus-Oromasdes sports Persian-style headgear and trousers, his characteristic Greek symbols proliferate: a thunderbolt, and oak motifs below his trousers, across his sash, and on his boots. His throne is embellished with oak leaves, lions and eagles.

⁹⁸¹ BRODY and HOFFMAN 2011, cat.2-23, p.53.

⁹⁸² ACKERMAN 1965-67, pl.139-O.

⁹⁸³ DEVEBOISE 1941; and SIMPSON *et al* 2010, p.211 and fig. 2, p.218.

⁹⁸⁴ 32.150.47 <http://www.metmuseum.org/collection/the-collection-online/search/322674> (accessed January 2015). See BALTRUŠAITIS 1938 and KROGER 1982 for broader discussions.

⁹⁸⁵ SCHLUMBERGER 1986, pls. 74a, b and c.

⁹⁸⁶ SANDERS 1996, p.408.

⁹⁸⁷ Six pointed *stars*, as opposed to *rosettes*, appear on the relief of Artagnes-Herakles-Ares and Apollo-Mithras’s tiara on the West Terrace at Nemrud Dağı.

Antiochos wears the distinctive Armenian pinnacled crown of the type seen on his coins, and is shown with a quadrilobe scabbard at his hip, in this case decorated with lions, although we have noted other Nemrud Daği reliefs showing rose ornament in this position.⁹⁸⁸ The decoration of his clothing, with oak leaves and acorns on his sash and a thunderbolt at his shoulder, echoes some of Zeus-Oromasdes's iconography as reinforcement of the connection demonstrated by the hand-shake. The importance of Antiochos's symbolic connection with Zeus-Oromasdes is perhaps also reflected by his tunic with six-petalled rosettes within a lozenge pattern on his *dexiosis* relief with the patron goddess of the kingdom of Commagene,⁹⁸⁹ by means of which he was identifying himself with Zeus.

There is a calculated iconographic programme at play at Nemrud Daği in which plant imagery constitutes a significant element. In addition to oak leaves and acorns, bay-laurel leaves are present in relation to Apollo-Mithras, and vine-leaves appear on Antiochos's costume when he is with Herakles.⁹⁹⁰ We have mentioned the simple roses decorating the lobes of the quadrilobe dagger case; and there were also pomegranates; while the patron goddess of Commagene carries sprays of fruit and an overflowing cornucopia. This use of plant iconography reflects the traditions of the Graeco-Roman world and its function here is often both more explicit and more conventional than the examples at Tillya-tepe.

In view of the combination of narcissi and oak leaves in the Zeus-Oromasdes relief, we also momentarily recall the juxtaposition of narcissus flowers and oak leaves on the headdresses worn by 5th century BCE Cypriot statues, which, it was postulated might be connected with Zeus, in a period when the iconography of the gods was well-established. This is perhaps a coincidence, or it may introduce the possibility that narcissi were an emblem of Zeus. Alternatively, the narcissus imagery might indicate Parthian influences since a similar motif is depicted on Iranian style headgear, and this will be considered next.

3.2.2.9 Parthian coins

A single six-petalled or six-rayed motif appeared prominently on the pearl-encrusted tiara worn by Parthian kings on coins issued around the early 1st century CE,

⁹⁸⁸ 1.4 THE TILLYA-TEPE WARRIOR'S BI-LOBED KNIFE CASE.

⁹⁸⁹ SANDERS 1996, fig.275, p.154.

⁹⁹⁰ SANDERS 1996, pp.412-413. Although vine-leaves were an attribute of Dionysos (Roman Bacchus), Herakles was often depicted wearing vine leaf crowns, FURTWÄNGLER 1886-1890, p.2178.

representing Mithradates II and his successors. Mithradates II's historic importance was as conqueror of northern Mesopotamia, including Dura-Europos in 113 BCE, creating an empire which stretched from the river Euphrates to eastern Iran.⁹⁹¹ He was responsible for the neo-Iranicisation of coinage, including the new royal headgear, a jewelled tiara or *kolah*, sometimes decorated with astral designs.⁹⁹² The significance of a king's headdress was considerable, both symbolically and also because it was an essential indicator of his identity for a largely illiterate population.⁹⁹³ **Fig. 3 – 18a** shows one of his successors, Gotarzes I. This design inspired coins issued by Sasanian king Ardashir I (224-241 CE). **Figs. 3 – 18b** shows the obverse of Ardashir I's gold coin, issued following his momentous defeat of Parthian king Artabanos IV. There is also a spindly six-pointed star on his chest.

Although these 'flowers' are morphologically close to the Tillya-tepe narcissi, both the Gotarzes and Ardashir coins also have this same motif with seven and even eight rays or petals.⁹⁹⁴ A question here is whether this motif represents a star or a flower, as also remarked in relation to the starry narcissus on the wall relief at Palmyra, since many crowns included astral elements. A further complication is that the narcissus flower itself had certain astral connotations, as noted in the following section.

Therefore there is the conundrum that six-petalled or six-rayed motifs with very similar appearances feature on headgear, but represent:

1. Narcissus flowers at Tillya-tepe
2. Narcissus flowers on Cypriot sculpture
3. Probably narcissus flowers in the Graeco-Roman and Parthian-influenced art at Nemrud Dağı, in which plant imagery was an important part of the iconographic programme.
4. Stars in the context of Parthian and Sasanian coinage since they are in a position typically occupied by other astral motifs.

⁹⁹¹ SARKHOSH CURTIS 2007, p.12.

⁹⁹² SARKHOSH CURTIS 2007, p.15.

⁹⁹³ SOUDAVAR 2009, p.418.

⁹⁹⁴ GARIBOLDI 2004, p.42.

3.2.2.10 Bactrian art

Finally, we consider the six-petalled rosette in Bactria, although the contexts are disparate. The earliest example is a diminutive six-petalled flowering in the rocky foreground (lower right) of a well-known gilded silver plate from Aï Khanoum depicting a goddess, often described as Cybele, in her chariot guided by a winged goddess and pulled by lions, **Fig 3 – 19a**. This is a rare and significant image of a landscape. The craftsman has introduced tiny, sketchy blooms of different kinds of flowers, an allusion to the reality of blooms emerging from stony ground, perhaps in springtime when narcissi emerge. As such the flowers would provide the appropriate seasonal context for the arrival of a fertility goddess. The plate is dated to *ca.* 300 BCE and executed in what is sometimes described as a hybrid ‘Graeco-Oriental style’.⁹⁹⁵

Elsewhere at Aï Khanoum, formalised six-petalled flowers alternate with leaping horses and an indecipherable motif on the lid of a schist pyxis found in the Sanctuary of the Temple with niches.⁹⁹⁶ These lids covered compartmented bowls which, it is often assumed, were for cosmetics or jewellery. There is also a six-petalled rosette on the lid of an ivory *pyxis*, dated 1st – 2nd century CE, from Old Termez, situated further north on the Oxus River.⁹⁹⁷ A fourth six-petalled motif appears among terracotta fragments including grapes and a ten-petalled flower, considered to be wall decorations, from the Kushan site of Dilberjin in northern Bactria, **Fig. 3 – 19b**.⁹⁹⁸ Other objects from Dilberjin include imagery from the West such as the Dioscuri, depicted in a Hellenising style.⁹⁹⁹ However, because of their conventionalised forms, in none of these circumstances can we be sure that these flowers represent narcissi.

3.2.3 Overview and discussions

3.2.3.1 Narcissi at Tillya-tepe

Narcissi occur in at least eight different circumstances at Tillya-tepe. Their most important roles are on the folding crown where these flowers dominate the decoration, and the single flower at the apex of the tree finial in the warrior’s grave. Sarianidi mentions a six-petalled flower on the pommel of the sceptre owned by the woman in

⁹⁹⁵ BERNARD 2008, cat.23, pp.118-119.

⁹⁹⁶ HANSEN *et al.* 2010, cat.229, p.348.

⁹⁹⁷ ABDULLAEV 1991, cat.93, p.98.

⁹⁹⁸ PUGAČENKOVA and KRUGLIKOVA 1977, fig.76.

⁹⁹⁹ LO MUZIO 1999.

grave VI, and if this too represented a narcissus it would be an important deployment. Significantly too, narcissi appear on three out of four crescent hairpins. Unlike the circumstances of poppies and roses, there is no evidence to suggest that these narcissi were especially associated with either women or men. The presence of narcissi on headdresses and hairpins is considered to be a more significant factor.

3.2.3.2 Identification

There is a strong case on morphological grounds to identify these narcissus flowers, not only because of the shaping of their pointed petals but also because of their well-defined corolla at the centre of the flower-head. This identification gains credibility from realistic depictions of the genus *Narcissus* in Hellenistic and Roman art, including a naturalistic floral border on a mosaic from Pergamon and a Romano-Egyptian glass mosaic fragment, whose colours provide an additional dimension of evidence.

3.2.3.3 Range and media

In addition to these definitive examples of narcissi on glassware and mosaics, relatively naturalistic examples featured far earlier, from the 7th century onwards in Anatolian and East Greek jewellery, and then later on Hellenistic pieces. Many of these pieces of jewellery are fragments, but several are evidently headgear: fragments from Eretria, a gold wreath from Chalcide and the Loeb diadem. The presence of narcissus on crowns is also testified by 5th century Cypriot sculpture and the tiara worn by Zeus-Oromasdes at Nemrud Dağı. However, it was postulated that the six-rayed motifs on Parthian and Sasanian coins likely represented stars and not narcissi.

More local to Bactria although earlier than Tillya-tepe, a narcissus flower is one of several blooms in the landscape on the Cybele dish from Aī Khanoum. There are several narcissi on objects from Sirkap-Taxila, including a small globular vessel and it was hypothesised these narcissi might represent ‘floral labels’ for the vessel’s contents.

Finally, the Tomb of Elahbel at Palmyra provides a particularly realistic rendering of narcissi, confirmation of their definite presence in the east of the Roman empire, in a period broadly contemporary with Tillya-tepe.

3.2.3.4 Transmission

Images of the narcissus flower are more-or-less literal translation of the flower in nature. This mode of depiction did not change throughout history and it lacked any peculiar stylistic convention which might provide clear clues towards the transmission of the motif. Therefore, although narcissi were present in Hellenistic jewellery and by the 1st century CE featured in Roman, Palmyrene and north Pontic contexts, as well as at Sirkap-Taxila, the original source and route of influence are not discernible.

3.2.3.5 Context and iconography

As persistently noted throughout this case study, the presence of narcissi or star-shaped, six-petalled motifs on headgear is readily apparent, and one question was whether this phenomenon correlates with the fact that almost all the Tillya-tepe narcissi feature on head ornament, including most prominently, the two surviving crowns in graves IV and VI. The earliest narcissi on jewellery appeared alongside a Daedelic-style goddess, reflecting the influences of eastern Mediterranean artistic styles, but we do not know whether they were part of headdresses. By the 5th century, narcissus flowers appear both solo and in combination with oak leaves as crowns on Cypriot sculpture, and narcissi are flanked by oak leaves later at Chalcide on a wreath, which prompted the speculation that narcissi may have been associated with Zeus, because oak leaves were one of his prime emblems. This possibility is seemingly reinforced by narcissi decorating the headdress of Zeus-Oromasdes. However, in the absence of more compelling evidence, this question will remain open.

There is a case for the proposal that narcissus flowers sometimes embodied funerary connotations, most strongly demonstrated by the ceiling of the tomb of Elahbel at Palmyra, a tomb which exhibited many Hellenising or Roman elements in its decoration. In addition, there are two incidents of narcissi on Bosporan grave stelae. These examples are from cultures which are historically closer to Tillya-tepe than the comparanda described above and therefore they may provide clues towards the use of narcissi on the Tillya-tepe crown. This suggestion will be investigated further in the following two sections

Finally, it is worth noting that the culmination of narcissus floral imagery was the emblematic presence of narcissi on the Antioch mosaic where they aptly surround the

scene of the mythological protagonists *Echo and Narkissos*, expressing in direct terms the visual correlation between the flower and the story.

It is surprising that artistic images of narcissus flowers have been overlooked since they were manifestly present in art, and the examples at Tillya-tepe were surely among the most important. In order to decide whether these Tillya-tepe narcissi were purely decorative or perhaps fulfilled an emblematic role, there follows a review of the wider cultural functions of the narcissus flower.

3.3 A short cultural history of narcissi

The lack of previous studies on narcissus images in art is matched by the paucity of research into the status of these flowers in society. The following exploration will attempt to address this oversight and is intended to amplify our understanding of ideas which may underpin images of narcissi in art and in particular those at Tillya-tepe.

3.3.1 Introduction

Narcissi are well-adapted to a broad spectrum of habitats and they grow across the eastern Mediterranean and west Asia. They are highly decorative plants with richly perfumed flowers, and for these reasons they were sought-after, which might explain the spread of their cultivation in a narrow band as far as China during the Song dynasty and thereafter to Japan, the eastward distribution presumably representing transfer along ancient communication routes.¹⁰⁰⁰

The presence of narcissi in Bronze Age art has already been remarked, but they are not known to be recorded in texts. Actual traces of narcissus bulbs appear in a 13th century Egyptian tomb (discussed below),¹⁰⁰¹ and they featured in Graeco-Roman texts from around the 7th century BCE, when they played a seminal role in *The Homeric Hymn to Demeter*, discussed below.

Here the narcissus is discussed in terms of its genus, but where a specific species is indicated, this is noted.

3.3.2 Medical uses of narcissi

The etymology of the name *Narcissus* is informative about the biochemical properties of the plant since it is unusually consistent across a range of languages. This is fortuitous since it is sometimes difficult to correlate ancient plant names with modern taxonomy. Among the Greek writers it was known as *Ναρκισσος*, which in common with other native Greek flora like hyacinth and daphne, may have been a pre-Indo-European name which was adopted by incoming Greeks.¹⁰⁰² The *-ισσος* ending perhaps indicates a Thraco-Pelasgian origin, with the root of the word deriving from the Indo-

¹⁰⁰⁰ HANKS 2005a, p.1.

¹⁰⁰¹ GERMER 2001, p.543.

¹⁰⁰² REECE 2009, p.263; CHANTRAINE 1968, p.736.

European (*s*)nerg meaning ‘to paralyse’.¹⁰⁰³ *Ναρκισσος* then passed into Latin as *Narcissus*, and into Iranian languages in the form of Middle Persian *nargi* or *narghis*.¹⁰⁰⁴ Commenting on the origins of the Latin name *Narcissus*, Pliny explained that its source was: ‘the word *narce*, torpor, and not from the youth in the myth’.¹⁰⁰⁵ This opinion was supported by Plutarch, who noted that narcissus: ‘dulls the nerves and induces a narcotic heaviness’.¹⁰⁰⁶

An understanding of the narcotic properties of narcissi has endured into relatively modern folk medicine. ‘An extract of the bulbs, when applied to open wounds, has produced staggering numbness of the whole nervous system and paralysis of the heart’.¹⁰⁰⁷ Yet despite such references, many commenators have dismissed an etymological derivation related to narcosis.¹⁰⁰⁸ Until recently there was no scientifically attested evidence to endorse the narcotic properties of narcissi asserted by Pliny and Plutarch. However, pharmaceutical investigations in the latter part of the 20th century have demonstrated that the *Narcissus* genus is indeed rich in phytoactive compounds. Scientists have isolated the alkaloid *galanthamine* from these compounds and have shown that it is valuable in the treatment of neurological disorders, including neuro-muscular conditions.¹⁰⁰⁹ These extracts from narcissus are now subject to further medical research, and modern patents have been taken out with respect to its use in the treatment of Alzheimer’s disease.¹⁰¹⁰ So assertions that the narcissus plant’s etymology arose from its physiological effects have strong scientific foundations.

Dioscorides referred to narcissi twice in *De Materia Medica*. In Book I ‘Aromatics’ he described the process of steeping the flowers in an oil mixture for use in gynaecological cases, although warning, like Pliny, of a risk of headaches.¹⁰¹¹ In both instances the descriptions imply the species *Narcissus poeticus*, which was native to Greece. The validity of these practices is again borne out by the evidence of modern science, since

¹⁰⁰³ CARNOY 1959, p.185.

¹⁰⁰⁴ LAUFER 1919, p.427 and fn 8. This root informed the Arabic *narjis*, Aramaic *narkim* and Armenian *nargēs*.

¹⁰⁰⁵ PLINY XXI: lxxv.128.

¹⁰⁰⁶ PLUTARCH, *Moralia* 647.

¹⁰⁰⁷ GRIEVE 1931, <http://www.botanical.com/botanical/mgmh/n/narcis01.html> (accessed January 2015).

¹⁰⁰⁸ For example, the principal commentators on *The Homeric Hymn to Demeter*, in which the narcissus plays an important part, ALLEN *et al.* 1936, and RICHARDSON 1979; see also the rejection in *SOED* 2007, p.3804.

¹⁰⁰⁹ BROWN 2005, pp.332-333.

¹⁰¹⁰ BROWN 2005, p.336.

¹⁰¹¹ DIOSCORIDES I: 63; PLINY: XXI: lxxv.128. Headaches are also recorded as a side-effect in modern pharmacology. Note also Hippocrates’s recommendation of a narcissus oil pessary for the treatment of uterine tumours, DWECK 2005, p.25.

Narcissus poeticus has a high proportion of the anti-neoplastic alkaloid compound *narciclasine*.¹⁰¹² Similarly, the alkaloid *lycorine* is also present in *Narcissus poeticus* and *Narcissus tazetta*,¹⁰¹³ and both *narciclasine* and *lycorine* are used in modern anti-tumoral and anti-viral treatments.¹⁰¹⁴

Bulbs and roots are often the most biochemically active part of plants and provide the most potent cures when mixed into solvents such as beer, wine, honey, oil etc. Dioscorides noted the suitability of narcissus for burns and dislocations, and for certain lepritic conditions, such as ulcers and boils in his Book IV 'Roots'.¹⁰¹⁵ Pliny also commented on its application for light wounds, including bruises and sprains.¹⁰¹⁶ In addition to the use of narcissus bulbs, the essence of narcissus flowers was extracted, and Pausanias (*ca.* 110-180 CE) noted the medical uses of narcissus oil.¹⁰¹⁷

Since the phytoactive characteristics of plants are universal, it is likely that some medical applications described by the Greeks and Romans were also known to the Iranians, particularly in view of their related etymology around the meaning of narcotic, although documentary evidence from the relevant periods is sadly lacking. Of course, it is impossible to assert definitively that the pharmacological properties of narcissi were known by the Tillya-tepe folk, but it seems likely, not only because of the aforementioned universality of botanical properties, and also because of their probable connections across a range of cultures including, directly or indirectly, with the Roman world.

3.3.3 Narcissi in cult and ritual

The potent narcotic properties of the narcissus plant may have inspired its use in ritual activities and mythology. Although there is some art historical evidence connecting narcissus plants with funerary activities (also texts, discussed below), there is only one example of archaeobotanical remains in a mortuary context, but it is an important one. In the lavishly provisioned burial of Rameses II, (1213 BCE), traces of *Narcissus tazetta* bulbs were found around the king's neck, while lily corms lay on the chest of a

¹⁰¹² BASTIDA *et al.* 2006, p.154.

¹⁰¹³ BASTIDA *et al.* 2006, Table VI, p.100.

¹⁰¹⁴ BASTIDA *et al.* 2006, p.90.

¹⁰¹⁵ DIOSCORIDES IV: 161.

¹⁰¹⁶ DIOSCORIDES IV: 161. PLINY, XXI: lxxv. 129.

¹⁰¹⁷ Pausanias IX: xli.7.

female mummy.¹⁰¹⁸ In another burial, crinum bulbs were found covering various body parts of the mummy.¹⁰¹⁹ Egyptian elite funerary practices were precise and elaborate, and burial accoutrements involved many different plant materials, chosen for practical, ornamental and ritual purposes. For example, coffins were often made of imported exotic timbers, selected for their anti-rot and anti-insect properties such as cedar, juniper, cypress, yew and ebony.¹⁰²⁰ Gums and resins were used for embalming, again including imported substances such as frankincense¹⁰²¹ and myrrh.¹⁰²² Mummified bodies were sometimes dressed with decorative funeral collars, manufactured from a wide range of real flowers and leaves, and faience beads shaped as fruit, flowers, leaves or pods.¹⁰²³ But an ornamental purpose for Rameses II's lumpen narcissus bulbs is not plausible. The narcissi in the pharaoh's grave will have been a premeditated choice and therefore these narcissus bulbs likely fulfilled some symbolic function, presumably in relation to the afterlife of the interred.

Several possibilities might explain why narcissus was chosen. As discussed, narcissi were recognised as a narcotic plant, and therefore, like two other psychotropic species, *Papaver somniferum* and *Nymphaea caerulea* (widely used in Egyptian rituals)¹⁰²⁴ they embodied an innate association with death. In addition, there is a common thread between the narcissus, lily and crinum bulbs used in Rameses's burial: all three are geophytes, flowering plants with a short and spectacular flowering period whose presence on earth is brief.¹⁰²⁵ Narcissus is the one of the earliest plants to flower, a harbinger of spring, bringing with it all the hope and reassurance of resurgent nature. They then disappear back into the soil in a matter of weeks, leaving no traces apart from dessicating or decomposing foliage which quickly fades away. These characteristics perhaps provided narcissus with an intrinsic connection with concepts of death and the annual return or rebirth of nature in spring.

Many types of flowers were used for garlands, necklaces and crowns in the Egyptian New Kingdom, and later in the Roman period when *Narcissus tazetta* petals were found in a wreath and as part of a garland worn by the daughter of the Egyptian High Priest at

¹⁰¹⁸ GERMER 2001, p.543.

¹⁰¹⁹ GERMER 2001, p.543. As noted above, *Narcissus tazetta* was native to Egypt.

¹⁰²⁰ BAUMANN 1960, pp.89-90 and p.99.

¹⁰²¹ BAUMANN 1960, pp.93-94.

¹⁰²² BAUMANN 1960, p.95.

¹⁰²³ HEPPER 1990; MANNICHE 1989, pp.26-27.

¹⁰²⁴ HEPPER 1990, p.9, 11, 16; EMBODEN 1989.

¹⁰²⁵ The botanical characteristics of the *Narcissus* genus are noted in 3.1.2 IDENTIFICATION OF THE SIX-PETALLED FLOWER

Hawara, *ca.* 220 BCE.¹⁰²⁶ In the Graeco-Roman world, narcissi were: ‘one of the most popular flowers for wreaths and garlands which were used in religious festivals alongside white violets, carnations, anemones, hyacinths, roses, lilies, irises and crocuses’.¹⁰²⁷ Crowns of flowers, including narcissi, were also offered as votive donations.

Among the written sources, Sophocles, writing lyrically of Colonus near Athens, in *Oedipus Coloneus*, in the 5th century BCE, mentioned narcissus crowns: ‘...and fed of heavenly dew, the narcissus blooms morn by morn with fair clusters, crown of the Great Goddesses from of yore...’.¹⁰²⁸

The two ‘Great Goddesses’ for the Greeks were Demeter and Persephone, although some scholia of the text have observed that narcissi were *not* used in garlands of the two Greek ‘Great Goddesses’, Demeter and Persephone,¹⁰²⁹ because crowns and garlands were specifically forbidden at the festival in their honour, the *Thesmophoria*.¹⁰³⁰ There are no surviving images of either goddess with narcissus flower headdresses. Alternatively, the narcissi crowns might have been worn by *pre-Greek* Great Goddesses ‘of yore’. This array of ‘Oriental Great Goddesses’ included among their number Mesopotamian Inana/Ištar, Levantine and Eastern Mediterranean Astarte and Anat, and Anatolian Cybele.¹⁰³¹ This interpretation is supported to some degree by the visual evidence. Narcissus-like flowers were found in conjunction with several of these typologically-related eastern deities in the jewellery of the 7th century BCE, as described above: a pair of narcissi flank a Daedelic style goddess on gold pendants from Tralles, and similar narcissus flowers float above female heads, **Figs. 3 – 6a, b, and d**. However, this association remains tentative without further evidence.

Textual evidence clearly shows that narcissus flowers were pre-eminent in funerary rituals. Floral crowns themselves were not worn to funerals but they were sometimes placed on the corpse itself or on the funeral byre.¹⁰³² ‘When the dead went into the presence of the gods of the underworld, they carried crowns of narcissus that those who

¹⁰²⁶ HAMDY p.117.

¹⁰²⁷ CARROLL 2003, p.88.

¹⁰²⁸ SOPHOCLES, lines 681ff, pp.114-115, *ca.* 406 BCE. Socrates is often mistakenly mis-cited as author of this quotation, describing the narcissus as: ‘chaplet of the infernal gods’,

¹⁰²⁹ RICHARDSON 1979, commentary to line 8, pp. 143-144.

¹⁰³⁰ RICHARDSON 1979, commentary to line 8, p.142.

¹⁰³¹ For the succession of these goddesses, see: CORNELIUS 2008, SELZ 2000, HEIMPEL 1982.

¹⁰³² GOODY 1993, p.66.

mourned had placed in their white hands when the last good-byes were said'.¹⁰³³ 'Myrtle, amaranthus and polyanthus' were strewn over graves - the latter 'many-flowered' polyanthus bloom in fact denoting *Narcissus tazetta*.¹⁰³⁴ In a specific case: 'a narcissus wreath (was) offered every winter at the grave of the girl Isidora in Hermoupolis Magna', Egypt.¹⁰³⁵

In poetry, references to the flower related to the doomed youth Narkissos. In Nonnus's *Dionysiaca*, as the lovesick shepherd anticipates his premature death, he requests: '...give me another grace: above my tomb let there be flowers of passion-struck Narcissus'.¹⁰³⁶ In the anonymous Augustan text entitled *Culex*, a shepherd's account of suitable flowers and shrubs to be planted around the tomb of a gnat (!), he hails the narcissus: 'Yonder fails not the Narcissus, whose noble beauty kindled with Love's flame for his own limbs; and what flowers soever the spring seasons renew with these the mound is strewn above'.¹⁰³⁷

Narcissus fulfilled a funerary role even beyond the Graeco-Roman world and the custom of bedecking graves with narcissi in the Middle East continues into the modern era.¹⁰³⁸ It is one of a select number of funerary plants placed on Muslim graves in Israel, where it predominated, present in 41.3% of graveyards.¹⁰³⁹

The extensive use of floral tributes around the Mediterranean required reliable supplies and a busy floricultural trade developed in Italy from the Hellenistic era onwards.¹⁰⁴⁰ Narcissi were imported in quantity, as recorded in a letter sent from Roman Egypt: 'We had all the narcissi you wanted, so instead of the two thousand you asked for we sent you four thousand'.¹⁰⁴¹

The oil extracts from narcissi preserve a rich flower scent which was a desirable ingredient in the perfume industry. As noted, such oils and aromatic solutions were not only used for cosmetic purposes but also as part of temple practices, such as ritual cleaning and anointing of both people and religious statues.

¹⁰³³ MOLDENKE 1952, p.148.

¹⁰³⁴ FOLKARD 1892, p.194.

¹⁰³⁵ NELSON 2000, fn.74, p.381.

¹⁰³⁶ NONNUS, XV: 352-3.

¹⁰³⁷ CAMPBELL 2008, p.36.

¹⁰³⁸ BAUMANN 1993, p.68.

¹⁰³⁹ DAFNI *et al*, 2006, Table 2 *White-flowered plants*. The pre-dominance of cypress trees, Table 3, is another instance of the persistence of specific funerary plants through history.

¹⁰⁴⁰ GOODY 1993, p.53.

¹⁰⁴¹ *Oxyrhyncos Papyrus*, 3313, quoted in GOODY 1993, p.53.

This discussion of the cultural status of narcissi in the Graeco-Roman milieu has been dominated by the chthonic aspects of the flower, but the mythological account of *Persephone's Descent into the Underworld*, discussed further below, demonstrates the other side of the coin, since narcissi also embodied the concept of seasonal return.

This latter idea is present too in the Iranian world, whereby the narcissus flower is one of two quintessential flowers chosen to celebrate *Nowruz*, the festival for New Year, the most important celebration in the Iranian calendar.¹⁰⁴² *Nowruz* was a celebration of the arrival of spring: 'when the sun begins to regain strength and overcome winter's cold and darkness and when there is a renewal of growth and vigour in nature.'¹⁰⁴³ *Nowruz* begins at sunrise at the spring equinox, and for Zoroastrians it follows another important ritual which is an essential part of their religious duty, the tradition of ritual farewell to the *Fravašis*, the spirits of the dead.¹⁰⁴⁴ The other *Nowruz* flower is the hyacinth, another highly ornamental, richly scented flower with similar geophytic characteristics. Hyacinths too were celebrated in Greek mythology, in a transformational myth in which the youth Hyacinthus was killed and his blood metamorphosed into the hyacinth flower.¹⁰⁴⁵

Although it is unknown when narcissi were adopted into the *Nowruz* ritual, these shared symbolic values for the narcissus are not coincidental but reflect the natural circumstances of the narcissus flower itself, discussed above in relation to the bulbs on the chest of Rameses II: their early arrival when spring conditions allow, and their swift departure. When the narcissi travelled eastwards along the trade routes to China in the 9th century CE,¹⁰⁴⁶ they took with them these associations and became the quintessential flower for Chinese New Year. Thus it can be seen that narcissus flowers preserved a significant cultural status across a wide geography through several millennia.

¹⁰⁴² Although it is unknown when this tradition originated.

¹⁰⁴³ BOYCE 2009: (accessed June 2015).

¹⁰⁴⁴ BOYCE 2009: (accessed June 2015).

¹⁰⁴⁵ OVID, *Metamorphoses*, X: 4.

¹⁰⁴⁶ GOODY 1993, Table 12.2, p.349.

3.3.4 Narcissi in religion and mythology

Narcissi flowers were not only one of the most popular plants in funerary rituals. This aspect was also reflected in its status in Greek mythology where it manifested strong chthonic associations. The narcissus flower played a dramatic role in the *The Homeric Hymn to Demeter*, one of thirty-three surviving texts, attributed to Homer in antiquity although its true authorship is unknown.¹⁰⁴⁷ It is central to the story of *Persephone's Descent into the Underworld* which commences with Persephone, daughter of Demeter goddess of fertility and agriculture, gathering spring flowers in a meadow. She reaches out to pluck a narcissus flower:

‘...the narcissus, which (*the goddess*) Earth made to grow at the will of Zeus and to please the Host to Many,¹⁰⁴⁸ to be a snare for the bloom-like girl – a marvellous radiant flower. It was a thing of awe whether for deathless gods or mortal men to see: from its root grew a hundred blooms and it smelled most sweetly, so that all wide heaven above and the whole earth and the sea’s salt swell laughed for joy. And the girl was amazed and reached out with both hands to take the lovely toy...’¹⁰⁴⁹

When Persephone grasped the flower the earth opened up beneath her and she was swept down into the Underworld by Hades in a golden chariot, a scene described in art as *The Abduction of Persephone*.

Two aspects strongly reflect the importance of the narcissus in this story. Firstly, its narrative importance in a mythological context. It was given a universal impact: the narcissus was wondrous for its hundred flowers and its joy-inducing scent which permeated heaven, earth and the oceans. It was ‘a thing of awe’ even to the gods themselves, commissioned by Zeus, god of heaven, created by the goddess of the Earth, to fulfil the purposes of Hades, god of the Underworld. Secondly, this miraculous plant was too tempting, Persephone was impelled to seize it, and therefore this narcissus was emphatically instrumental in plunging her into the Underworld, a place of death. The

¹⁰⁴⁷ FOLEY 1999; RICHARDSON 1979

¹⁰⁴⁸ Hades, Lord of the Underworld.

¹⁰⁴⁹ HOMERIC HYMNS, pp.288-289.

hundred blooms indicate that it was probably the multi-headed *Narcissus tazetta*, an identification which is compatible with references to its heady scent.¹⁰⁵⁰

The subsequent episodes are well-known. The tale at its briefest has the inconsolable Demeter wandering the earth in search of her daughter thereby neglecting her duties to nature. Meanwhile the soil lay bare and unproductive and famine stalked the land, threatening the very survival of mankind. In response to this, Zeus eventually allowed Persephone's return to earth, but there were conditions attached to his concession.

While in the Underworld, Persephone had been persuaded by Hades to eat pomegranate seeds. Eating these seeds condemned her to return to Hades for several months each year. Yet again a plant, this time the pomegranate, was responsible for Persephone's journey to the Underworld. So pomegranates, like narcissus, were explicitly associated with the Underworld.¹⁰⁵¹ This aetiology explains the annual cycle of the seasons: in spring Persephone would visit the living world and consequently the earth became fruitful and put forth its bounty, and later she would return to the Underworld during the lifeless months of winter. The relationship between underworld dieties and fertility is expressed succinctly by Erwin Rohde: 'Dwelling beneath the soil they guarantee two things to their worshippers: they bless the cultivation of the ground, and ensure the increase of the fruits of the soil, to the living; they receive the souls of the dead into their Underworld'.¹⁰⁵² He further goes on to note that for the Greeks at home and in their colonies in the post-Homeric period, Demeter and Persephone were closely associated and occupied 'the most important place in the cult of the Underworld'; there was even a goddess Demeter *Chthonia*.¹⁰⁵³

Suzanne Amigues remarks on the symbolic nature of the narcissus in the narrative¹⁰⁵⁴ and it is worth spending a moment to reflect on why narcissi were given such a prominent position. Several commentators have suggested that its golden-yellow colour symbolised the underworld,¹⁰⁵⁵ but this is mistaken since *Narcissus tazetta* is largely

¹⁰⁵⁰ Richardson suggests that: 'the flower represented a literary trope: 'a kind of 'Open Sesame', in which a magic flower is the key which opens the earth, revealing the underworld, and its hidden treasures.' RICHARDSON 1979, commentary on line 8, p.144.

¹⁰⁵¹ Pomegranates were widely regarded as a sacred plant across many cultures, see: WARD 2003, IMMEWAHR 1989, MERLIN 1984, p.201, MUTHMANN 1982, PORADA 1967.

¹⁰⁵² ROHDE 1925, p.160.

¹⁰⁵³ ROHDE 1925, pp.160-161. See also FARNELL 1909, p.48.

¹⁰⁵⁴ AMIGUES 2001, p.369.

¹⁰⁵⁵ RICHARDSON 1979, commentary on line 8, p.144; also p.142 commentary on line 6, p.142. ALLEN *et al.* 1931, ftn.428, p.53. In Evelyn-White's translation of line 428, the narcissus is compared with

white. Perhaps it is the general fact of the narcissus's natural association with death, deriving both from its narcotic properties and dramatically brief lifespan. The story of *The Abduction of Persephone*, a key part of *Persephone's Descent to the Underworld*, was itself considered an appropriate theme for tombs and it became a favourite in 1st – early 2nd century CE tombs at Kerch, where there are four different instances of the event, with Hades in his chariot and a smaller figure of Persephone.¹⁰⁵⁶ One image, from the Tomb of Alkimos, even features a faint image of Persephone picking flowers, although they are entirely schematic,¹⁰⁵⁷ while another shows her abduction against the backdrop of a rose-meadow.¹⁰⁵⁸ Therefore it seems likely that this story was well-known to the elite population in this area.

Indeed, it is apparent that from the 4th centuries BCE onwards, images of Demeter and Persephone were popular both among the Greek and Scythian/Sarmatian populations in the north Pontic region, as seen in the tomb of the aforementioned, so-called 'priestess of Demeter' at Bolshaya Bliznitsa, and specifically on an image of *The Abduction of Persephone* on the diadem of an elite Scythian woman at Kul'Oba.¹⁰⁵⁹

Another tale relating to the narcissus flower, even more famous than Persephone's story, is that of the beautiful youth, Narkissos. His story was related in Ovid's *Metamorphoses* from around the turn of the Common Era.¹⁰⁶⁰ Narkissos was punished for spurning the love of the nymph Echo and was condemned to fall in love with his own reflection in a pool. He faded away, metamorphosed into the narcissus flower, and therefore his return to earth each year was a brief affair. This transformative myth was a dual metaphor for the ephemeral quality of mankind and the annual cycle of nature. As described above, Narkissos and Echo are illustrated in conjunction with images of actual narcissus flowers on a mosaic at Antioch, **Fig. 3 – 14**. Finally, for Narcissus the youth, the narcissus was a consequence of his death rather than its cause (as in the *Abduction of Persephone*), but both tales have death and rebirth or return woven into their fabric.

crocuses and is assumed to be yellow, but yellow is not mentioned in the text, HOMERIC HYMNS, pp.318-319.

¹⁰⁵⁶ UTECHIN 1979, the subject was revived generally in Roman Imperial times on a range of funerary monuments, p.14.

¹⁰⁵⁷ ROSTOVTZEFF 1913, revised SCHILTZ 2004, pl.XLIX.

¹⁰⁵⁸ ROSTOVTZEFF revised SCHILTZ 2004, pl.LVIII, tomb excavated in 1895: see Case Study I.

¹⁰⁵⁹ UTECHIN 1979, p.15.

¹⁰⁶⁰ NELSON 2000, p.380 and fn.69.

The narcissus, like the rose, was one of seven flowers in a sacred text known as the *Eighth Book of Moses*, in the *Magical Papyri*, (2nd century BCE – 4th century CE), wherein seven plants were each associated with a planetary deity.¹⁰⁶¹ Although such esoteric texts are hard to decode, this example expresses the notion that narcissi were among those flowers imbued with magical powers. 1st century CE Roman writer Columella refers to narcissi, marigolds and gilliflowers as ‘earthly stars’.¹⁰⁶² There is also evidence for plants associated with planets and deities in Iranian religious contexts, although from a later date, as shown in the Zoroastrian *Greater Bundahišn*, ‘Primal creation’, in the chapter concerning ‘The nature of plants’, narcissus is listed as one of twelve sweet-scented blossoms cultivated by man,¹⁰⁶³ associated with the *yazata* Māh, the Moon.

The context of narcissi in Iranian literature outside the Zoroastrian texts is entirely secular, reflecting its role in courtly life, including its presence in the *Šahnameh*, the *Persian book of Kings*, compiled around 1000 CE but with origins reaching back into the Parthian epoch. Sasanian king Khosroes II convened a splendid hunting expedition comprising 300 horses with golden bridles and 3000 footmen. The spectacle was attended by 2000 musicians mounted on camels and: ‘...two hundred young servants carrying narcissi and crocuses, and they carried these so that the wind bore their scent to Parviz (the king)’.¹⁰⁶⁴

3.3.5 Overview and Discussion

Like roses and poppies, the narcissus was one of a small group of plants enjoying a status which transcended that of ordinary garden plants. Its pharmacological property as a narcotic is indicated in its linguistic origins which extends across many languages. Evidence that this important biochemical capability was well-known in the 1st century CE is provided by both Pliny and Plutarch but it has only recently been confirmed by the medical establishment.

A chthonic character was deeply-ingrained in the cultural identity of the narcissus, where it was a popular flower in funerary rituals, potentially stretching back centuries, as indicated by narcissus bulbs around the neck of Rameses II. Narcissus flowers had a

¹⁰⁶¹ BETZ 1986, pp.172-173 and 182; *PGM* XIII, lines 18ff.

¹⁰⁶² COLUMELLA, Book X.

¹⁰⁶³ Bundahišn, 27. 5,11. <http://www.avesta.org/pahlavi/bund24.html> (accessed January 2015). Note *ranges* should read *narges*.

¹⁰⁶⁴ *ŠAHNAMEH*, p.810.

well-attested function in rituals more generally, as an important flower in garlands and crowns, including an emblematic status as the crown worn by ‘Great Goddesses of yore’.

Graeco-Roman literature was explicit in assigning narcissi a dominant theme of death and annual return or rebirth, both in the stories of the *Abduction of Persephone*, in which a narcissus flower played a crucial role, and in the metamorphosis of the youth Narkissos.

One might therefore expect to see images of narcissi in funerary art. Around the 1st century CE narcissi appeared on stelae at Kerch and most notably in the tomb of Elahbel at Palmyra, reinforcing textual evidence for the sepulchral function of the plant. The narcissus flower appears on a coffin from Vitjazevo although it was but one of many flowers. It is possible that the Hellenistic-style diadems with narcissi-type flowers found in graves were created to accompany the dead, but we cannot be sure of this. Nor can we assume that the Tillya-tepe crown had a direct funerary purpose.

Therefore it is possible to identify a convergence of text, image and even emblematic associations in the status of the narcissus flower in relation to death and return or rebirth. The connections are two-fold: firstly due to the narcissus flower’s narcotic properties, which must be seen as a highly significant factor in our understanding of this plant, succinctly expressed by Richard Jebb, translator of Sophocles: ‘It is *the flower of imminent death*, becoming associated, through its narcotic fragrance, with *πάγκη* – the pale beauty of the flower helping the thought.’¹⁰⁶⁵ And secondly due to its lifecycle – narcissi arrive early as harbingers of spring, but the fleeting nature of their existence lends itself to reflections on the ephemeral nature of man. Because this symbolism is embodied within the very character of the narcissus, their connection with death and return extends beyond the Graeco-Roman and Egyptian worlds, and we find narcissi as the flowers associated with *Nowruz* in Iranian rituals, a resonance which travelled as far as China and Chinese New Year.

With these over-riding characteristics in mind we will now return to Tillya-tepe and look more closely at the folding crown from grave VI and other related objects.

¹⁰⁶⁵ Commentary to SOPHOCLES, tr. JEBB, fn.683, p.115.

3.4 Crowns and hairpins: a closer study of the Tillya-tepe folding crown

3.4.1 Introduction

The Tillya-tepe folding crown from grave VI is a unique artefact and the creation of such an important object would doubtless have involved a considerable degree of thought. It is discussed here in relation to several other Tillya-tepe objects:

1. The warrior's crown finial, because its design also involves a tree.
2. The pair of pendants depicting the 'Mistress of the animals' which were attached to the folding crown.
3. The narcissus and crescent hairpins which also hung from it.
4. The crescent hairpins from the other women's graves.

There is reason to suggest that all these items originated from the same workshop, which is generally considered to have been located in Bactria,¹⁰⁶⁶ or at least under the control of the Tillya-tepe folk. The consistency of the techniques and materials used – cut sheet gold, fine granulation around the centres of the flowers, and turquoise inlays – and the specific design of the narcissus flowers on the crowns and the hairpins all attest to a shared source for items 1, 3 and 4. The heart-shaped, turquoise petals of the flower above the 'Mistress of the animals' (item 2) are also entirely typical of Tillya-tepe decoration, although this version differs from the flowers discussed so far in this thesis. Their framing structure shares features with the Hellenised soldier clasps from grave III, discussed further below.

We recall too the fragmentary lattice headdress in grave III was discussed in 2.1.1 CATALOGUE OF THE FIVE-PETALLED FLOWER AT TILLYA-TEPE. It was suggested that this crown was originally hung with poppy flowers which were found lying close by. This offers the prospect that this woman, whose status was almost on par with the incumbent of grave VI, also wore a crown covered in flowerheads, this time representing poppies.

In the following analysis the folding crown is deconstructed, **Fig. 3 – 20**, and its various layers of imagery are studied in the light of objects with similar characteristics drawn from relevant cultures. The warrior's crown finial, **Fig. 3 – 21** is also briefly discussed.

¹⁰⁶⁶ See 0.4 TILLYA-TEPE BURIALS.

3.4.2 Floral crowns

It has been observed that ‘the most elaborate items of jewellery were usually made for the adornment of the head’.¹⁰⁶⁷ By the era of Tillya-tepe there was already a long history of gold headdresses with vegetal and especially floral decoration, sometimes elaborate recreations of simple crowns constructed from real flowers. Leaves and flowers naturally lend themselves to be fashioned into crowns, providing colourful and scented decoration during festivals and rituals. Spectacular gold headdresses with fruit and flowers were buried in rich graves at Ur (southern Iraq) occupied by Queen Pu’abi and her attendants in the mid-3rd millennium BC.¹⁰⁶⁸ A gold diadem with rosettes was found in a hoard dated to the 16th century BC from Tell el-‘Ajjul (Gaza).¹⁰⁶⁹ Centuries later crowns were particularly favoured by the Assyrians, reaching their most elaborate forms at Nimrud (northern Iraq) in the 8th century BC. The outstanding example is a multi-levelled, gold crown comprising a row of winged goddesses floating between a vine-trellis hung with lapis lazuli grapes, with a multi-rayed flower above and a dense wreath of flowers and fruit below.¹⁰⁷⁰ Another gold crown from Nimrud consists of 96 flowers fixed to a deep band.¹⁰⁷¹ Images of Assyrian headdresses on ivories and wall-reliefs show simpler diadems with lotus buds and various kinds of multi-rayed flowers.¹⁰⁷²

Stylised flowers appeared on diadems from the 7th century BC in the eastern Mediterranean area, including examples from Rhodian and Cycladic sites, which Reynold Higgins considered to be a reflection of Assyrian influences transmitted via Syria.¹⁰⁷³ The resulting Daedelic style travelled beyond these islands, and diadems featuring different types of flowers alongside griffin-heads and birds were found at Kelermes.¹⁰⁷⁴ This was an early example of an interest in plant ornament from incoming nomadic, horse-riding tribes, a taste which developed further among the Scythians under the influence of Greek, and particularly in Hellenistic, art. Some of the most spectacular examples of gold jewellery with detailed floral elements feature from this era, including elaborate diadems.

¹⁰⁶⁷ WILLIAMS AND OGDEN 1994, p.36.

¹⁰⁶⁸ MILLER 2013, 2000; PITTMAN 1998, pp.89-106; PITTMAN AND MILLER 2015.

¹⁰⁶⁹ MAXWELL-HYSLOP 1971, p.121.

¹⁰⁷⁰ COLLON 2008, pp.105-106; pls.V-VI.

¹⁰⁷¹ COLLON 2008, pp.105-107; fig.14a).

¹⁰⁷² MAXWELL-HYSLOP 1971, pp.251-254.

¹⁰⁷³ HIGGINS 1961, pp.105-106.

¹⁰⁷⁴ ARTAMONOV 1969, pls.25-28.

A hint that headdresses with floral decoration may have been popular in Bactria in the early centuries CE is provided of course by the Tillya-tepe women's crown(s);¹⁰⁷⁵ and by two examples at Dalverzin-tepe from a couple of centuries later which must be seen in the context of Buddhist iconography,¹⁰⁷⁶ but the sporadic survival of materials from the region prevents a systematic study.

3.4.3 Overview of the Tillya-tepe folding crown

The crown is described in 3.1.1 CATALOGUE OF THE SIX-PETALLED FLOWER AT TILLYA-TEPE and the main points are summarised here with supplementary remarks. It consists of five stylised trees rising up from a diadem, **Figs. 3 – 20a, b and c**. These trees, with their pyramidal shape emphasised by a pointed finial, resemble the shape of coniferous forest species, perhaps reflecting the eastern nomadic origins of the Tillya-tepe folk.¹⁰⁷⁷ The trees were attached by means of rods to the diadem. This simple mechanism, enabling the delicate crown to travel safely with its owner, meant the entire crown could be assembled or dismantled with ease. The collapsible structure may indicate a throwback to nomadic traditions when possessions had to be portable for a life based around transhumance.

Each tree was occupied in its upper branches by a pair of confronted birds and at its base by a pair of fish or reptiles indicated by their spiny tails. The trees are covered with fifty-three narcissi, a flower, as noted, also present on the warrior's crown finial.

Both the folding structure, which might refer to a nomadic lifestyle if not current then from previous generations, and the trees indicate steppe influences. The arrangement of these trees creates an overall silhouette which replicates the 'definitive' crown shape. This is quite unlike the tall conical headdresses which were a feature of nomadic cultures 'from the Ukrainian steppes to the Altai mountains'.¹⁰⁷⁸ They were typically single-pointed forms or, in 'Scythian' contexts such as Tolstaya Mogila, *kalathos*-shaped reflecting Greek influence.¹⁰⁷⁹ Indeed, the shape is atypical for Tillya-tepe, where reconstructions of crowns in graves II and III show them both as tall

¹⁰⁷⁵ The plural is used here in relation to the folding floral crown in grave VI and the proposed poppy crown in grave III.

¹⁰⁷⁶ PUGAČENKOVA 1978, fig.141, p.207.

¹⁰⁷⁷ Coniferous trees dominate the forest-steppes from the Altai mountains in the east to the Ural mountains in the West, and they were used for funerary fittings. For example, the Siberian larch, a rare example of a deciduous conifer, was used for coffins and as linings for chambers at Pazyryk, RUDENKO 1970, pp.28-29.

¹⁰⁷⁸ SCHILTZ 2008, p.241.

¹⁰⁷⁹ SCHILTZ 1994, pl.299, p.381.

constructions, based on the disposition of gold appliqués on textile or leather headdresses whose structure is now lost.¹⁰⁸⁰

Crowns with zig-zag profiles which derived from Achaemenid mural designs are seen on textiles from kurgan V at Pazyryk: one piece depicts women wearing pointed crenellated crowns attending to a *thymiaterion* in a ritual scene, part of a repeat pattern in the border of an imported Achaemenid saddle-cloth;¹⁰⁸¹ on a felt rug, an enthroned woman wears a similar crown, with an additional elements, and holds a sinuous plant with flowering shoots of various stylised plants while facing a warrior on horseback. This felt carpet is probably a local production but it reflects Achaemenid influences, not only in the design of the throne, but also the crown which is a simplified version of Achaemenid crowns with stepped crenellations.

However, as we contemplate the Tillya-tepe folding crown, there are no mural elements and its imagery is overwhelmingly vegetal. Therefore although there is a superficial similarity to the shape of the Pazyryk crowns, it is difficult to assert a direct comparison. An actual *stepped* crenellated crown appears at Tillya-tepe on the head of the ‘Master of the animals’, the pendants from grave II which Sarianidi states were attached to a fabric headdress whose structure was lost.¹⁰⁸² Seemingly he is the male counterpart to the ‘Mistress of the animals’ pendants attached to the folding crown (see below).

Since the Tillya-tepe folding crown came from a grave, we need to address the possibility that it was made exclusively for the woman’s funeral.¹⁰⁸³ The critical question is whether there are signs of use. Sarianidi refers to the crown’s state of preservation as: ‘flowers partly deformed’, although this was probably due to depositional circumstances since the body had slipped through the rotted base of her coffin onto the grave floor.¹⁰⁸⁴ Jane Hickman inspected many of the Tillya-tepe artefacts including the crown but she makes no reference to signs of wear-and-tear.¹⁰⁸⁵ The expert on jewellery techniques, Jack Ogden, did not have the opportunity to handle the

¹⁰⁸⁰ See recent reconstructions in SCHILTZ 2008, p.241 and p.254; the female incumbents of graves I and V did not have crowns.

¹⁰⁸¹ RUDENKO 1970, pp.296-297. For general Achaemenid influences at Pazyryk, see ROES 1952, pp.24-30; for comparable *thymiateria* from Persepolis and Lydia, see http://www.cais-soas.com/CAIS/Art/international_achaemenid_art.htm part I (accessed June 2015).

¹⁰⁸² SARIANIDI 1985, p.24 and cat.2.7, p.231.

¹⁰⁸³ According to Sarianidi, the Tillya-tepe warrior’s crown finial and ibex came from an earlier era and therefore it was not manufactured for his burial, SARIANIDI 1985, p.37.

¹⁰⁸⁴ SARIANIDI 1985, p.254; also p.46.

¹⁰⁸⁵ HICKMAN 2012, pp.84-85.

Tillya-tepe objects, but he studied the crown in a glass case with a short focus monocular lens and did not observe apparent wear, noting that the crown looked relatively pristine: 'It's constructed of fairly flimsy components, so if used to any extent I'd expect it to show more signs... My guess is that if worn at all it was for a brief ceremony or two and handled very carefully'.¹⁰⁸⁶ Therefore, unfortunately, a definitive assessment is not possible.

3.4.4 Tree elements on the crown

Although the pinnacled format of the Tillya-tepe folding crown differs from traditional steppe crowns, the tree-shaped elements demonstrate steppe influences since trees do not 'grow' on west Asian or Graeco-Roman crowns. The arrangement of animals is also distinctive. As described, a pair of confronted birds with long necks and outspread wings perch on the top branches of the four identical trees. The base of each tree is flanked by lowly beasts with spade-shaped tails and jagged undercarriages or fins, seemingly monstrous fish, **Fig. 3 – 20b**. These creatures are part of the tree structure itself, cut from the same gold sheet. This configuration has its origins in the tall crowns from Saka or early Sarmatian burial sites (see below), and the evident importance of this imagery on such a significant Tillya-tepe object demands a closer look at the comparanda.

An early example of this tree arrangement is present on a tall crown worn by a woman aged around 17 – 20 years old buried in a kurgan at Taksay 1, Terekty (Kazakhstan,) dated by the excavators to around the 6th – 4th centuries BCE,¹⁰⁸⁷ **Fig. 3 – 22a**. This elite woman's grave contained an array of rich possessions including gold appliqués and jewellery, long-handled mirrors, a cauldron, horse-fittings and precious metalwork vessels. The inventory included several Achaemenid or Achaemenid-style objects: temple-pendants,¹⁰⁸⁸ and bracelets with blue glass inlay distantly redolent of the type found at Tillya-tepe, and a unique Achaemenid wooden comb depicting a battle-scene with a charioteer and combatants.

¹⁰⁸⁶ Jack Ogden, email communication, 16 April 2015.

¹⁰⁸⁷ <http://en.tengrinews.kz/science/Golden-Princess-found-2-years-ago-finally-shown-to-public-256009/> and <http://en.tengrinews.kz/science/Reconstruction-shows-how-ancient-Scythian-Princess-255482/> (both accessed June 2015).

¹⁰⁸⁸ Similar gold conical earrings, without the attached seeds, were found at the 5th century BCE Besoba acropolis, West Kazakhstan, *L'UOMO D'ORO* 1998, cats.184-5, p.147.

The woman's crown has been reconstructed to show rams flanking a tree with flying birds, in broadly the same configuration as the Tillya-tepe ensemble. The tree is a quintessential example of the steppe style, whose scrolling exuberance is almost exactly replicated in the 4th century BCE deer antlers on stags excavated from a grave at the early Sarmatian site, Filippovka, **Figs. 3 – 22b and c.**¹⁰⁸⁹ The Filippovka antlers even feature bird-heads carved into the extremities of the tines. Logic dictates that the Filippovka deer image pre-dates its apparent transformation into the Taksay tree, not least because this tree features the ears of the deer. The evidence seems to suggest that tree imagery is in some way interchangeable with the deer antlers, a notion previously explored by several scholars.¹⁰⁹⁰ The antlers and branches also curve into a heart-shape in a manner which is redolent of the pierced hearts on the Tillya-tepe trunks, **Fig. 3 – 20b.**

An extravagantly horned ram sits at the apex of the Taksay crown, **Fig. 3 – 22d**, whose design has resonances in the affronted rams decorating a Scythian-style axe from Kelermes, which itself resembles animal column capitals at Persepolis.¹⁰⁹¹ There are also two close contemporary parallels between objects from Taksay and the 5th – 4th centuries BCE necropolis at Prokhorovka in the Urals: identical 'ram-griffin' appliqués are found at both sites;¹⁰⁹² and wolf-tooth pendants from both burials doubtless originated in the same workshop.¹⁰⁹³ This implies that the dating of Taksay I may be closer to Prokhorovka. Prokhorovka consisted of horse-riding people and was recognised as an early Sarmatian site since the time of Rostovtzeff.¹⁰⁹⁴

Potentially therefore this tree – bird – animal combination provides a step linking the worldview of the Tillya-tepe folk with 5th or 4th centuries BCE Saka or early Sarmatians sites such as Taksay, Filippovka and Prokhorovka.

Another more elaborately decorated headdress was worn by the famous 'Golden Man' unearthed by archaeologist Kemal Akishev from an undisturbed, 3rd – 2nd century BCE, timber-lined tomb at Issyk, Semirechye, Kazakhstan, **Fig. 3 – 22e**, The tomb was

¹⁰⁸⁹ For a recent overview of excavations at Filippovka, see YABLONSKY 2010.

¹⁰⁹⁰ MARTYNOV 1991, pp.105-105; JACOBSON 2007, pp.192-194, 1993, p.77.

¹⁰⁹¹ ARTAMONOV 1969, fig.18.

¹⁰⁹² L'UOMO D'ORO 1998, cat.266, p.173, from Kurgan II.

¹⁰⁹³ L'UOMO D'ORO 1998, cat.255, p.170, from Kurgan II.

¹⁰⁹⁴ MORDVINTSEVA 2013a, pp.205-206.

occupied by a warrior, probably female,¹⁰⁹⁵ allegedly from an Iranian-speaking Saka tribe, wearing trousers and a jacket, both covered with gold appliques.¹⁰⁹⁶ The Issyk crown has many elements including jagged mountains, and characteristic steppe animal-style ornament such as horned horses, snow leopards, rams and birds, and is dominated by soaring arrows and feathers. Although the concept may be similar to the Taksay crown, the schematised multi-branched trees are expressed in a different style, more comparable with various stylised trees at Pazyryk on felt saddlecloths, **Fig. 3 – 22f**. The Issyk tree emerges from rocky terrain and featuring a single bird perched at its apex, and it was discussed by Akishev in terms of a ‘tree of life’ related to kingship.¹⁰⁹⁷

There are no further extant examples of this crown ensemble until the 1st century CE, the era of the Tillya-tepe folding crown. A late 1st or early 2nd century CE crown was excavated from an unlooted kurgan at Kobiakovo on the Lower Don,¹⁰⁹⁸ **Fig. 3 – 22g**. The square pit contained the body of a 25 – 30-year-old Sarmatian woman wearing a red leather headdress ornamented with a tree, in a style again recalling the Pazyryk saddle decoration, flanked by deer at the base and birds above, all cut from fine gold sheet.¹⁰⁹⁹ Her grave also included a Chinese mirror and a turquoise-inlaid gold pectoral which, it has been suggested, shared a common source with the Tillya-tepe jewellery,¹¹⁰⁰ as well as gold griffin bracelets of possible Bactrian origin,¹¹⁰¹ and horse harnessing.¹¹⁰² The incumbent has been identified as a priestess on the basis of various accoutrements allegedly associated with cult practices, including this crown with its tree decoration, her mirror, two incense burners, bells and a silver spoon.¹¹⁰³

Another headdress with a related design was found in a Sarmatian female burial at Khokhlach, near the Don River dating to the third quarter of the 1st century CE,¹¹⁰⁴ **Fig. 3 – 22h**. The grave contained a rich inventory of goods including gold torques, items which imitated the turquoise-gold combination with pale blue glass inlaid into gold,

¹⁰⁹⁵ The gender is assigned to male in L’UOMO D’ORO 1998, but is considered to be female in DAVIS-KIMBALL 1995 and 1997-1998. LEBEDYNSKY 2009, p.68 notes that the anthropologist who examined the bones later conceded that they were small and probably belonged to a woman.

¹⁰⁹⁶ L’UOMO D’ORO 1998, cat. 270, p.175; JACOBSON 1993, pp.76-77.

¹⁰⁹⁷ KUZ’MINA 1983, p.16.

¹⁰⁹⁸ SCHILTZ 2001, pp.219-223.

¹⁰⁹⁹ SCHILTZ 2001, cat.248, pp.222-223.

¹¹⁰⁰ TREISTER 1997, p.48.

¹¹⁰¹ TREISTER 1997, p.48.

¹¹⁰² SCHILTZ 2001, pp.224-231.

¹¹⁰³ LEBEDYNSKY 2014, p.247-248. See MORDVINTSEVA 2010, p.199 for the list of objects.

¹¹⁰⁴ TREISTER 2004e, pp.459-460, dated on basis of comparanda in other Sarmatian graves.

bracelets, gold clothing appliques including crenellated shapes, and small vessels.¹¹⁰⁵ Her sheet gold crown is decorated with semi-precious stones, including a central amethyst bust of a woman wearing a Greek-style chiton, flanked by large cabochon gems and birds inlaid with turquoise. Along the top of the diadem are tiny trees flanked by deer and a ram. The branches are beaten at their inner end and wrapped around the trunk of the tree in the manner applied on the Tillya-tepe warrior's tree.¹¹⁰⁶ The naturalistic veined, cordiform leaves are sophisticated and probably shaped over a mould rather than simply cut from sheet gold.¹¹⁰⁷ The reconstruction of this crown shows five trees,¹¹⁰⁸ and there were small birds at the outer edge of the composition. Like the Tillya-tepe crown the profile seems to imitate a crenellated headdress, although the pyramidal silhouettes derive from the assemblage of trees and animals rather than the single trees. This piece reflects influences from steppe art juxtaposed with Graeco-Roman features such as the bust, the realistic leaves, and the pendant flower and seeds. The re-use of the cameo bust coincides with the taste for cameos at Tillya-tepe.

Another morphologically similar headdress comes from the grave of a Sarmatian female at Ust'-Labinskaia on the banks of the Kuban river, north of the sea of Azov, dated to the early 2nd century CE.¹¹⁰⁹ Like the Tillya-tepe folding crown, some of the creatures actually grow from the stylised tree with rams emerging from its base, and its apex is formed in the shape of a bird with outspread wings, **Fig. 3 – 22i**.

In all these women's crowns the tree – bird – animal combination is consistent, but we should note that all the comparanda feature herbivores with prominent horns rather than the fish or draconic beasts found at Tillya-tepe.¹¹¹⁰ Therefore, as ever, Tillya-tepe shares certain compositions with one group of objects but also diverges from their perceived norms. Notwithstanding this variation, the presence of these headdresses clearly positions the Tillya-tepe folding crown within the steppe tradition, which by the 1st century CE was commonly associated with the Sarmatians.¹¹¹¹

¹¹⁰⁵ SCHILTZ 1995, pp.55-59.

¹¹⁰⁶ LAURSEN 2011, p.153, p.190.

¹¹⁰⁷ LAURSEN 2011, p.153.

¹¹⁰⁸ SCHILTZ 1995, cat.85, pp.58-59.

¹¹⁰⁹ LEBEDYNSKY 2014, p.248. A gold-turquoise style belt-plaque was found in a male burial, kurgan 35, MORDVINTSEVA 2010, p.196.

¹¹¹⁰ Francfort discussed earlier Altaic examples, proposing that the missing aquatic element was represented further down in the compositions, as pendant felt fish, FRANCFORT 2011, pp.307-308.

¹¹¹¹ LEBEDYNSKY 2014, p.282, also notes a spoon engraved with a similar stylised tree, considered to be a cultic object, from the 1st century CE north Pontic site, Sokolova Mogila.

This tree – bird – animal is generally accepted to be an expression of a nomadic cosmological ideology,¹¹¹² whose origin was perhaps related to shamanism.¹¹¹³ These crowns are described as illustrating the three levels of the universe linked by a ‘Cosmic tree’ acting as the central axis.¹¹¹⁴ According to this theory, the reptiles or fish at the base of the Tillya-tepe tree occupy the subterranean world, either a watery abyss or netherworld; the tree growing upwards links this lower stage to the fruitful earth and then reaches heavenwards, indicated by the birds, and they were all connected with concepts relating to the annual renewal of nature. And these are the terms in which such crowns have been discussed.¹¹¹⁵ It should be noted, however, that the animals in all these images stand on the ground-line and not below it, therefore the reference to a subterranean world is not entirely clear in any of these instances. On the basis of the *prima facie* visual evidence, the scenes might equally be interpreted in terms of fertility and an ordered universe. Although the evidence from art repeatedly demonstrates the three-fold construction discussed above, it is important to emphasise that we are in the realm of speculation when proposing the concept of a three-level universe, whether at Tillya-tepe or the other sites under discussion.

Variations of the tree – bird – animal configuration are discernible on two other Tillya-tepe items, although in both cases a figure occupies the position of the tree: a pair of pendants featuring the ‘Mistress of the animals’, discussed below, in which dolphin-like heads flank the base; and the pair of clasps comprising a Hellenised soldier enclosed within a leafy frame, with seated partridge-like birds at the top and contorted leonine dragons rising up from the base,¹¹¹⁶ **Fig. 0 – 9b**. As noted, the presence of marine creatures was characteristic of all four of the principle women’s graves at Tillya-tepe.¹¹¹⁷

At this point it is worth briefly remarking on the tree from the Tillya-tepe warrior’s headdress which has a simpler, more archaic structure and is more directly associated with steppe art, **Fig. 3 – 21**. Sarianidi compared it with similar miniature trees with branches and discs found in Peter I’s Siberian treasures, including one with a

¹¹¹² JACOBSON 1993, pp.177-178; FRANCFORT 2011, pp.306-307; LEBEDYNSKY 2014, pp.281-284; SCHILTZ 2009, pp.116-117; TREISTER 1997, p.45; also MARTYNOV, 1991, pp.99-111 for an extended discussion.

¹¹¹³ BRENTJES AND VASILIEVSKY 1989, p.265.

¹¹¹⁴ See ELIADE 1964, pp.269-273 for an elucidation of the ‘Cosmic tree’.

¹¹¹⁵ For example, Mie Ishiwata has discussed a range of crowns with tree ornaments, birds and animals specifically in relation to fertility and resurrection of nature, ISHIWATA 1987.

¹¹¹⁶ FRANCFORT 2011, pp.292-295.

¹¹¹⁷ See 0.4 TILLYA-TEPE BURIALS.

rectangular section trunk like Tillya-tepe and a base perforated for attachment.¹¹¹⁸ He also surmised that both the tree and the ibex fixed to it were prestige items from elsewhere and were ‘incorporated into a ceremonial headdress akin to a diadem or crown’.¹¹¹⁹ We have already seen the combination of both tree and ram on the Taksay headdress, and another ram crowns the headdress belonging to a woman in a 5th century BCE kurgan I at Ak-Alakha in the Altai.¹¹²⁰

3.4.5 The narcissus flowers

As discussed in 3.2.2 ARTEFACTS WITH NARCISSUS IMAGERY, the trees and diadem on Tillya-tepe folding crown are covered with fifty-three narcissus flowers whose form was found in Graeco-Roman contexts, although narcissi also appear in ‘Parthian’ influenced sites such as Nemrud Dağı and the Tomb of Elahbel, 103 CE. Significantly there was also the narcissus on the warrior’s tree finial, and narcissi were also present on the hairpins attached to the folding crown. Looking beyond Tillya-tepe, we recall narcissi among the floral repertoire of gold diadems and other jewellery, including from the Black Sea area.

The iconography and cultural status of narcissi have already been analysed. Sophocles attributed the wearing of narcissus crowns to the ‘Great goddesses of yore’,¹¹²¹ and this may perhaps have resonances with images of the Daedelic Anat-Astarte who appears *alongside* narcissus flowers, **Fig. 3 – 6a, b and d**. Conversely, narcissus crowns were worn by males in sculpture at Cyprus and Nemrud Dağı, and there may have been an association with Zeus. However, the over-arching significance of narcissus flowers was related to their biochemical, narcotic properties, discussed in relation to the etymology of the name ‘narcissus’ and reinforced by remarks from Pliny and Plutarch. In the light of the analysis of art historical and textual sources it was proposed that narcissi possessed an enduring emblematic significance related to concepts around the cycle of life, death and return, and that such ideas were, in effect, innate to the iconographic status of the narcissus flower. Moreover, it was suggested that these associations were recognised across several communities, particularly those which had connections with the Graeco-Roman world, either directly or indirectly via other groups of people. The

¹¹¹⁸ SARIANIDI 1985, p.37, citing unpublished artefacts.

¹¹¹⁹ SARIANIDI 1985, p.37.

¹¹²⁰ LEBEDYNSKY 2009, p.68.

¹¹²¹ SOPHOCLES, lines 681-683, pp.114-115, *ca.* 406 BCE.

question is then whether the narcissi on the folding crown embodied these concepts for the Tillya-tepe folk?

We may address this question by taking into account a number of connections with the Graeco-Roman world. Tillya-tepe was sited in a region which had a relationship with the Greek world dating from the arrival of Alexander's army and continuously through to the end of the Graeco-Bactrian period. The significant quantity of Graeco-Roman imagery in the women's graves, including well-worn signet rings inscribed with the name and image of Athena.¹¹²² According to Boardman, the owner of the Tillya-tepe folding crown may personally have had some Greek connections. She was buried with one coin clasped in her hand and another in her mouth – presumably reflecting the Greek funerary custom,¹¹²³ which Boardman notes 'was little copied elsewhere', and which he judged was 'a clear reference to lingering Greek beliefs'.¹¹²⁴ She also had a wide array of Graeco-Roman imagery in her grave plus vessels actually imported from the Mediterranean.¹¹²⁵

Furthermore, we have also noted connections between Tillya-tepe artefacts and those found in a select group of north Pontic Sarmatian-Alan tombs, and other commonalities are discussed in each of the case studies. Again, it is clear that these communities were familiar with Graeco-Roman imagery. Elsewhere within the Bosporan area, within the same 'Sarmatian' cultural milieu, the Kerch tombs demonstrate that *The Abduction of Persephone*, a story in which narcissus flowers played a role, was an established funerary theme during this period.¹¹²⁶

It is therefore possible that the Tillya-tepe folk were familiar with ideas which were embedded within images of narcissi, particularly those under discussion here which have a universal dimension – i.e. they are not restricted to a very local or specific ideology. The Tillya-tepe people did not need to know the stories concerning narcissi and Persephone or the youth Narkissos, but as with the case of the rose imagery discussed in Case Study I, they may have been aware of the general connotations of the flower. In fact, western literary influences had been present in the Bactria area itself, although the evidence is fragmentary. In 2nd century BCE there was a Greek theatre at Aï Khanoum, and the works of great Greek playwrights were still in circulation towards

¹¹²² SARIANIDI 1985, cats 2.1, 3.78, although there is no assumption that the Tillya-tepe folk could read.

¹¹²³ BOARDMAN 2012, p.105.

¹¹²⁴ BOARDMAN 2012, p.107.

¹¹²⁵ BOARDMAN 2012, p.105.

¹¹²⁶ UTECHIN 1979.

the 1st century CE as is demonstrated by a reference to a performance of *Bacchae* by Euripides at Nisa, 53 BCE.¹¹²⁷

Interim summary and discussion

The presence of the tree – bird – animal configuration on headdresses, including those found in north Pontic area from around the 1st century CE, seemingly provides clues about the ideology of these various people which derived from steppe sources. The concept entailed a three-staged universe linked by trees and embraced notions of fertility and the cycle of nature. An additional dimension was proposed with regard to the prominent presence of numerous narcissi which cover these trees. For the Greeks and Romans, and, it was postulated, also for the Sarmatian-Alan peoples in the north Pontic region, and the Tillya-tepe folk, they embodied references to life, death and seasonal return, again reflecting ideas around the cycle of nature.

In order to deepen our understanding of the folding crown further, we will now review the objects attached to it.

3.4.6 The ‘Mistress of the animals’

Among the possessions of the woman in grave VI, Sarianidi noted a pair of temple pendants hanging from her folding crown, depicting a semi-naked female deity.¹¹²⁸ She is clearly divine, not only in her pose as ‘Mistress of the animals’, but also because she has wings, **Fig. 3 – 23a**. The goddess wears limited clothing: a cross-strap derived from Hellenistic sources, which also featured in Parthian, Bactrian and North Indian art.¹¹²⁹ The clothing at her hips slides downwards and, like the cross-strap, serves to expose rather than conceal her body, accentuating her almost-naked state. Abdullaev discussed this drapery in terms of influence from Bactrian terracottas.¹¹³⁰ She is framed within an architectural structure denoting a *naiskos*, a small, columned temple,¹¹³¹ which is crowned by a four-petalled, stalked flower at its centre linked on either side by tear-shaped inlays to owl-like birds at the outer corners. The base of these pendants, inlaid

¹¹²⁷ MASSON AND PUGAČENKOVA 1982, p.109.

¹¹²⁸ SARIANIDI 1985, pp.48-49; cat.6.4, pp.254-255, whom he identifies as Anāhitā.

¹¹²⁹ BOARDMAN 2003, pp.359-360, e.g. at Nisa and Taxila. See also the fully naked ‘Aphrodite’, standing with slight contrapposto and wearing a cross-strap, within a simple arched niche at Dura-Europos, BRODY AND HOFFMAN 2011, pl.66, p.367.

¹¹³⁰ ABDULLAEV 2016, p.118.

¹¹³¹ ABDULLAEV 2016, p.120.

with semi-oval turquoise, terminates at either end with the head of a dolphin-like creature. Plain discs hang from wires attached to the base and the birds.

In his detailed study of these pendants, Abdullaev observes that this locally-produced piece is important for our understanding of Tillya-tepe, likely reflecting the collection of myths of the Bactrian people.¹¹³² Moreover, their attachment to the folding crown suggests that this deity was specifically important for the Tillya-tepe woman in grave VI.

There are a number of images of goddesses which share characteristics with this image and the observations commence here with remarks on her presentation as ‘Mistress of the animals’, her most visible identity. The closest, near-contemporary exemplar is a naked, wingless ‘Mistress of the animals’, *ca.* 2nd century CE, wielding a pair of ‘dolphins’ on an engaged column capital at the Parthian site of Qal‘eh-i Yazdigird, **Fig. 3 – 23b**.¹¹³³ Both naked goddesses are depicted in frontal pose, but the Tillya-tepe goddess exhibits a slight hint of contrapposto reflecting Graeco-Roman influences. This contrapposto is a step further from the Graeco-Roman conventions exhibited by the Tillya-tepe ‘Bactrian’ and ‘Kushan’ ‘Aphrodites’, both also winged.¹¹³⁴ It has faded to a faint tilt of the hips, the shadow of her knee and a slight swirl along the line of the cloth.

Although the Tillya-tepe goddess wields a pair of peculiar composite creatures, they do not have scales like the Yazdigird fish, yet they must be sea monsters since despite their dog- or wolf-like snouts they each have abbreviated fins and a fishy tail. Their heads have a passing similarity to the undulating *kētē* monsters on the Loeb diadem, discussed in 3.2.2 ARTEFACTS WITH NARCISSUS IMAGERY. The presence of such creatures in Central Asian art is attested, including a clay *kētos* head in an apparent cultic context at Akchikhan-kala in Chorasmia, *ca.* 1st century BCE to CE.¹¹³⁵ Unlike the undulating draconic beasts on the Tillya-tepe knife-case and quadrilobe scabbard, the aquatic canines on these pendants have none of the fluency of steppe art. Their bodies are lumpen and static, also recalling the Indian *makara* with its squat body, schematic

¹¹³² ABDULLAEV 2016, p.119.

¹¹³³ ABDULLAEV 2016, p.119; KEALL 1980, p.24. For the possible significance of dolphins in Parthian contexts as a nomadic Central Asian symbol, see PFROMMER 1993, p.25. There was also a class of frontally-presented, naked women, popular in the Parthian world, although without accompanying animals: see INVERNIZZI TURIN 2007b, cats. 69, 71, 72, 81.

¹¹³⁴ SARIANIDI 1985, cat.6.3, p.254, cat.2.6, p.231.

¹¹³⁵ Michele Minardi provides a history of the *ketos*, including its presence in Central Asia, MINARDI 2016, pp.175, 179, 183.

tail, and snapping jaws, of which a pair may be seen in the grasp of an Indic-style figure, at Begram in Afghanistan **Fig. 3 – 23c**.¹¹³⁶

The ‘Mistress of the animals’ had a long history in Bactria itself, dating back to the Bronze Age when Bactria engaged in contact and exchanges with the Mesopotamian and Syro-Anatolian worlds throughout the 3rd and 2nd millennium BCE. Compartmentalised seals featured a category of semi-naked goddesses, sometimes winged, flanked by animals and with spread-eagled birds above, **Fig. 3 – 23d**.¹¹³⁷ If we look to the Ancient Near East, there are Mesopotamian images of Inana/Ištar who also provided the typological precedent for generations of goddesses in this frontal pose,¹¹³⁸ such as the Semitic figurines of Anat-Astarte, Ašerah, Qudšu.¹¹³⁹ These images may be seen as precedents for the Qal‘eh-i Yazdigird and Tillya-tepe goddesses, and there are further aspects of the Tillya-tepe ‘Mistress of the animals’ which relate her to Inana/Ištar and many of her Levantine variants, since they too had wings. And the detailing of her pubic area explicitly emphasises the sexuality of this goddess, a mode of depiction which departs sharply from Graeco-Roman artistic conventions and is closer to Mesopotamian and Levantine precedents.

This type of goddess entered Greece from the Near East in the guise of a winged *Potnia Theron*, ‘Mistress of the animals’, depicted in the Daedelic style, and standing below a flower,¹¹⁴⁰ **Fig. 3 – 23e**. Daedelic goddesses have been discussed above in relation to narcissus flowers, **Figs. 3 – 6a, b and c**. Typically for the Aegean world in the 7th century the *Potnia Theron* is shown clothed.¹¹⁴¹ In this period she was usually associated with the Greek goddess of the hunt, Artemis. Interestingly, seven pendants depicting a Daedelic-style *Potnia Theron* below a flower were discovered at the 2nd – 4th century CE Kushan dynastic shrine, Surkh Kotal in Bactria,¹¹⁴² a site noted in Case Study I for the presence of the sepalled rose flowers on the crenellations, and demonstrating the taste for this type of image many centuries after its creation.

¹¹³⁶ BOARDMAN 2003a, p.362.

¹¹³⁷ SARIANIDI 1998a, p.16.

¹¹³⁸ See for example the famous Burney relief at the British Museum:

http://www.britishmuseum.org/research/collection_online/collection_object_details.aspx?objectId=1355376&partId=1 (accessed June 2015).

¹¹³⁹ CORNELIUS 2008; HEIMPEL 1982; SELZ 2000.

¹¹⁴⁰ HIGGINS 1961, pls.19-20; LAFFINEUR 1978, pls.I-3, XII.

¹¹⁴¹ MARINATOS 2000, pp.92-93. He offers a range of interpretations for the ‘naked goddess’ in her various Near Eastern and Greek incarnations.

¹¹⁴² http://www.lgpn.ox.ac.uk/image_archive/images/SurkhKhotal8.jpg (accessed June 2015).

The analysis of the Tillya-tepe goddess is further complicated by her shared iconography with the Greek goddess Aphrodite, which is unsurprising in the light of the other Aphrodite-type goddesses and Erotes at Tillya-tepe. In fact, it has been argued that due to a range of similarities in character, cult and iconography Aphrodite is another goddess who is related to Inana/Ištar,¹¹⁴³ although these putative connections over several millennia remain hypothetical. The Tillya-tepe goddess has been discussed in terms of Aphrodite-Anadyomene, ‘Aphrodite rising from the sea’, who was depicted naked by the Greeks and Romans, sometimes alongside a dolphin.¹¹⁴⁴ As regards the *naiskos*, I would suggest that the inlaid flower at the apex of its pediment may represent a rose, one of Aphrodite’s symbols. The rose lacks the sepals which were essential features on the numerous roses in the warrior’s grave, and the inclusion of the stalk in this manner is very unusual, perhaps unique. A similar, but stalkless, rose appears in pediment of a 1st century CE terracotta depicting Aphrodite, **Fig. 3 – 23f**.¹¹⁴⁵ However, in other respects the Tillya-tepe goddess is stylistically different from typical Aphrodite images. The Greek Aphrodite does not have wings, and in fact these heart-shaped version are customarily an attribute of Psyche, personification of the soul.¹¹⁴⁶

One final point of comparison is a winged goddess on a 2nd – 1st century BCE silver phalera from the north Pontic site, Yanchokrak, Donetsk (modern Ukraine), usually associated with the Sarmatians, who holds a round fruit like the Tillya-tepe goddess, and also a phiale, **Fig. 3 – 23g**.¹¹⁴⁷ She is identified as Aphrodite *Ourania* by Iulia Ustinova on the basis of the dove, one of Aphrodite’s emblem, and the fact that she believed this incarnation of Aphrodite was predominant in the Bosporan world.¹¹⁴⁸

Therefore, once again we have a range of diverse artistic sources converging on a single, iconographically rich image at Tillya-tepe. As with the exploration of the Tillya-tepe crown, it is postulated that the individual elements of such an important, iconic image were chosen by the Tillya-tepe folk because they were meaningful for them in some specific way, but it is difficult to define exactly what this goddess represented to them. However, if we are seeking insights into the Tillya-tepe worldview then it is

¹¹⁴³ PENGLASE 1994, pp.165-179.

¹¹⁴⁴ ABDULLAEV 2016, p.120.

¹¹⁴⁵ ABDULLAEV 2016, p.120; fig. 6, p.123.

¹¹⁴⁶ See BUNKER 2004 for a study of a textile depicting with an Erotes and butterfly found in eastern Central Asia, interpreted as an allusion to Psyche.

¹¹⁴⁷ USTINOVA 1999, pl.8.1 and p.111.

¹¹⁴⁸ USTINOVA 1999, p.111.

necessary to try, even though the information assembled will remain a theoretical proposal because of the absence of texts.

Like the tree – bird – animal ensemble on the folding crown, these pendants have been interpreted in terms of a three-tier universe,¹¹⁴⁹ although in this case the goddess herself takes the position of the tree, and at her feet are dolphin-like creatures, while birds perch at the top of the frame. She occupies the middle ground grasping the sea-monsters in a composition which unequivocally reflects her domination of the natural world. According to Schiltz, in her role as ‘Mistress of the animals’ the Tillya-tepe goddess: ‘embodies fecundity and fertility, and the renewal which underpins the concept of the world held by Iranian people, and in particular, nomads’.¹¹⁵⁰

As discussed, an early visual point of reference for this Tillya-tepe goddess is Inana/Ištar, the complex, multifaceted deity from the Mesopotamian world: ‘...the goddess was both womb and tomb... both the source of fertility and life as well as the cause of death’.¹¹⁵¹ Texts as early as the 21st century BCE recount her descent to the Netherworld and subsequent return to the living world,¹¹⁵² epitomising her ability to move between the living and the dead.¹¹⁵³ Although this was more than two millennia before Tillya-tepe, there is research which explores how divine narratives in ancient Near Eastern literature influenced the development of Greek mythological themes, and these same stories persisted into the early centuries CE. According to Charles Penglase, the account of Inana/Ištar’s journey influenced the story of *Persephone’s Descent to the Underworld*,¹¹⁵⁴ in which the narcissus flower played its part. In this instance it is particularly relevant to both Inana/Ištar and Persephone that the journey ‘results in the instigation of the perpetual descent-and-return fertility cycle’.¹¹⁵⁵ Indeed, we recall that Demeter herself, a fertility goddess, also possessed cultic associations with the ‘realm of the souls under the earth’.¹¹⁵⁶ Thus there is an enduring association with death and return among these deities.

Therefore, these pendants display an array of visual motifs which, it is proposed, represent an ideology deriving from the nomadic world which was expressed using both

¹¹⁴⁹ FRANCFORT 2011, pp.290-291.

¹¹⁵⁰ SCHILTZ 2009, p.117. See also PUGACHENKOVA AND REMPEL 1991, p.14.

¹¹⁵¹ ABUSCH 1999, p.454

¹¹⁵² METTINGER 2001, p.187.

¹¹⁵³ ABUSCH 1999, p.454; BARRET 2007 pp.19-24.

¹¹⁵⁴ PENGLASE 1994, pp.136-147.

¹¹⁵⁵ PENGLASE 1994, p.139.

¹¹⁵⁶ ROHDE 1925, pp.160-161.

Graeco-Roman and Parthian forms based on conventions from earlier millennia. But who was this goddess ? As noted, the persona and iconography of these Ancient Near Eastern divinities, and especially the role of *Potnia Theron*, penetrated the characterisation of Artemis in Greece.¹¹⁵⁷ This divinity later developed into the highly syncretic Aphrodite *Ourania*, ‘Heavenly Aphrodite’.¹¹⁵⁸ If we are thinking in terms of Graeco-Roman influences, there are three aspects of the pendant image which suggest Aphrodite as a better *interpretatio graeca* than Artemis. The first is the blatant sexuality of the Tillya-tepe goddess which is incompatible with Artemis the Virgin, who was customarily shown in hunting gear, whilst Aphrodite was often shown naked. Secondly, the framing of a naked goddess within a *naiskos*, with a rose in the pediment, suggests Aphrodite.¹¹⁵⁹ The third consideration is the round fruit she holds, which may be a pomegranate as a calyx is just visible, one of Aphrodite’s attributes.¹¹⁶⁰ Although Aphrodite is not usually winged,¹¹⁶¹ these small, heart-shaped wings are, as remarked, found on the other Aphrodite-type goddesses at Tillya-tepe.

When we consider the north Pontic area, which has been mentioned so often in relation to plant imagery, ‘Bosporan epigraphy of the first centuries AD produces a strong impression of the total domination by Aphrodite’, writes Ustinova.¹¹⁶² This goddess was Aphrodite *Ourania*, who represented a conflation of a goddess imported into the area by the Greeks in the 6th century BCE, and the Scythian ancestral Great Goddess, Argimpasa, an identification which dated back to Herodotus.¹¹⁶³ Ustinova suggests that in the 1st century CE, the syncretic Aphrodite *Ourania* also acquired Iranian characteristics as a result of incoming Sarmatian peoples.¹¹⁶⁴ At this time the goddess embodied new characteristics: a role as patroness of the dead in the Netherworld,¹¹⁶⁵ and an association with war, which Ustinova has interpreted as ‘grantor of success in

¹¹⁵⁷ MARINATOS 2000, pp.92-109, pp.110-129; ‘Queen of the wild beasts’, HOMER, *Iliad*, Book XXI: 470.

¹¹⁵⁸ USTINOVA 1999, pp.109-113.

¹¹⁵⁹ ABDULLAEV 2016, discussed above.

¹¹⁶⁰ SARIANIDI pl.48, p.105. Abdullaev identifies the fruit as an apple, ABDULLAEV 2016, p.121.

Fortuitously, both fruits are attributes of Aphrodite,

<http://www.theoi.com/Olympios/AphroditeTreasures.html> (accessed February 2015).

¹¹⁶¹ Ustinova suggests that winged goddesses of this type derived from Scythian forebears, USTINOVA 1999, pl.6.1, p.347.

¹¹⁶² USTINOVA 1999, p.139.

¹¹⁶³ USTINOVA 1998, pp.213-215.

¹¹⁶⁴ USTINOVA 1998, p.210.

¹¹⁶⁵ USTINOVA 1999, p.148.

the battlefield'.¹¹⁶⁶ This characteristic was remarked on previously, when I proposed that the copper red roses on the Bosporan Queen's helmet may have been a reference to Aphrodite *Ourania* in a context in which roses specifically had military connotations. This warrior element tallies with other images of roses associated with soldiers in the Roman Empire and beyond, including at Tillya-tepe, described in Case Study I. As Ustinova summarises: 'She was the tutelary goddess of the Bosphorus, the guardian of its kings and their subjects, grantor of power and victory in battle, the supreme cosmic deity of this world and the protectress of the dead in the netherworld, and a great fertility-goddess, reigning the vegetal and animal kingdoms'.¹¹⁶⁷ In these two latter aspects, Aphrodite *Ourania* drew on the characteristics of both Demeter and Persephone.¹¹⁶⁸ In view of Tillya-tepe's apparent cultural connections with the north Pontic area, it is interesting that the persona of Aphrodite *Ourania* represented the primary qualities expressed in this image of a goddess.

However, there are other contenders: Anāhitā, the Iranian deity of water and fertility who was cited by Sarianidi.¹¹⁶⁹ But on those rare occasions when Anāhitā was definitely depicted, which did not occur until the Sasanian period, she is shown with flowing ribbons and not wings attached to her shoulders.¹¹⁷⁰ There is also Nana, the Bactrian goddess who was attested in the Rabatak inscription in southern Bactria, *ca.* 100-125 CE.¹¹⁷¹ She was recognised by the Parthians in western Iran, at Aššur, Hatra and Dura-Europos,¹¹⁷² as well as Nisa in the East.¹¹⁷³ Nana was syncretised with Artemis at Palmyra and Dura-Europos.¹¹⁷⁴ The woman seated on a lion decorating the Tillya-tepe warrior's belt roundels was identified as Nana (see above). But the Tillya-tepe 'Mistress of the animals' is presented in a totally different persona, and this circumstance plus the absence of either of Nana's chief attributes, the lion and crescent, render this identification doubtful.¹¹⁷⁵

¹¹⁶⁶ USTINOVA 1999, p.146. She discusses a stela at Kerch, *ca.* late 1st - early 2nd century CE, depicting a warrior performing a libation below the Temple of Aphrodite, in the presence of the goddess herself, Nike and Eros. She also received thanks-givings for military victories. USTINOVA 1999, pp.143-146.

¹¹⁶⁷ USTINOVA 1998, p.209.

¹¹⁶⁸ USTINOVA 1999, pp.57-59.

¹¹⁶⁹ SARIANIDI 1985, p.49.

¹¹⁷⁰ SHENKAR 2014, figs.21, 22, pp.249-250.

¹¹⁷¹ SIMS-WILLIAMS AND CRIBB 1996, pp.78-79; SIMS-WILLIAMS 202, p.77. SHENKAR 2014, pp.116-128 provides an account of her imagery.

¹¹⁷² SHENKAR 2104, pp.117-178.

¹¹⁷³ INVERNIZZI 2011, p.664.

¹¹⁷⁴ SHANKAR 2014, p.117.

¹¹⁷⁵ Francfort has interpreted the cultic objects and archaeological structures at Aī Khanoum and Takht-i Sangin as indications of a local Bactrian goddess, sometimes called Oxus/Vaxš/Vaxšu, associated with

In reality this goddess may be an image of a specific, localised deity worshipped by the Tillya-tepe folk, whose name is now lost to history, but who manifested many of the characteristics of Aphrodite *Ourania* and her ilk, as described above.

When we consider the juxtaposition of these goddess pendants with the folding crown, we find that many elements are potentially inter-related – the trees with birds and animals denoting the living world and fertility, the chthonic narcissus with its connections to the cycle of nature, and the ‘Mistress of the animals’. There may even be a hint from the crescent hairpins of an iconographical reference to the ‘heavenly’ aspect (see below). Therefore it is suggested that this range of imagery from different sources may be viewed collectively as representing the nature of a goddess who was central to religious belief at Tillya-tepe, and in particular to the woman buried in grave VI who carried this assemblage of emblems on her head.

3.4.7 Crescents Hairpins

With this proposal in mind we will now scrutinise the pair of hairpins attached to the folding crown consisting of a narcissus flower hung with a crescent, **Fig. 3 – 2a**. These hairpins are closely related to examples from the three other senior women’s graves, and three out of four of these crescent hairpins feature narcissi, including **Figs. 3 – 24a** and **b**. Crescents also form part of the ornamentation of the folding crown, since one is cut into the trunk of each of the four identical trees, evenly spaced between heart-shaped motifs,¹¹⁷⁶ **Fig. 3 – 20b**.

Since crescents were widely present in art, the process of isolating their direct source is problematic. A relatively close example is the Parthian crescent pendant decorating the forehead of statue in the grave of Menophila, in Hama (north Syria), **Fig. 3 – 24d**.¹¹⁷⁷ There follows a brief review of the other motifs on the hairpins in the search for further clues.

The crescent/narcissus hairpin from grave I has three-lobed ivy leaves, **Fig. 3 – 24b**, which are more naturalistic than the simple cordiform ivy leaves customarily found at Tillya-tepe. These ivy leaves may have been copied from nature, or from Graeco-

both water and fertility, whose iconography was variously derived from Cybele, Artemis, Aphrodite, FRANCFORT 2012b. However, Michael Shenkar challenges Francfort’s theory on the basis that the Vaxš deity was male, SHENKAR 2014, p.129.

¹¹⁷⁶ In addition, eight crescents appliqués with pendant discs were found in grave III cat.3.20, p.238.

¹¹⁷⁷ MUSCHE 1988, cat.2.1, p.36.

Roman artistic sources where they were a very popular motif. For example, similar lobed ivy leaves feature on cameo glass objects which depict realistic plants and which were exclusively manufactured around the 1st century CE,¹¹⁷⁸ including the ‘Auldjo jug’,¹¹⁷⁹ and an amphora from the tomb in the House of the Column Mosaics at Pompeii.¹¹⁸⁰ Evidence for Roman cameo glass exports to the east is restricted to a cup ‘said to have been one of a pair found in a Parthian tomb in Iran’.¹¹⁸¹ Ivy was also well-represented on 2nd century CE funerary reliefs at Palmyra,¹¹⁸² in ornamental forms which exhibit other Roman influences.

However, an entirely different origin is evident for the distinctive openwork pendants decorating the crescent hairpin from grave III, **Fig. 3 – 24c**. At first glance they might be construed as reductive versions of ivy or vine leaves. But this is unlikely in the light of almost identical wooden ‘leaves’ from Tuekta in southern Siberia.¹¹⁸³ Several of these motifs are crowned by griffin protomes, **Fig. 3 – 24e**, while others are simply foliage. They may have originally been covered in gold foil and are typical artistic themes found on Tuekta bridle ornaments, part of a repertoire of elaborate animal transformation and predator imagery.¹¹⁸⁴ However, although leafy ornaments are common at Tuekta,¹¹⁸⁵ this version is far more rectilinear than the other scrolling and mostly assymetric motifs, so even within Tuekta this motif is unusual.¹¹⁸⁶ The Tuekta people, living around 6th – 5th century BCE, are among the earliest known nomads in the Altai. Their bodies were buried in tree trunks placed in deep chambers and accompanied by horse sacrifices.¹¹⁸⁷ We do not know the significance of these putative leaves, nor the purpose of their inclusion at Tillya-tepe, but their presence appears to represent a conscious reaching back to a nomadic heritage. We should also recall that the body of the young woman in Tillya-tepe grave V was buried in this traditional way in a tree trunk.

In view of this rather idiosyncratic steppe connection, we cannot assume that crescents derive from Parthian art. Indeed, crescents also feature on Altaic artefacts, especially

¹¹⁷⁸ As noted in Case Study II on the Getty Museum opium bottle.

¹¹⁷⁹ HARDEN 1987, cat.34, p.79.

¹¹⁸⁰ HARDEN 1987, cat.33, pp.74-78.

¹¹⁸¹ HARDEN 1987, p.68.

¹¹⁸² TANABE 1986, pl.14, p.65; pl.465, p.482.

¹¹⁸³ The shape and proportions are the same, but one of two diamonds on the Tuekta piece is replaced by a heart.

¹¹⁸⁴ JACOBSON 1993, pp.59-60.

¹¹⁸⁵ Discussed in 0.6.2 STEPPE NOMADIC PLANT IMAGES.

¹¹⁸⁶ RUDENKO 1960, pls. LXXXI – XC, XCVI, XCIX and CIII.

¹¹⁸⁷ JACOBSON 1993, p.58.

saddle-wares, such as the examples with simple quatrefoil flowers and a bird of prey at the 6th – 5th century BCE site of Bashadar, only 30km from Tuekta.¹¹⁸⁸ Gold-coloured crescents and discs featured alongside pairs of commas arranged in ‘yin and yan’ fashion on another saddle-cloth at Bashadar,¹¹⁸⁹ **Fig. 3 – 24f**. This combination of a gold crescent and disc appeared further east in Xiongnu tombs, for example at Takhiltyn Khotgor, western Mongolia,¹¹⁹⁰ **Fig. 3 – 24g**, in a grave occupied by woman aged 35-40, possibly part of the coffin decoration.¹¹⁹¹ Bryan Miller proposes that they might be ‘equated with Xiongnu ritual obeisance to the sun and moon’.¹¹⁹² At Gol Mod T20, another pair was found in the same position as Takhiltyn Khotgor: above the head of a north-facing warrior in a Xiongnu tomb, as were an iron pair were also found in grave 1 at Burkhan Tolgoi,¹¹⁹³ a uniformity which Ursula Brosseder suggests indicates similar beliefs.¹¹⁹⁴ The placement above the head is interesting, but the exact position is outside the coffin so they are therefore unlikely to have been part of a crown. In all these circumstances, whether on Parthian, Altaic or Xiongnu objects, the conjunction of a solar disc and crescent maybe denoted some meaning relating to the heavens.¹¹⁹⁵

Closer to Tillya-tepe, both geographically and temporally, is a bronze crescent pectoral found in the sanctuary of the Temple with niches Aï Khanoum.¹¹⁹⁶ At the centre of the crescent is the head of a figure, in poor condition but possibly sporting a beard which suggests a male. At either side of the head, simplified tendrils scroll provide shallow surface decoration.

In a recent article, Harry Falk identified the crescent motif on Roman coins and the sculpture at Nemrud Dağı as pertaining to the planet Venus rather than representing a crescent moon, and considered it to be an emblem of Roman goddess Venus (Greek Aphrodite).¹¹⁹⁷ Furthermore, he considered this crescent to be ‘the common astral counterpart for a number of related female deities’,¹¹⁹⁸ including Ištar and Nana. Although it would be convenient to use his theory as a basis for suggesting that the crescents on the Tillya-tepe hairpins were therefore connected with Nana, Aphrodite

¹¹⁸⁸ RUDENKO 1960, fig.145d, p.286.

¹¹⁸⁹ RUDENKO 1960, pl.CXX; see also pls.CXIX-2 and CXXIII-1.

¹¹⁹⁰ MILLER 2009, pp.301.

¹¹⁹¹ Grave 64, MILLER 2009, pp.304-306.

¹¹⁹² MILLER 2009, p.306.

¹¹⁹³ BROSEDER 2009, p.265, fn.30.

¹¹⁹⁴ BROSEDER 2009, p.265-266.

¹¹⁹⁵ For possible association of solar discs with fertility, see MARTYNOV 1991, pp.70-71.

¹¹⁹⁶ BERNARD 2008, cat.15, p.114.

¹¹⁹⁷ FALK 2015b.

¹¹⁹⁸ FALK 2015b, p.282.

Ourania or some local version of this goddess, the evidence is too tenuous to make a confident attribution.

Finally in terms of comparanda from relevant cultures, although crescents were not a particularly common Roman motifs, they occurred on amuletic jewellery for women and children in the 2nd and 3rd centuries CE, although their exact significance in these contexts is unknown.¹¹⁹⁹

Therefore this analysis of the hairpins shows that they consisted of elements drawn from different sources, but there is no definitive answer to the origin of the crescent motif at Tillya-tepe. Nevertheless, it would not be unreasonable to suggest that the crescents on the hairpins may have denoted a lunar motif and embodied some celestial symbolism.

3.4.8 Overview and discussion

This study involved a search for clues about the woman buried in grave VI, **Fig. 3 – 25**. It was predicated on the belief that the Tillya-tepe folding crown was a possession of great importance and therefore its design would have been carefully conceived. Its capability to fold flat suggests that this crown was so special it was considered an essential accompaniment for this elite woman when she travelled. As such it perhaps represented a throwback to the mobile conditions of nomadic life.

The process of analysing the Tillya-tepe folding crown and its attachments entailed a study of each crown element, reviewing these forms against relevant comparanda, in order to identify interactions with other cultures. As is customary at Tillya-tepe, imagery from several different sources converged on one single object. The tree – bird – animal configuration of the crown elements relates it to the Eurasian steppes, from Taksay in the Urals eastwards to Issyk in the Altai. This formula was conveyed westwards by some means – perhaps migration – since, in addition to Tillya-tepe, it is also present on crowns worn by Sarmatian women from the Black Sea area. The Graeco-Roman contribution is limited to the narcissus flowers. Nevertheless, since there are fifty-three of them, they are demonstrably an important part of the overall construction and are interesting in the light of the many Graeco-Roman aspects of the woman's possessions.

¹¹⁹⁹ BECATTI 1995, p.115.

Narcissi also featured with crescents on three sets of hairpins at Tillya-tepe, including one pair attached to this crown. Also part of the crown assemblage were a pair of pendants with a semi-naked goddess in the guise of ‘Mistress of the animals’, an image which evinces a distinctive stylistic hybridity, drawing its sources from Graeco-Roman, Parthian and other exemplars. The composition of this pendant echoes the crown with the tree – bird – animal combination, although in both Tillya-tepe instances (crown and pendants) aquatic rather than terrestrial creatures are represented.

Thus it is apparent that this crown assemblage is constructed with the inclusion of many imported elements. It was argued that some of these borrowed motifs incorporated a symbolic dimension and therefore one important question is whether any of this symbolism travelled with the imagery to the Tillya-tepe folding crown – ie whether certain components were chosen because they embodied particular meanings, or whether the constituent parts of the crown were merely chosen for their decorative qualities. Any proposal for the transmission of symbolic values in this folding crown is more credible if there is a degree of congruity across the iconographies of the various parts. The analysis is summarised in Table VII.

Table VII Elements of the folding crown and hairpins

	Aspect of folding crown	Source/route of transmission	Concept or context	Possible type of deity represented
1	Tree ensemble with birds and animals	Steppe nomadic, origins around the 5 th century BCE; 1 st century Sarmatian	Three-staged universe; fertility	Allusion to fertility deity ?
2	Narcissus decoration	Graeco-Roman	Seasonal cycle of nature: life, death, return. Narcotic plant	‘Great goddess’; Persephone or Demeter
3	‘Mistress of the animals’	East Mediterranean Greek; Iranian (Parthian); Mesopotamian origins	Dominance over nature; fertility; three-staged universe	Aspects of Inana/Ištar; later Artemis; (Anāhitā), (Nana), Aphrodite <i>Ourania</i> or local equivalent
4	Crescents on crown, hairpins and other items at Tillya-tepe	Parthian, Altaic or Xiongnu, but also a ‘universal’ motif	Celestial association (?)	

Much of this iconography consistently evokes a goddess, a type of deity who is compatible with cosmological notions encapsulated in the steppe tree format with birds

and animals. She represents notions around fertility, life, death, and return or rebirth, the divine assurance of the continuity of the annual cycle of nature. These concepts are not only expressed by means of the trees, but also by the narcissi and the ‘Mistress of the beasts’. The presence of celestial imagery – the crescent moons and possibly also sun discs - introduces an additional layer of complexity which may elevate the goddess’s domain from earthbound fertility into the heavenly realm, although this remains very conjectural. These elements were all present to some considerable degree in the character of Inana/Ištar, her Levantine counterparts and successors. Among these were Aphrodite *Ourania*, Heavenly Aphrodite, the pre-eminent goddess in the Black Sea area who also embodied aspects of Artemis the huntress whose identity included the role of ‘Mistress of the animals’.

We do not know the actual name of the Tillya-tepe goddess depicted as ‘Mistress of the animals’. In the period under consideration Anāhitā would be appropriate in the eastern Iranian world; and in terms of Bactria itself, Nana was known in Afghanistan in the 1st century CE, but both options were discounted. There is Aphrodite *Ourania*, the foremost goddess in the Bosporan kingdom, including perhaps the Sarmatian-Alans, who have cultural connections with Tillya-tepe. The Sarmatian-Alans are important here because the tree — bird – animal configuration featured on Sarmatian female headdresses which were contemporary with Tillya-tepe.

A proposal for the significance of the folding crown at Tillya-tepe

It therefore appears that the designer of the Tillya-tepe folding crown ensemble appropriated its vocabulary from different cultures and combined the various motifs to create a language which, both visually and metaphorically, alludes to a powerful nature goddess. Although it is not feasible to assign securely a name to this Tillya-tepe goddess, on the basis of an observation and evaluation of the iconography it has been possible to define her attributes and domains. There are limitations to this exercise, since the proposed result is, in all likelihood, only an approximation and we can only draw broad-brush conclusions about the religious beliefs or worldview which the crown embodied.

Although we can only speculate about the precise nature of the relationship between the Tillya-tepe woman and this deity, there is a clue that the folding crown denoted the woman’s priestly status at Tillya-tepe. Lebedynsky associates the aforementioned crowns from Kobiakovo, Khokhlach and Ust’-Labinskaia with the role of

priestesses.¹²⁰⁰ He discusses sceptres among their possessions, used for a type of divination called rhabdomancy, although the evidence is sparse. Herodotus in the 5th century BCE discusses divination with wands among the Scythians, describing the priestly class of Enarees using skills bestowed upon them by Aphrodite. Then in the 4th century CE Ammianus Marcellinus mentioned the use of wicker wands and incantations during divination ceremonies conducted by the Alans.¹²⁰¹ Even so, it is worth briefly noting that the woman in grave VI at Tillya-tepe also owned a sceptre decorated with a six-petalled flower.¹²⁰² One might speculate that this flower also represented a narcissus, just as narcissi featured on her crown. On the basis of Lebedynsky's analysis, the Tillya-tepe sceptre may also have functioned as a cultic object.

Therefore, even though the crown and perhaps also the sceptre are sometimes regarded as royal regalia, the context discussed in this chapter is suggestive of a priestly status, although the role of priestess might conceivably come within the remit of a queen. In such circumstances, it may be speculated that the proliferation of narcissus flowers on the crown might also in fact be directly connected to this status, over and above their emblematic significance. As discussed, the use of narcissi as a narcotic was recorded in the 1st century CE, and psychotropic plants are often associated with ritual activity.¹²⁰³ Such plants were used to engender a transcendental state of mind, a departure from lucid, conscious mental states, thereby providing a fertile environment for mystical experiences.

Furthermore, the incumbents of graves II, III and VI, who all wore crowns also owned Han mirrors which were laid on their chests. The combination of crowns and mirrors may be significant and certainly reinforces the superior status of these women. If we consider the mirrors through the prism of religious activity, it has been suggested that in some Central Asian cultures, mirrors were also considered to be part of a priestess's 'armoury' of paraphernalia for divination and other magical activities,¹²⁰⁴ but such practices are not generally recorded in the archaeological record, other than, perhaps, at Pazyrk.¹²⁰⁵

¹²⁰⁰ LEBEDYNSKY 2014, pp.281-284.

¹²⁰¹ LEBEDYNSKY 2014, p.284.

¹²⁰² SARIANIDI 1985, cat.6.19, p.256; p.129.

¹²⁰³ SHERRATT 1995; MERLIN 2003, 1994.

¹²⁰⁴ MARTYANOV 1991, pp.69-70; DAVIS-KIMBALL 2000, pp.226-227.

¹²⁰⁵ The presence of mirrors alongside a drum (or vessel) and a brazier with stones and hemp seed in kurgan 2 at Pazyryk is sometimes considered to constitute a 'shamanic assemblage', for example, RUBINSON 2002, p.71.

Furthermore, in 2.4. POPPIES AND THE TILLYA-TEPE WOMEN, we discussed the fact that the owner of the folding crown also had the most poppy-related items among her personal adornments and her grave-goods also included numerous small vessels and instruments. It was therefore suggested that she may have fulfilled a medical role and/or priestly role using opium. The likely evidence for ritualistic uses of opium is indicated by the presence of raw opium in the tombs of the ‘Sarmatian-Alan’ tombs at Klin-Yar,¹²⁰⁶ and at a Middle Sarmatian site in the Black Sea area around the 1st century BCE.¹²⁰⁷ We also recall the hypothesis that the incumbent of grave III wore a crown covered in poppies. Both this woman and the owner of the folding crown were the highest status women at Tillya-tepe.¹²⁰⁸ So we appear to have one woman with narcissi in her crown and another with poppies, both narcotic plants used in rituals, both with strong funereal associations. Therefore perhaps we need to expand the proposal regarding these women’s potential medical roles. In fact their positions actually embraced both functions as cultic and medical practitioners, as Sherratt argues: ‘such ‘religious’ uses would no doubt have included ‘medicinal’ uses as well, since it would be artificial to separate physical healing from ritual observance’.¹²⁰⁹ And, as noted, this would not be a unique phenomenon since among the Iranians, there were doctors within the priestly magi class.¹²¹⁰

Therefore, in conclusion, the analysis of plant and other imagery has provided us with a working theory for the presence of the narcissus folding crown and its attachments in grave VI. They provide a certain amount of evidence to suggest that their owner was a priestess, possibly engaging in some medical activities within her role, serving a cult which centred on a goddess similar in character to Aphrodite *Ourania*, whose domain included fertility and the cycle of nature as well as chthonic roles around death and return.

¹²⁰⁶ HÄRKE and BELINSKIJ 2012, p.140.

¹²⁰⁷ KORYAKOVA 2002, p.276; KORYAKOVA 2014, p.249.

¹²⁰⁸ See 0.4 TILLYA-TEPE BURIALS.

¹²⁰⁹ SHERRATT 1991, p.51.

¹²¹⁰ ELGOOD 1934, p.19; also references to Magi’s knowledge of medical plants in Dioscorides.

4 DISCUSSION

4.1 Introduction

This research focussed on a new area of study, the prolific flower ornament at Tillya-tepe, which was present on one-third of all decorated artefacts, and in all the burials except the less well-provisioned grave V. Three floral motifs were chosen because they were prominent within the ornamental repertoire, and each flower was shown to have an important role at Tillya-tepe. Table VIII provides a digest of the key data.

Table VIII Summary: roses, poppies and narcissi at Tillya-tepe

	Roses	Poppies	Narcissus
Typology	4 heart-shaped petals, and sepals	5 heart-shaped petals	6 pointed petals
Main objects	Knife scabbard Large appliqués	Poppy necklace Large brooches 'Censer'	Folding crown Tree crown finial Crescent hairpins
Objects/sets of objects	5	17, including poppy capsules	9
Graves	IV ¹²¹¹	I, II, III, VI	I, II, III, IV, VI
Gender	Male	Senior females	Male and female

The forthcoming discussion is largely devoted to Tillya-tepe. It reviews how the Tillya-tepe folk with their nomadic heritage appropriated these floral motifs from other artistic environments. Despite the fact that these flowers came from alien, non-steppe sources, they were adapted and assimilated into Tillya-tepe's own, distinctive artistic milieu. The accumulated information, assembled collectively from all three case studies, is used to shed light on the Tillya-tepe folk themselves and their potential interactions with other cultures. In addition to the research concerning Tillya-tepe, this study of plant imagery provided insights into artefacts and artistic media at other sites, of which just a sample is revisited below.

4.2 Physical characteristics and style of the Tillya-tepe flowers

The quantity of depictions of the roses, poppies and narcissi is notable: more than 900 images on thirty-one different catalogued objects/sets of objects. Their manner of presentation is noteworthy: mostly comprising stylised flowerheads, often 'cut-out'

¹²¹¹ One exception: a pair of hairpins in grave I.

forms, usually depicted as either free-standing or strung out in a row. Especially notable are the numerous narcissi on the folding crown which are approximately half life-size, and the almost life-size poppy brooches. These flowers and the ten naturalistic opium poppy capsules on the necklace from grave VI are reminiscent of real plants transformed into gold.

In one circumstance only, two of these Tillya-tepe species appear together: both poppies and narcissi feature on the same basket in grave II, and the suggested reason for this is considered below. Otherwise, the three Tillya-tepe floral types are mutually exclusive, they are never just bundled together. Nor are any of these three particular flowers subsumed as subordinate motifs within the figurative pendants found at Tillya-tepe.

Furthermore, these Tillya-tepe floral motifs are never intermixed with other decoration as part of complex scrolling designs, typically seen in Hellenistic gold jewellery.¹²¹² In a single instance, one of the three Tillya-tepe flowers is part of a composite floral design. A five-petalled flower forms the centre of a six-axis, multi-layered flower on a pair of ornaments from grave III,¹²¹³ a configuration which was found in late Hellenistic, Bactrian, Parthian and Sarmatian art. But this design is uniquely adapted into the Tillya-tepe style, since the outline exhibits a more elaborate version of the characteristic 'cut-out' convention discussed above.

When these flowers appear with other types of motifs or with ornament from different sources - steppe nomadic, in particular - they are juxtaposed rather than integrated into a pattern, as might be expected, for example, in some Hellenistic art. This is most obvious on the warrior's bi-lobed knife case, where the central band with steppe animal scenes is surrounded a row of roses and swastikas which were both present in Roman art.

Collectively, we can see that the consistency in the depiction of these three flowers across different object types, and executed in various techniques, attests to the likelihood that they were all produced in the same workshop. This conclusion correlates with the evidence discussed in 0.4.7 TILLYA-TEPE ORNAMENT. The craftsmen exhibit intensive attention to detail, as on the medallion belt in which each of the nine medallions is manufactured separately with small variations. Therefore the Tillya-tepe artefacts were not, for example, acquired periodically from external sources. This

¹²¹² See 0.6.3 GREEK AND HELLENISTIC PLANT ORNAMENT.

¹²¹³ See 2.1.3 SEVERAL TILLYA-TEPE ARTEFACTS DECORATED WITH POPPIES.

circumstance would have enabled the Tillya-tepe patrons to exercise discrimination and judgement more easily in the selective use of motifs on their possessions.

4.3 Deployment of the flowers at Tillya-tepe

The first analytical step was to isolate and review each of these flowers on Tillya-tepe objects. The resulting information was assembled within three case studies. Notwithstanding the small sample of graves – one man and five women¹²¹⁴ - the analysis revealed that these three flowers were used selectively and purposefully by the Tillya-tepe folk: they were found in particular graves and featured on certain object-types, summarised in Table VIII above. The key points regarding these flowers are as follows:

1. Rose: the warrior's bi-lobed knife case, possibly also his quiver top, and the large square appliqués which figured prominently along the front of his jacket were all ornamented with sepalled rose imagery. The presence of these roses is almost entirely in the warrior's graves, representing a gendered application.
2. Poppy: more than one hundred poppies appeared on seventeen items, or sets of items, and these were confined to the four senior women's burials, indicating a gendered element in their distribution. The poppy capsule necklace and the item identified as a possible opium censer, the substantial cut-out poppy brooch, and the large pair of pendants all featured in grave VI, occupied by the highest rank woman. It was also postulated that the second-most senior woman in grave III wore a crown covered with poppy appliqués. Therefore the highest rank woman owned the most important poppy items, and the second-highest rank woman seemingly owned a poppy crown. The only female who lacked poppies was the incumbent grave V, the least provisioned burial. Therefore the presence of opium poppies may be seen as a reflection of these women's rank, and, as discussed below, this was directly related to the proposed roles of these women.
3. Narcissus: the folding crown with fifty-three narcissi was worn by the highest ranking female in grave VI. A single narcissus features on the warrior's head ornament, so these narcissi appear on the headdresses of the two most important

¹²¹⁴ 0.4 TILLYA-TEPE BURIALS, Table I differentiates these women's statuses in order of seniority: grave VI, III, II, I, and lowly grave V.

Tillya-tepe people. There is a general association with head ornament since narcissi also appear on three of the crescent hairpins.

More broadly, it is notable that the less well-provisioned young woman in grave V did not possess any flowers at all, which reinforces the idea that their presence was related to the rank and status of the Tillya-tepe folk. However, it should be recalled that her shroud was covered in a textile with large silver vine-leaves and it is possible that these were an allusion to the consumption of wine. Wine too may be considered as a substance which provokes an ‘altered state of consciousness’.¹²¹⁵ On the other hand, she did not own any implements such as knives.

The sheer quantity of this floral ornament and its focussed deployment is unmatched at any other site either elsewhere in Bactria or among the various peoples discussed throughout the thesis.

This all testifies to the considered, selective application of these motifs by the Tillya-tepe folk, demonstrating that they were not chosen randomly or for purely decorative purposes. This suggests that these flowers were of particular significance within their culture.

4.4 Identification of the flowers

Having established that the application of these floral motifs at Tillya-tepe likely reflected the preferences and active agency of the Tillya-tepe folk, one closely-related question was *what* these floral images represented. It was anticipated in 0.3 METHODOLOGY that they might depict real flowers, which view contrasts with the general assumption that they were generic rosettes. Therefore it was important to discover which genera or species were represented. Although the flowers themselves are stylised to some degree, they are nevertheless depicted with sufficient naturalism and consistency to compare them with more realistic versions from elsewhere. The Tillya-tepe burials coincided with a peak period of artistic realism in the depiction of plants, especially in the Roman empire. So plenty of more-or-less contemporary examples were available which enabled their identification as opium poppies, roses and narcissi.

¹²¹⁵ With thanks to Henri-Paul Francfort for indicating this circumstance.

The correlation of these three plant conventions, which are consistently presented across several different cultures, with named flowers hopefully represents a useful contribution to researches concerning both Tillya-tepe and other sites discussed in the comparanda. These identifications even open up the prospect of studies further afield where these flowers appear, beyond the confines of this thesis. Importantly, the identification process also enabled access to Greek and Roman textual references to each flower, which were then used to provide insights into their cultural values.

4.5 Non-steppe imagery

Since these flowers were deliberately selected by the Tillya-tepe folk, the next issue concerned their artistic source. The burial practices of these people and some of the ornament on their possessions, particularly the animal combat and chase scenes found in the warrior's grave, demonstrate that their ancestors originated in the nomadic steppelands of Inner Asia. Yet floral images did not originally derive from that part of the world, and therefore it is clear that when the Tillya-tepe folk chose this ornament, they obtained the motifs from outside this earlier heritage. Nor did the flowers originate locally among the numerous seals and stone objects with vegetal motifs in Bronze Age Bactrian art from around the Oxus River and Merv.¹²¹⁶

There was some floral imagery in Bactria itself around Tilly-tepe's era, and in the earlier Graeco-Bactrian period, as noted in 0.6.5 BACTRIAN AND GANDHARAN PLANT ORNAMENT, whose source was ultimately the Hellenistic world. In the period following Tillya-tepe, the only excavated examples of any of these flowers were the two roses which appeared on the merlons at Surkh Kotal, dated to the 2nd century CE or later, so these flowers did not play a dominant role in subsequent Bactrian art.

Therefore, each of these three floral motifs was largely, although not exclusively, studied in relation to comparanda from outside Bactria in order establish to provide suggestions about where they came from and, to some degree, how they might have reached Tillya-tepe.

¹²¹⁶ This verdict therefore differs from the origins of tulip imagery, which were traced back to Bactria-Margiana, TANABE 1999.

4.6 Potential sources of transmission

This stage entailed the isolation of these flowers within the wider geography of interlinked cultures, particularly: Hellenistic and Roman art; on artefacts from the north Pontic area, especially sites associated with the Sarmatian-Alans; Bactrian and Parthian imagery. The material for the comparanda was not ready-assembled in a select number of publications or museums, so it was necessary to track down images of similar flowers and reconstruct their presence in art. Much of this process involved looking at the specificities of the floral conventions and the contexts in which they were applied. One result of this detailed scrutiny of particular floral motifs was to demonstrate specific instances of interaction between different cultures rather than just a generalised assumption of connectivity.

The most important evidence was drawn from images of roses, since their convention was both distinctive and artificial, consisting of four petals and sepals, a typology which deviated from the rose's true botanical form. This singularity was most useful in confirming the notion that these motifs were definitely *transmitted* to Tillya-tepe and were not independently generated. The earliest direct prototype for the Tillya-tepe rose, comprising four petals with a folded upper edge and inter-leaved sepals, featured on the ornament of a bronze chariot in a tomb at Vasjurina Gora (late 3rd – 1st century BCE), in the Kuban. The earliest roses with the exact Tillya-tepe type of cordiform petals and long sepals were found on jewellery at Artyukhov (1st century BCE – 1st century CE), also in the Kuban area, in which the curled edge of the petal has developed into a heart shape. A typologically identical form, represented in the characteristic red-pink of roses, appeared on jewellery at Kosika near Astrakhan (2nd half of the 1st century BCE – 1st century CE, or more probably the 1st century CE), one of the sites which shared other commonalities with Tillya-tepe.

The dating of these sites in the north Pontic area is much debated, but these examples are seemingly earlier than the presence of this convention in Roman and Roman-influenced art, which occurred from the 1st century CE onwards, as seen on the *opus sectile* trellis from the Domus Tiberiana, Rome (*ca.* 54 – 68 CE) and thereafter on floor mosaics. At the time of Tillya-tepe in the second half of the 1st century, the rose convention was present in both Bosporan and Roman art. It was judged, by a small margin, that the rose was more likely transmitted from the north Pontic area where rose

imagery was very popular, and where there was also plenty of interaction with the Romans; although the alternative, directly from Roman art cannot be dismissed entirely.

Another consideration are textiles, which are an important medium largely missing from the archaeological record. Closest in date to Tillya-tepe, textiles with roses were found at Noin Ula (1st century CE) and Shanpula (1st – 2nd centuries CE), which were not locally-produced at those sites but were imported, possibly from Bactria – and of course the roses at Tillya-tepe shows that this was possible. However, it is difficult to construct a scenario whereby this rose actually originated in Bactria.

Roses featured prominently in those periods when greater numbers of textiles survive, as shown by Coptic, Byzantine and Sasanian and even early Islamic pieces. In particular, the rose's four-axis configuration rendered it especially suitable for trellis designs. Therefore it is quite possible that textiles were a medium of transfer for which the evidence is now mostly lost.

More broadly, the analysis of the comparanda showed that the sepalled rose was an important plant motif in a range of media from the 1st century BCE onwards, not only in textiles but also in tomb wall-paintings. Rose images have not been studied previously, and it is hoped that the process developed in this thesis involving their identification, the isolation of their presence across a broad range of cultures, and the reconstruction of their wider typology, may represent a contribution to art history, setting the scene for further research on the transmission of rose motifs and the development of relative chronologies right across the Roman Empire and beyond in the centuries around the Common Era.

Although five-petalled flowers were found in a number of media, including on unprovenanced objects which may originated in Bactria and which exhibited Hellenistic influences, we cannot be sure they were poppies. The same limitation applies to the five-petalled bloom on objects found at Sirkap-Taxila. There is some evidence to suggest that the Tillya-tepe opium poppies reflected a Roman convention. Roman poppies featured especially in funerary sculpture, but the strongest support for their identification was a small cameo-glass vessel whose figurative iconography and poppy-flower base combined to suggest that it was an opium container. Poppies also appeared on other cameo-glass artefacts around the 1st century CE; and as shown by Begram, glassware was a typical luxury object traded from the Roman Empire.

Images of narcissi were often rather generalised and were too widely distributed to provide any clear evidence of a direct source for Tillya-tepe.

4.7 The primacy of non-Hellenistic floral conventions

Cumulatively it appears that all three flowers manifested Graeco-Roman pictorial influences. The suggestion here is that two of the three Tillya-tepe conventions for floral motifs – roses and poppies – may have specifically represented post-Hellenistic versions of the flower, which would therefore indicate different origins from the Hellenised style with Greek characteristics of the Tillya-tepe figurative subjects. This demonstrates the co-existence of two Graeco-Roman artistic traditions at Tillya-tepe: earlier Hellenised eastern art, and Roman artistic styles emanating from the Empire as its influence penetrated eastwards.¹²¹⁷ The receptivity of the Roman and north Pontic floral sources into Bactria was, though, based on the foundations of Hellenistic and Graeco-Bactrian artistic legacies. This suggests that the Tillya-tepe folk were importing ‘modern’ conventions for plant imagery, using versions of the flowers which were in more readily in circulation during the Roman Empire, rather than depending on earlier Hellenistic precedents. Having said this, the judgement is delicately balanced and the discovery of more securely provenanced and dated Bactrian flower imagery in the future may shift this proposal.

This suggestion should be seen in relation to the suggested dating of the Tillya-tepe site, which was evaluated in this thesis to be in the second half of the 1st century CE, later than that assigned in the catalogues for the Tillya-tepe travelling exhibition.¹²¹⁸ Specifically, Joe Cribb has dated Tillya-tepe to the last quarter of the 1st century CE based on the presence of the ‘Heraeus’ obol; while the Dachi quadrilobe sword scabbard, close in design to the Tillya-tepe scabbard, is dated to the 3rd quarter of the 1st century CE. Since the study of plant imagery involved many comparisons with examples from the north Pontic area, the Dachi dating is particularly pertinent.

The proposition that the transmission of rose imagery was either directly from, or mediated via, the north Pontic area correlates with general commonalities between sites in this region and Tillya-tepe. In the latter part of the 1st century CE, what Mordvintseva

¹²¹⁷ This admixture of influences is not unique and has been identified, for example, in Herodian architectural decoration in Judaea at the edge of the Roman Empire (40-4 BCE), in which Roman prototypes were adapted to local tastes. Among this new ornament were freestanding floral motifs, PELEG-BARKET 2014.

¹²¹⁸ See 0.4.9 NUMISMATIC EVIDENCE AND DATING.

calls ‘barbarian political centres’¹²¹⁹ were situated right on the edge of those Roman imperial territories which had previously been Greek states. The evidence of Roman goods in the ‘barbarian’ elite tombs of this region, usually described as Sarmatian-Alan, or Sarmatian and Maeotian,¹²²⁰ demonstrates that these ‘non-Greek Bosporan peoples’, whose ancestral origins were in the eastern steppes, were interacting with the Roman Empire.

Furthermore, when sepalled roses appeared later in what was previously the Parthian world, at Palmyra and Dura-Europos, they represented one specific motif among the larger corpus of imagery which was disseminated from the West under the impetus of the Roman Empire.

More generally, this proposed Roman influence reflects the strong social and cultural interest in plants, and flowers in particular, as expressed not only in Roman art but also in their conspicuous enthusiasm for private, public and tomb gardens.¹²²¹ And of course, there are many references to flowers in Roman literature. Therefore, because of the connection of the Tillya-tepe roses and poppies with Roman conventions, it is legitimate to consult Roman texts to understand how specific plants were valued in society around the 1st century CE.

4.8 Context and iconography

The next question for consideration was *why* these plant images were chosen by the Tillya-tepe folk. This part of the study involved exploring the context of the three flowers both at Tillya-tepe and as presented on the comparanda. As discussed in 0.3 METHODOLOGY, this subject could only be addressed properly after the systematic use of plant iconography was investigated and demonstrated for these flowers. There were no comprehensive contextual studies of roses and narcissi either in art or literature, and little research on poppies around the Common Era. So the reconstruction of this cultural history was a substantial undertaking.

The identification of plant species was central to this task, since it shed light on the use of these particular flowers in art. It also enabled access to information about each flower in texts, which was then used to enhance the visual interpretations of each floral motif,

¹²¹⁹ MORDVINTSEVA 2015.

¹²²⁰ SIMONENKO *et al.* 2008.

¹²²¹ See: 0.5 PLANT CULTURE and 0.6.4 ROMAN PLANT ORNAMENT.

both at Tillya-tepe and elsewhere. Textual references to these flowers were largely, but not exclusively, chosen from around the 1st century CE, the era of the Tillya-tepe burials.

Using this combination of contextual and textual studies, I was able to assemble an ‘iconographic profile’ for each flower. The evidence for all three flowers indicated that in many instances there is sufficient evidence to assert that each flower embodied what is described in semiotic analysis as a codified meaning.¹²²² The presence of these flowers did not denote merely a loose agglomeration of different associations and attributes, but they formed part of a visual language which was recognised by the societies which deployed it. Such images might be especially useful among non-literate cultures, like Tillya-tepe, who did not produce their own texts which could be studied to help us understand their lives and ideas. Therefore the analysis of these flowers and the construction of their iconographic profile within the detailed context of Tillya-tepe provides access to information about these people which is not readily available from other sources.

Since all three of the flowers were carefully chosen by the Tillya-tepe folk, an important question was whether the connotations identified in relation to the original Graeco-Roman flowers - either from artistic contexts or the textual sources - travelled with these floral motifs to Tillya-tepe.

4.9 The ‘military’ and funerary contexts of roses

Roses were almost entirely confined to the Tillya-tepe male’s possession. Their most important presence was on his bi-lobed knife case, a parade object which was testimony to an elite warrior status. When the comparanda were reviewed it became apparent that roses had two important characteristics which were sometimes intertwined. They were connected with death, a subject which had received little attention previously. These connotations seem to be so well embedded in the personality of the rose that they are also discernible in Sasanian texts and Sogdian funerary depositories. Roses were a favoured motif in military imagery, which represents a new angle of research. These associations were prevalent in literature, and were also evident in material sources from at least the 3rd century BCE (the Barbatous sarcophagus, **Fig. 1 – 7**), and later, especially in those cultures influenced by Roman art. For the particular sepalled rose convention at

¹²²² LAYTON 2006, p.31.

Tillya-tepe, these characteristics were more prevalent than the rose's well-recognised connections with the goddess Aphrodite and as a seasonal expression of Spring.

As noted, the presence of the roses in the warrior's grave indicated a gendered aspect, and among the comparanda, there is also often a gendered element in the display of this rose convention, relating to its occurrence alongside military imagery. The most substantial example of soldier and rose-related iconography is the wall-painting of Roman tribune Julius Terentius and his soldiers in the Temple of the Palmyrene Gods at Dura-Europos. A close study of this scene led to my proposal that it depicted the ritual of the *Rosalia signorum*. Because the Roman *Rosalia* ceremonies commemorated the dead, the subject-matter was interpreted as a supplication relating to the afterlife of generations of soldiers under the auspices of the tutelary goddesses of Palmyra and Dura-Europos.

Roses in the painted tombs at Kerch had an unequivocal sepulchral association. In the '1872 crypt' a rose meadow forms the background to a row of soldiers and battle scenes. A single rose appears on the cavalry-man Staphilos's grave-stone, while other more elaborate conventions for roses - representing the multi-petalled, cultivated rose - were even more popular on military stelae.¹²²³

Other subjects have a martial context but not an obviously funerary one, such as the Nabataean Dioscuri, whom I identified as representing a rare instance of their astral role as Gemini. In this case, a large rose is positioned on the breastplate, the *kardiophulax*, translatable as 'heart protector'. The prominent positioning of the rose suggests that it was a protective emblem, which was evaluated in the light of Aphrodite's treatment of Hector in the *Iliad*, discussed below.

Therefore there is visual evidence from a range of contexts, which all exhibit the influence of Roman art, suggesting that roses often had funerary associations, both generally and particularly in relation to warriors. Furthermore, when the scope was extended to images of roses exhibiting a different artistic convention, four cordiform petals *without* sepals, then more examples of 'military' roses were identifiable in art: from the helmet worn by Ptolemy II Philadelphos (ca. 278 – 269 BCE), the metopes in the Square Hall at Nisa, and quadrilobe dagger scabbards at Nemrud Dağı, through to

¹²²³ The use of a typological convention precisely the same as the Tillya-tepe flower is less important in the exploration of meaning providing we are sure that precise same species of plant is indicated.

the single rose on the Roman statuette of a soldier, and roses on Nero's armour and the helmet of the Pontic queen in 1st century CE.

This material was augmented with literary sources, which reinforced the concept of a connection between soldiers and roses. Some of the relevant texts (Virgil, Ausonius, the *Anacreontea*) pertained to funerary rites and death. The connotations of roses and death were two-fold, indicating associations which were perhaps inter-related: the protective qualities provided by 'ambrosial' roses, a trope which had originated far earlier, in Homer's *Iliad*, with his description of Aphrodite anointing Hector's corpse with rose oil in order to safeguard his body from violation; and later textual references to an afterlife in rose-filled Elysium fields by Tibullus, Plutarch (citing Pindar) and Propertius. These connections were interpreted here as reinforcing the idea that roses possessed a special role as an 'immortal' plant. Perhaps such connotations would be especially reassuring for a soldier whose profession constantly brought him in close contact with death.

Therefore this research has demonstrated a previously unidentified but specific association between roses, soldiers, protection against death, and perhaps where that protection failed, a blessed afterlife. Of course it is recognised that any interpretative propositions concerning symbolic values are tentative, but in this case these notions seem to be fundamentally embedded within the iconography of roses both in literature and in art. It was thereby proposed that this conjunction demonstrates the convergence of text, image and meaning in relation to roses.

Returning to the Tillya-tepe knife case, these roses alternated with swastikas. Although the swastika is a motif with a long and diverse history, at Tillya-tepe I judged them likely to derive from Roman/Pontic sources, and the analysis of swastikas on Roman artefacts revealed that they bore a similar status to Roman roses, as a protective symbol in military contexts. This combination of the rose and swastika, both embodying the same concept, reinforces the overall theory that roses were consciously chosen with these emblematic values in mind, above all on the warrior's knife case, but also on his other possessions. Thus, I proposed that the choice of roses and swastikas at Tillya-tepe were specifically related to their iconographic status. This selection was both specific and nuanced since it demonstrates not only that the Tillya-tepe folk appropriated the imagery but that they also assimilated the symbolic values of roses. The proposition is a cautious one which does not suggest that there was a complex allegorical programme at Tillya-tepe. I would not even speculate that the Tillya-tepe warrior was aware of any

literary sources underpinning the iconography, although there is a remote possibility of this, since a scene of Achilles fighting Hector from Homer's *Iliad* was probably depicted on a glass vessel at Begram.¹²²⁴ There was also a cult of Achilles on the island of Leuke in the Black Sea and he also had connections with the 'nomadic Scythians'.¹²²⁵ Realistically, the interpretation here may be calibrated at the far end of the spectrum of meaning with just an imprint of its original association: perhaps the warrior just recognised the protective connotations of roses in relation to soldiers.

4.10 Interpretations of Poppy iconography

At Tillya-tepe, opium poppies were only present in the decorated possessions of the four senior women, and it was construed that opium poppies had a special significance to these women and their presence was a reflection of the women's rank. Furthermore, all four women were buried with small vessels and metal instruments, and these, like the opium poppies, were absent from the warrior's grave and the young woman's grave V. I suggested that these items were tools of their trade and proposed a theoretical scenario based on this evidence that these women fulfilled some sort of role as religious or medical practitioners, using these instruments to prepare their materials and employing opium in their activities. The opium poppy imagery was most prominent on the possessions of the highest ranking woman in grave VI, including, as noted, her poppy capsule necklace which showed extensive signs of wear, and the 'censer' decorated with an opium poppy. Her status is discussed further below in relation to her folding crown with its numerous narcissi.

Opium was an important substance in the ancient world, and there is archaeological evidence for opium's ritualised use in the north Pontic area. Opium was mixed with cannabis in a cup in a 4th century Scythian tomb at Sengileevskoe-2 in the Kuban. Raw opium was found at an unspecified site around the 1st century BCE in the north Pontic area, and thereafter it was discovered in several later Sarmatian-Alan tombs at Klin-Yar, also in the Kuban.

When the broader context of opium poppies was investigated, it was clear that their connection with death was widely recognised in the 1st and 2nd centuries CE, in both Roman tomb art and literature. This association extended to images of psychopomp

¹²²⁴ TISSOT 2006, p.273.

¹²²⁵ RUSYAEVA 2003, p.2.

figures in the Tomb of Anthesterius at Kerch, who wore poppy capsules in their hair; and whole poppy plants were illustrated on Palmyrene tower tombs. There again seems to be a confluence of image, text and meaning, in this case arising from the biochemical properties of opium pertaining to its narcotic function which could also deliver death if taken in sufficient quantities, thereby rendering it suitable for funerary rites. Opium was also useful to mourners to quell their grief. Thus it was construed that in general usage, the symbolism of poppy flowers was often directly related to these innate qualities of opium.

4.11 Grave VI, the folding crown ensemble and narcissi

The woman in grave VI was not only the most important female at Tillya-tepe, her burial also proved to be the most revealing in this investigation – in terms of both the images of opium poppies, and with particular regard to her folding crown and its attachments. As Boardman stressed, her possessions and the Greek practice of burial with a coin in her mouth, both imply Greek connections. Certainly at the very least her possessions demonstrate a familiarity with Graeco-Roman imagery. On the other hand, Sarianidi mentioned that she had an elongated skull which would imply a central Asian nomadic ethnos, although osteological evidence has not survived to confirm this. So the picture is complex.

Her folding crown was a substantial, high status object which was likely to be symbolically invested, and thus one would expect the ornamentation to be carefully selected. Equally, I anticipated that both this crown and its attachments might provide clues towards her wider status and perhaps even her worldview. This crown is dominated by crenellations created with trees and covered in narcissus flowers. It was also suggested that the six-petalled flower on her gold-covered sceptre may have represented a narcissus, although it is not visible in any photos. Cumulatively from the evidence it was proposed that the crown indicated a priestly role for this woman. This adds credence to Francfort's remark, who asked of this woman, 'Was she, with her gold wand, a magician or priestess? This question is....difficult to assess'.¹²²⁶ Davis-Kimball has also long speculated on such possibilities but without offering definitive proof.¹²²⁷ In view of the additional evidence uncovered in this research, this hypothesis becomes a real possibility.

¹²²⁶ FRANCFORT 2012a, p.99.

¹²²⁷ DAVIS-KIMBALL 1995, 1997-98.

The decoration was analysed, commencing with the tree structures: exhibiting the tree – bird – animal configuration which was present on earlier steppe nomadic crowns at Taksay I and Issyk, and later on ‘Sarmatian’ women’s crowns from the north Pontic area, although unlike these other terrestrial beasts, the Tillya-tepe creatures were aquatic. This arrangement has been widely associated with a particular nomadic cosmological ideology involving concepts of a three-stage universe (netherworld, living world and an upper world equating with heaven) and fecundity.

The fifty-three narcissi flowers were evaluated in terms of their cultural status, reconstructed within this thesis. Narcissus, like opium, contained narcotic substances and this biochemical characteristic was encapsulated in its very name, as discussed by both Pliny and Plutarch. Although these Roman writers’ statements have been dismissed by certain modern commentators, I argued that their assertions were correct, as demonstrated by recent medical research into narcissus alkaloids which demonstrates the neuro-active properties of the plant. Within this thesis I also proposed that this narcotic property rendered narcissus a strong association with death. For example, there is early evidence that narcissi had a role in post-mortem rituals, suggested by the presence of a narcissus bulb on the body of pharaoh Rameses II. Later on, in iconographic terms, there were numerous narcissus flowers on the ceiling of Tomb Elahbel at Palmyra and pairs of narcissi on funerary stelae at Kerch.

There were many textual references to narcissi in funerary rituals. These included poetic allusions to death in the story of the love-sick youth, Narkissos, who was transformed at death into the narcissus flower. Narkissos’s tale was concerned with the notion of death and return, and this trope also featured in the story of *Persephone’s Descent into the Underworld*, in which a spectacular narcissus bloom was instrumental in sending Persephone on her journey. Persephone’s myth was aetiological, explicitly explaining concepts of fertility and nature’s annual cycle.

It seems that an association with death, possibly interrelated with a return to the living world, was intrinsic to narcissus flowers, since this latter dimension is apparent in other cultures: in narcissus’s role as one of two quintessential New Year flowers at *Nowruz*, both for Zoroastrians and for Iranians more generally. These New Year ceremonies are concerned with the cycle of life, death and then new life returning. This shows that narcissus was a plant with a cross-cultural significance based on its innate botanical properties.

Therefore the trees and the narcissi on the crown appear to manifest an iconographical and conceptual consistency, around notions of fertility, life, death and return, even though the images derived from different sources.

The objects attached to the crown were also studied. The most important of these was the pair of pendants, putatively manufactured in the same workshop as the folding crown, comprising a 'Mistress of the animals', and considered by Abdullaev to be important evidence of Bactrian mythology.¹²²⁸ She was assessed in this thesis to be a goddess of particular significance to the occupant of grave VI because of her proximity to the crown. The deity's iconography was interpreted as exhibiting similar connotations to the narcissus, although defined in terms of a more 'dominating' relationship to nature and fertility, so again consistent with the ideas embodied within the crown itself. This goddess's identity cannot be entirely reconstructed and we will never know her actual name, but on the basis of the depicted persona she was related to Aphrodite, and perhaps specifically Aphrodite *Ourania*, the primary goddess of people in the north Pontic region, a part of the world which has been repeatedly mentioned in relation to Tillya-tepe.

Interpretations of the crescent hairpins are more obscure and it can only be speculated that their iconography may have embodied an astral dimension, because of the accompanying pendant crescents, which would be appropriate to the 'heavenly' aspect of Aphrodite *Ourania*, but this remains unclear.

Therefore it appears that the designer of the folding crown used different visual languages but compatible iconographies to express religious ideas around fertility and the annual cycle of nature, death and return, and thereby embedded within these concepts the functioning of an orderly universe.

Thus the earlier discussion concerning this woman's professional role in rituals and/or medicine involving opium should be expanded to include narcissi. I therefore hypothesised on the basis of the evidence that this elite woman was a priestess who used opium and narcotic extracts of narcissus bulbs in her ministrations. She could have used the censer to burn opium resin, and it certainly seems that opium was used in rituals concerning death, the evidence for which is in tombs in the Kuban area discussed above. More broadly, there is a substantial literature on the use of psychotropic

¹²²⁸ ABDULLAEV 2016, p.119.

stimulants in rituals, consumed as entheogens to facilitate an altered state of consciousness¹²²⁹ in part to engage with ‘the spirit world, gods, or an afterlife’.¹²³⁰

Looking beyond grave VI, the woman in grave III, second in rank, was also buried with abundant possessions including a crown which, I suggested, may have been covered with opium poppy flowers. Cumulatively, three of the women, occupying graves II, III and VI, owned crowns, Chinese mirrors, and objects displaying imagery of Aphrodite, Eros and ‘dolphins’, characteristic Graeco-Roman motifs popular in the East. The aforementioned basket in grave II was decorated with the two narcotic plants, poppy and narcissus, and since it also contained knives it was likely related to its owner’s function as some sort of ritual or medical practitioner. The female incumbent of grave I, of lesser rank on the basis of grave-goods and burial position, was nevertheless also an elite woman, and both poppy and narcissus iconography featured on her possessions and she too owned instruments and small vessels. Thus both the floral imagery and the ownership of implements seem to relate to the professional activities of all four of these women.

4.12 The Sarmatian-Alan versus Kushan debate

The study of these three Tillya-tepe flowers, and roses in particular, has constantly referred to comparanda in the north Pontic area, often associated with peoples who are generally considered to be Sarmatian-Alan, and who, like the Tillya-tepe folk, had a steppe nomadic heritage, while the poppies appear to be influenced by Roman sources.

On the other hand, the Yuezhi-Kushan contexts were sparse, with the only sure identification being the four-sepalled roses depicted on battlements at the Kushan shrine, Surkh Kotal, but this was later than Tillya-tepe. Therefore, this study of plant iconography positions the Tillya-tepe folk more closely to the Sarmatian-Alans in the Bosporan kingdom than the Yuezhi-Kushans. This conclusion underpins the hypothesis that the ‘Mistress of the animals’ on the pendants represented a goddess like Aphrodite *Ourania*, the primary goddess of the Bosporan kingdom, or a local, Bactrian version of this deity. This alignment of Tillya-tepe with the Sarmatian-Alans supports and augments the researches of Bernard, Schiltz, Mordvintseva and Francfort who frame their theories about Tillya-tepe in relation to that part of the world.

¹²²⁹ ABDULLAEV 2010, p.335; COLLARD 2011; GOODMAN *et al.* 1995; MERLIN 1994.

¹²³⁰ KENNEDY 2014, p.5.

4.13 Synthesis of plant iconography at Tillya-tepe

The Tillya-tepe folk, who indicated their steppe nomadic origins in their mode of burial, chose to procure all three flowers discussed in this thesis from an alien pictorial language outside this cultural heritage. The source of the flowers, like aspects of the figurative imagery, reflects the influence of Graeco-Roman art. The evidence for at least two of the flowers – roses and perhaps also poppies – suggests that these conventions were specifically connected with Roman art. If this is correct, then it demonstrates that the Tillya-tepe folk were in the vanguard of artistic taste, using these contemporary conventions for floral motifs rather than drawing their influences from earlier Hellenistic or Graeco-Bactrian sources.

The movement of these plant motifs is an explicit indicator of contacts, thereby contributing information to an understanding of communications and exchange along the trade routes from Rome in the West to Noin Ula in the East. The combined evidence of the Shanpula and Noin Ula textiles demonstrate communications between Bactria and Inner Asia. More specifically, I proposed on the basis of rose imagery in the comparanda that this convention was likely to have been transmitted from the north Pontic area, considered to be Sarmatian or Sarmatian-Alan territories, but in demonstrable contact with the Romans, thereby illustrating correspondences between Tillya-tepe, Sarmatian-Alan and Roman cultures. It should be recalled here that certain characteristics of the Tillya-tepe burials were replicated in Sarmatian-Alan examples west of the Don between the 1st century BCE to 3rd century CE, as summarised by Bârcă: burials within earlier tumuli; the use of rectangular pits; northern orientation of bodies; partial animal offerings;¹²³¹ a subject also discussed by Mordvintseva.¹²³²

Moreover, the detailed investigation of plant imagery demonstrated that the Tillya-tepe folk not only appropriated Pontic and Roman artistic conventions, but they also appear to have deployed them in a manner which conformed to a calculated, systematic use of iconologically-rich floral imagery. The appearance of roses on the warrior's possessions, especially his knife case, suggests that they were not reinterpreted or repurposed in their new, ideologically different environment, nor were they just appropriated in ignorance of meaning. Roses seem to have been chosen because they embodied certain ideas – perhaps as a protective, amuletic emblems. The decision to

¹²³¹ BÂRCĂ 2006, p.156. He does not discuss Tillya-tepe.

¹²³² MORDVINTSEVA 2010.

deploy roses and swastikas together reflected the shared symbolic values of both motifs in relation to military contexts. This is a specific indication that Tillya-tepe partook of a wider plant iconography within and beyond the Roman Empire. The rose flower, with its embedded iconographical values, crossed several cultural boundaries including the Sarmatian-Alan and Parthian territories in the period 1st – 3rd centuries CE. This transmission of imagery is a testament to the penetration of these iconographies.

Therefore the analysis of the knife case shows that the emblematic values which were embodied within the images of flowers at source travelled with them to Bactria. The Tillya-tepe folk were apparently using these western images to express their own worldview. Thus this study of floral imagery demonstrates that we are dealing not just with the transmission of motifs but also with the communication of ideas within these motifs. Importantly in this regard, Tillya-tepe in Central Asia appears to be the furthest outpost in the East at this date. The roses which feature on textiles further eastwards, at Noin Ula and Shanpula, are present on imported objects; and the Surkh Kotal rose imagery is later.

These flowers with their Graeco-Roman origins were combined with imagery from other sources on two prestigious objects. The roses and swastikas on the knife case form a frame for animal chase scenes executed in imitation of steppe nomadic imagery, and the outer band of hearts surrounds rams' heads which derived from Altaic creatures. This conjunction of images reflects an artistic environment at Tillya-tepe which was receptive to a new visual language while still perpetuating traditional subject-matter and modes of depiction. In view of the 'battling' context of the animals along the length of the scabbard and the proposed connotations of both the rose and swastika relating to warriors, there seems to be some consonance of themes, even though they are expressed by means of imagery with diverse origins.

In broad terms, the poppies and narcissi were interpreted as a reflection the priestly status of the woman in grave VI and her companions. The presence of poppies specifically alluded to their respective ranks. From an art historical perspective, in the case of the folding crown, which I consider to be the most important artefact from Tillya-tepe, there also appears to be more than a simple co-existence of motifs from different sources, since it was argued that the narcissus flowers and trees on the folding crown embodied ideas related to fertility, life, death and return, notions which were also expressed in the attached the 'Mistress of the animals' pendants.

Understandably there may be a case for scholars to discuss such artistic treatment in terms of ‘hybridity’ or ‘hybridisation’, but these descriptions are not used here since their definition in relation to material culture is not yet settled.¹²³³ What is notable is that the Tillya-tepe artists and/or patrons drew inspiration from different sources and combined them on these two high status artefacts. The apparent consistency in the emblematic values within each artefact and the compatibility of the themes across different objects is surely deliberate and suggests that this imagery was intended to communicate a message to the audiences which beheld them. In this regard, the images of flowers may be considered as representative symbols.

The consistency in the iconographic deployment of the three flowers mirrors the common characteristics in their style and modes of depiction, discussed above. This assertion is more credible in the light of evidence suggesting that these objects were all manufactured in the same workshop, an environment in which a wide range of technical expertise was available. This would have given the Tillya-tepe folk control over the objects created for them, enabling them as patrons to dictate their requirements with precision and ensure that the final productions exactly expressed their intentions. The fact that they commissioned objects which involved the selection of compatible iconographies from different sources reflects a sophisticated level of patronage based on a knowledge of art from other cultures. This also tallies with the fact that the Tillya-tepe folk showed a preference for the more ‘modern’ fashions of Roman art, rather than depending entirely on earlier Hellenised conventions.

In view of the shared visual language attributable to the Tillya-tepe flowers, it is possible to speak of their cross-cultural significance, and this is briefly noted next.

4.14 The idea and scope of plant iconography

The three Tillya-tepe plants were not only studied in relation to artistic comparanda, but also with respect to Graeco-Roman literature. These texts provide us with critical knowledge about the role of plants in society, in particular their ritual, religious and medicinal importance, and this information was exploited to support the observations of plant imagery. Using these written sources was justified by the fact that in the 1st – 3rd centuries CE when these flowers appeared on objects produced at the edge or even

¹²³³ For a range of viewpoints on hybridisation and identity, see the various analyses in KOURENENOS *et al.* 2011.

beyond the Roman Empire, in Sarmatian-Alan, Parthian, and even in Nabataean art, they were not isolated images but were present in an artistic environment which comprised other 'Classicising' motifs, such as Nike, Erotes, centaurs, figures in Roman costume. Thus floral imagery was used in this thesis to provide insights into objects from a range of cultures, and it was possible to demonstrate that these plants often participated in an iconological schema.

The emblematic role of floral imagery is not immediately apparent because we do not sufficiently recognise the significant role of plants as purveyors of such information. And yet the evidence is there. Well-recognised examples of plant iconography are found among the flowers, shrubs and trees which play emblematic roles in Graeco-Roman religion.¹²³⁴ Various fruits such as pomegranates and grapes have a well-attested significance in Jewish and Christian religious texts.¹²³⁵ And from an earlier period, many plants, including flowers, played a part in Ancient Egyptian and Bronze Age Greek art and cult, although in the absence of texts precisely describing their roles, their cultural functions must largely be reconstructed from art historical, archaeological and archaeobotanical sources.¹²³⁶

The Tillya-tepe flowers should be characterised as deciduous plants growing in temperate Eurasia (as distinct from tropical climes), which were therefore subject to the seasonal variations which effect an annual growth cycle. The emergence of the flowers year-on-year explains why their blooms might be understood to reflect the return of the life. Geophytes, such as the narcissi depicted at Tillya-tepe, represent the most extreme example of this seasonality since their time on earth is very limited. Their long dormancy and swift flowering enables them to thrive in marginal terrain such as mountains and deserts where the climatic conditions suitable for growth are brief. Hence the association of both narcissi and hyacinths (another geophyte)¹²³⁷ with the Iranian New Year, *Nowruz*, and more generally with rebirth and return, although these customs may have developed at a later date. For those societies which celebrated a love of flowering plants in their art, literature, rituals and gardens, including the Greeks, and especially the Romans during the late Republic and the Empire, the incorporation of flowers into an emblematic corpus might be seen as a natural development.

¹²³⁴ BAUMANN 1993; GIESECKE 2014.

¹²³⁵ GOOR AND NUROCK 1968; JANNICK 2007; MOLDENKE AND MOLDENKE 1952.

¹²³⁶ HEPPEL 1990; MANNICHE 1999; TZEDAKIS AND MARTLEW 1999.

¹²³⁷ Hyacinths were also celebrated in Greek and Roman mythology, in the tale of Hyacinthus whose blood was transformed into a hyacinth flower.

Of all three Tillya-tepe flowers, rose images are the most prevalent, in terms of their longevity in art, and their penetration into different cultures, religions, and diverse media. Representations of roses in wall-paintings are among the most fruitful sources of information, as demonstrated by the iconological presence of a single rose in the scene of Terentius at Dura-Europos, discussed above. The proliferation of roses in the decoration of tombs appears to provide some allusion to the afterlife. At Kerch the rose meadows seemingly denote a type of Elysium, which may also explain the presence of the briar roses in the *hypogeum* of the ‘Three Brothers’ at Palmyra, as well as the roses in structurally similar vaulted tombs at Durostorum (Silistra) and Nicaea, both of a later date, all influenced by Roman Imperial precedents.

Roses were shown in this thesis to be part of the core ornamental repertoire of Roman art (including later Roman/Byzantine art), as they migrated from pagan into Christian iconography, in the same way as can be observed with better researched plants such as pomegranates and grapes. They also appeared in great numbers on the synagogue ceiling at Dura-Europos.

In the Iranian world, roses preserved their funerary connotations on a Zoroastrian ossuary and the ‘Merv vase’, as well as appearing in ceremonial scenes, such as at Tāq-e Bostān. This all attests to the potency and longevity of plant emblems. In the context of ossuaries, there is also potential continuity in the depiction of opium poppy capsules, identified by Abdullaev on an example from Ishtykhan, and by myself on an ossuary from Mizdakhan. The remarks on late antique and Sogdian images of roses were necessarily cursory, but this identification and analysis may open doors into further research on the iconography of the rose in sepulchral, ritual and ceremonial environments.

I also discussed the simpler, four-petalled (non-sepalled) convention for roses, as well as narcissus flowerheads, which appeared on small spherical vessels from Sirkap-Taxila and other Buddhist contexts in northwestern Pakistan. It was tentatively hypothesised that this floral ornament indicated they were containers for rose and narcissus oils and unguents, just as other floral decoration on far earlier containers indicated types of plant oils and extracts. This suggestion accords with the attested suitability of stone as a container for such precious substances. At Sirkap-Taxila and Nemrud Dağı very similar stone phialae were found with a rose at the centre, perhaps indicating that they were receptacles for ritual offerings involving rose oil. These examples, like the Getty

Museum opium bottle, offer the possibility that images of flowers sometimes functioned as ‘floral labels’. This subject-area should be explored further, as it may contribute both to our knowledge of the function of some vessels and the ritual uses of plants.

Therefore, since it was shown that each of these flowers had distinctive cultural, emblematic, and functional values across a range of societies, as well as at Tillya-tepe, their selective application on artefacts demonstrates that plants can provide information which is difficult to determine from other sources.

4.15 Closing remarks

In summary, this research was framed in terms of floral imagery, which was an important part of the artistic expression of the Tillya-tepe folk. The identification of roses, poppies and narcissi, both at Tillya-tepe and elsewhere, and the subsequent correlations of material and textual sources, revealed that these three flowers, with their proposed gendered, hierarchical, symbolical and functional implications, not only acted as indicators of interaction between cultures, but also had the potential to embody meaningful associations for those societies which applied them in their art. The close study of the floral iconography not only enabled us to understand more about the Tillya-tepe folk, but also to position their artefacts within the history of art. Within the research presented in this thesis, these represent some of the most important contributions.

When the Tillya-tepe folk chose to introduce floral imagery into their art, deploying it in a consistent and nuanced manner, they were actively participating in the artistic language used by cotemporary elite people both within the Roman empire and just beyond, especially in the north Pontic area. It is hoped that this research might also provide the methodology and first steps in the construction of a corpus of data on plant iconography which can be used to illuminate our understanding of those cultures which applied it.

This detailed research on plant iconography has contributed information about the Tillya-tepe folk, helping to define their status, functions, connections and perhaps even some idea towards their worldview.

5 ILLUSTRATIONS

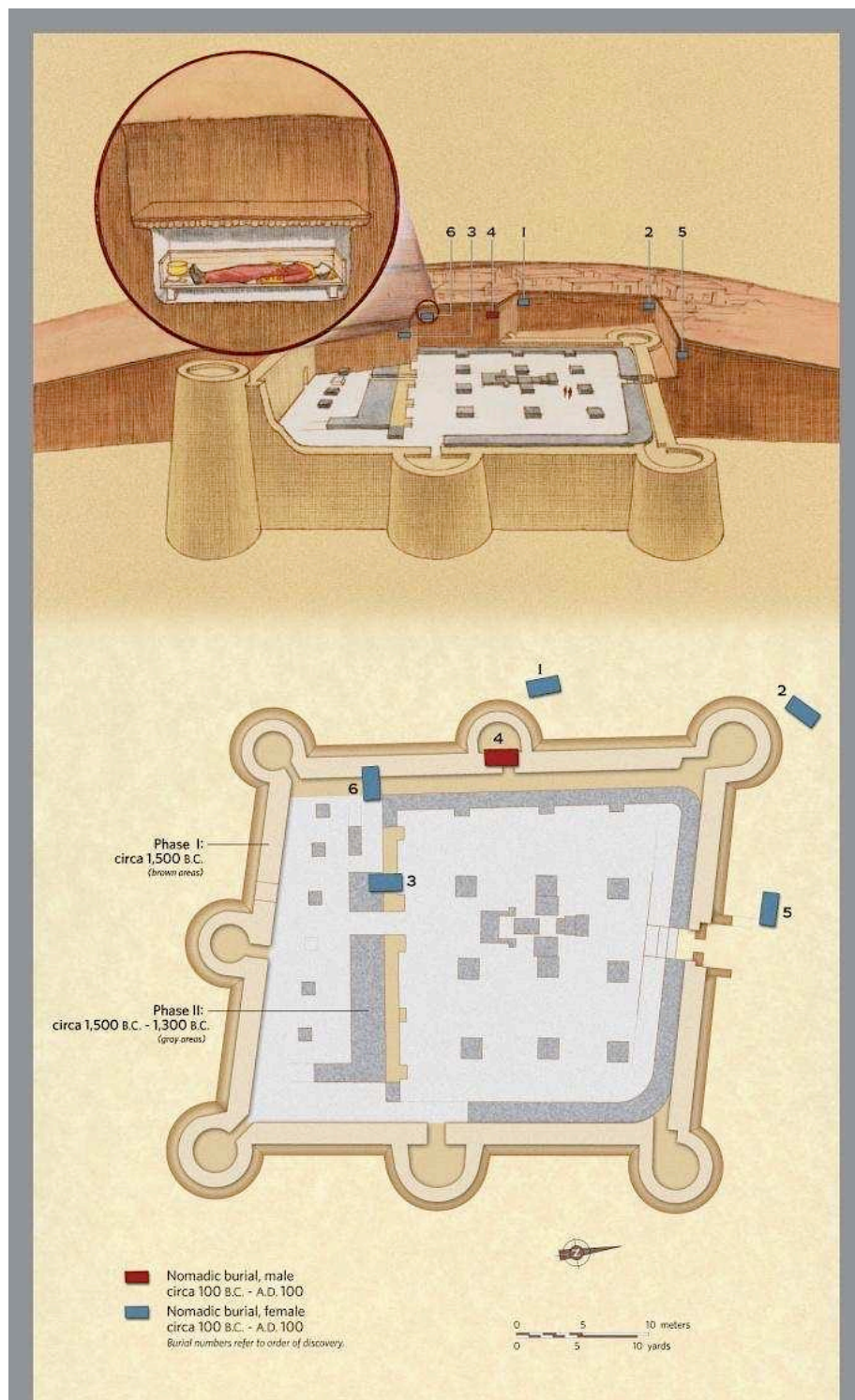
Abbreviations

BM	The British Museum, London
HMSP	The State Hermitage Museum, St. Petersburg, Russia
MMA	Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York
NMA	National Museum of Afghanistan
PMAT	Palazzo Massimo alle Terme, Rome
YUAG	Yale University Art Gallery

The author has endeavoured to supply dimensions and the current location where the information is available.

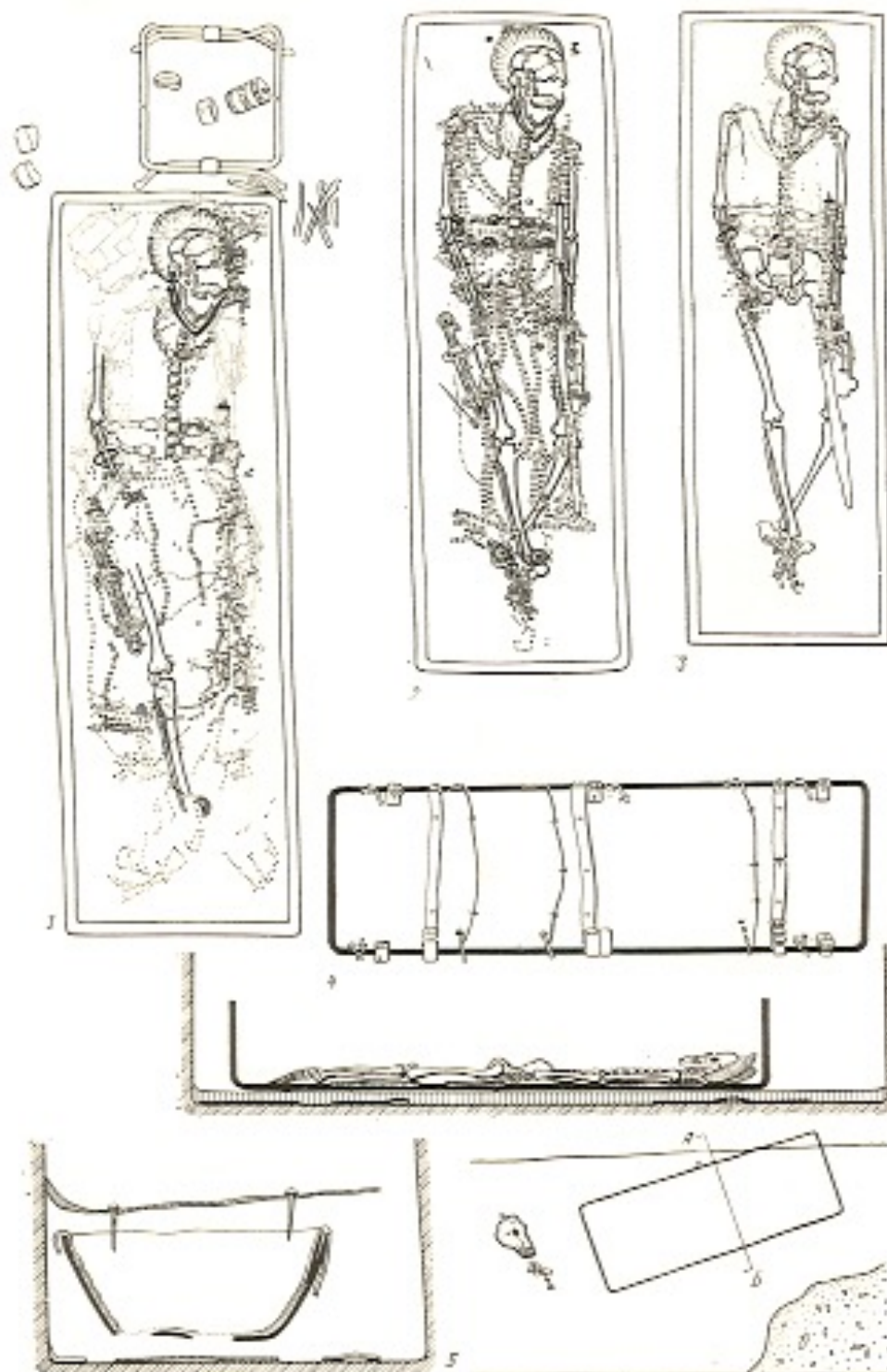
5.1 Introductory sections

Fig. 0 – 1 Tillya-tepe Burials

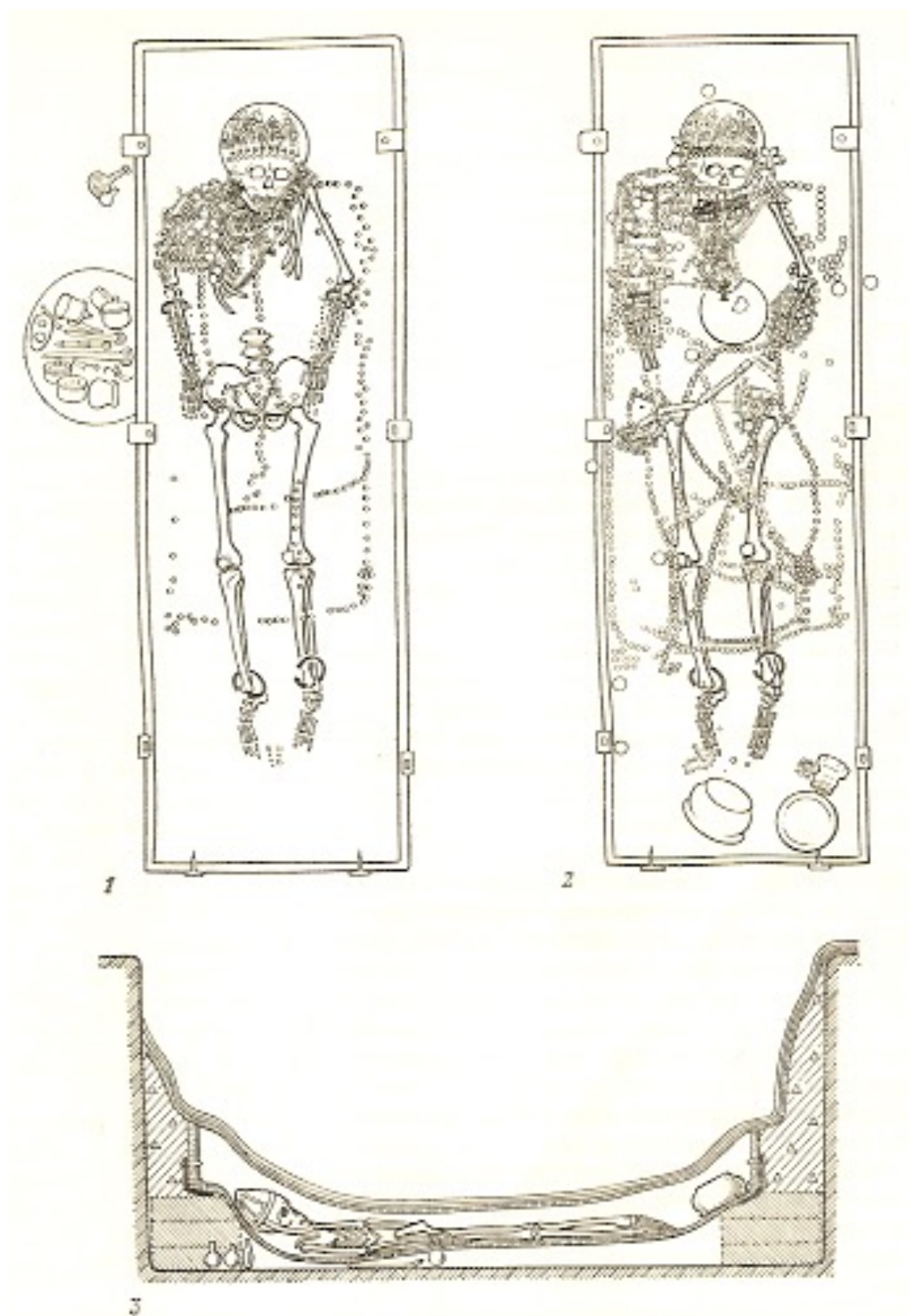


Projection view and plan of the burial site at Tillya-tepe. Image courtesy of St. John Simpson, the British Museum.

Fig. 0 – 2 Tillya-tepe warrior's burial

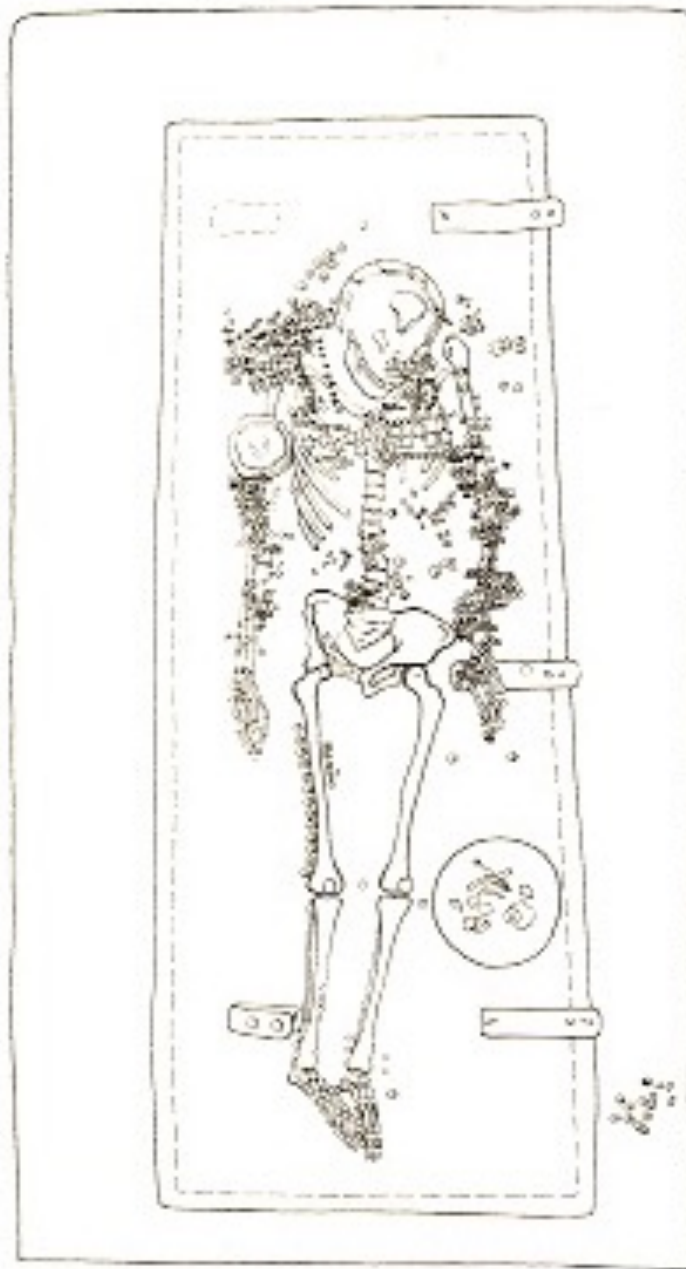


Deposition layers, burial IV, Tillya-tepe. SARIANIDI 1989, fig.30, p.85.

Fig. 0 – 3 Tillya-tepe Burial VI

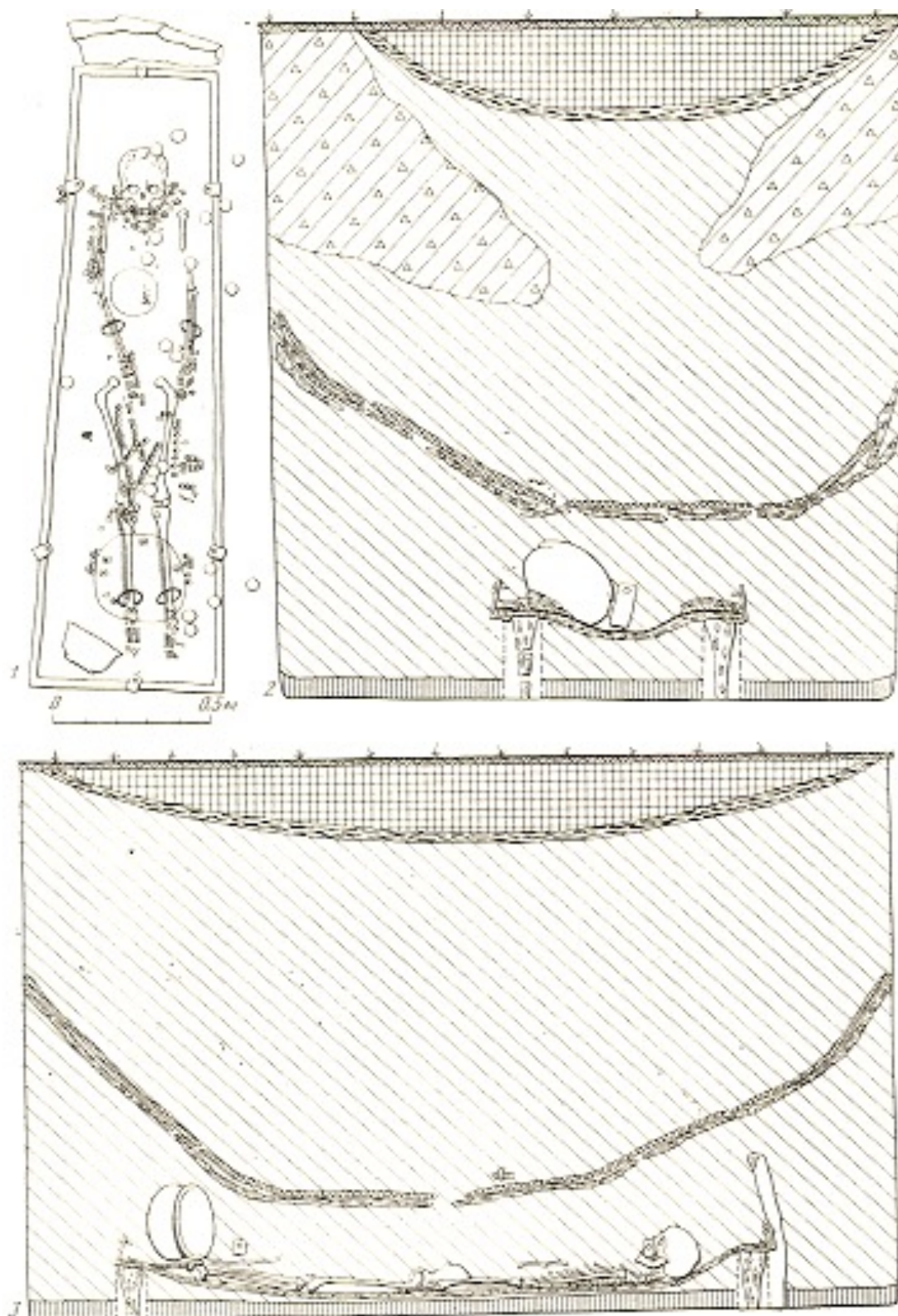
Deposition layers, grave VI, Tillya-tepe. SARIANIDI 1989, fig.40, p.115.

Fig. 0 – 4 Tillya-tepe Burial I



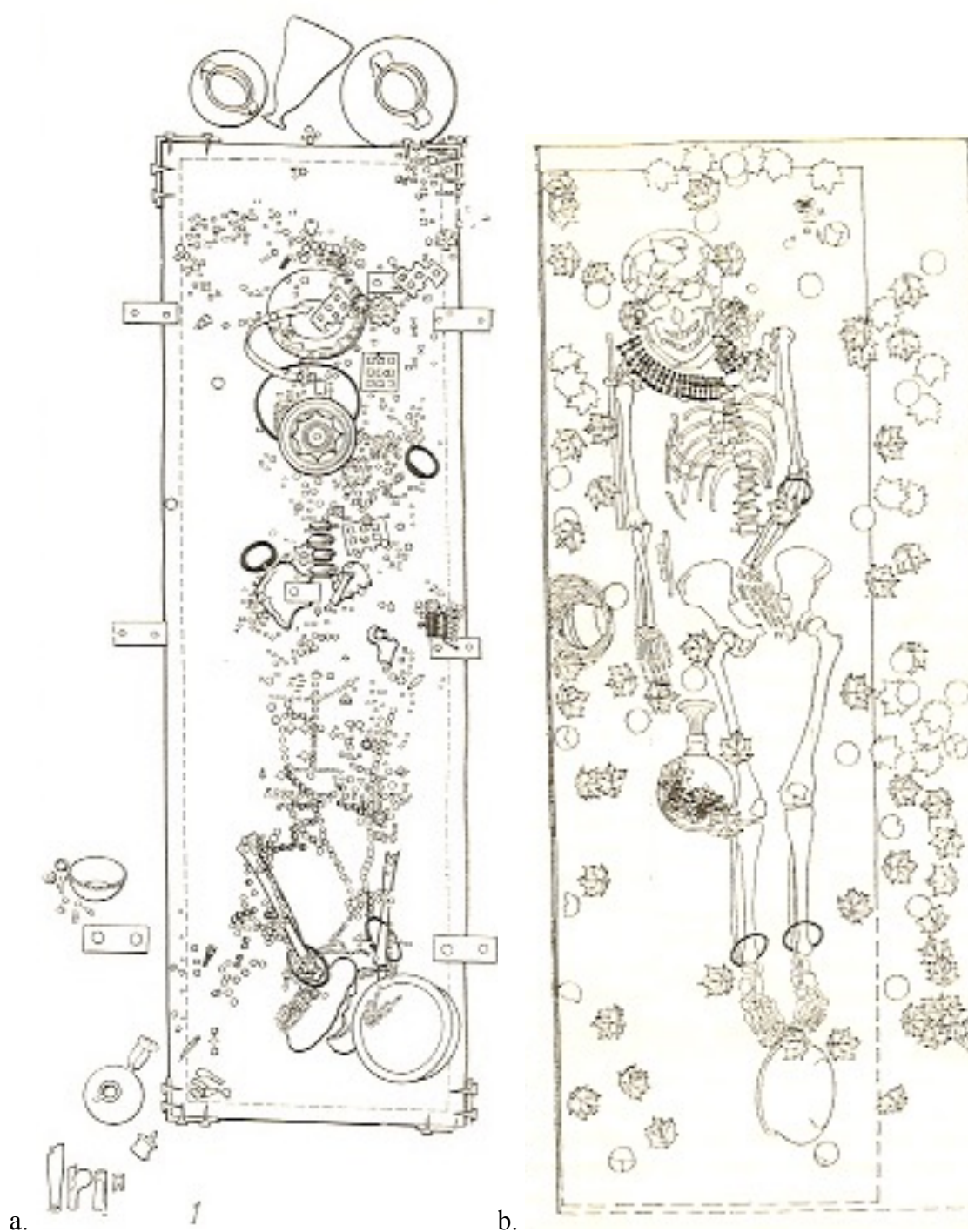
Grave I, Tillya-tepe. SARIANIDI 1989, fig.13, p.50.

Fig. 0 – 5 Tillya-tepe Burial II



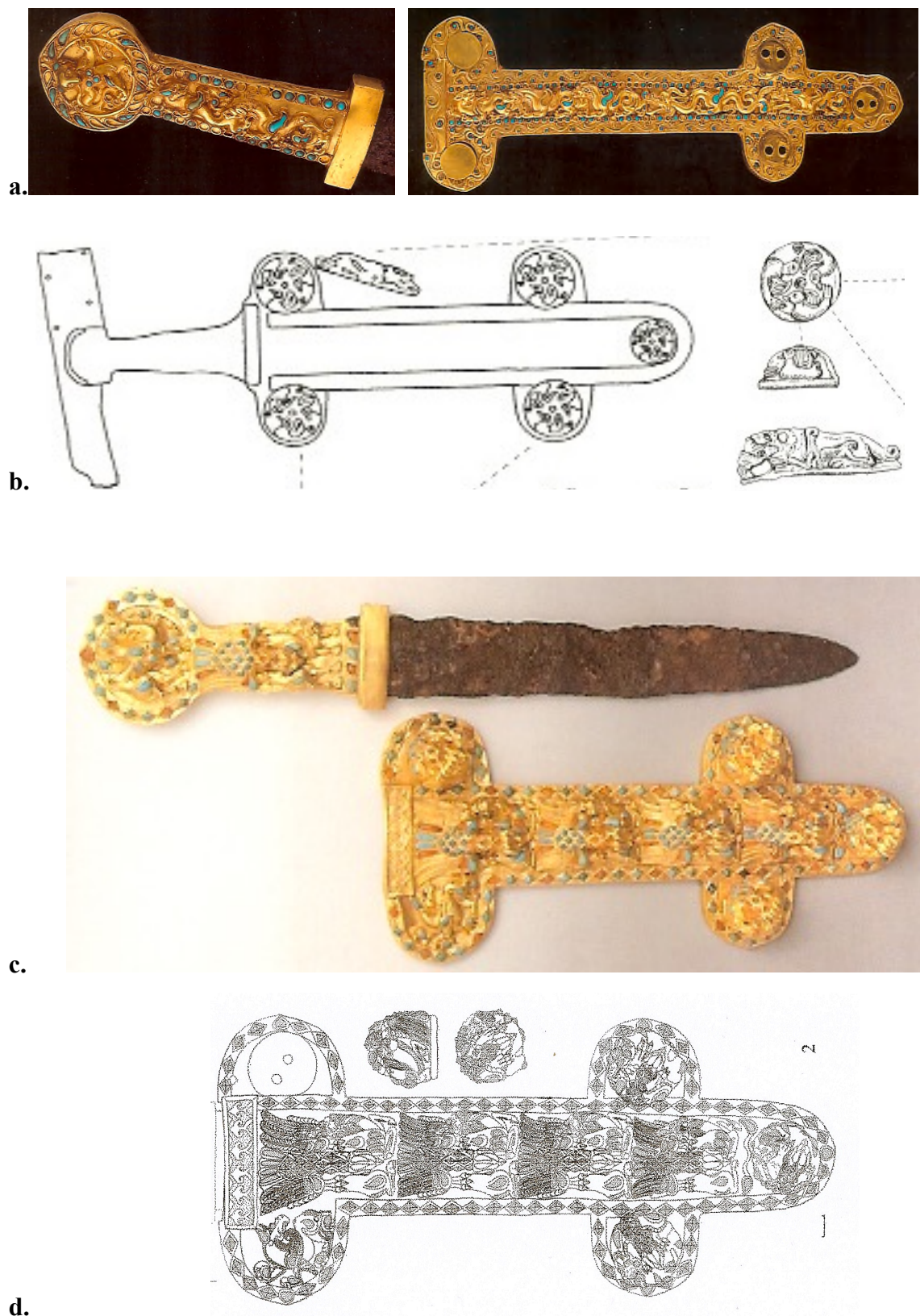
Grave II, Tillya-tepe. SARIANIDI 1989, fig.16, p.55.

Fig. 0 – 6 Tillya-tepe Burials III and V



a Grave III, Tillya-tepe. SARIANIDI 1989, fig.24, p.68.

b Grave V, Tillya-tepe. SARIANIDI 1989, fig. 38, p.111.

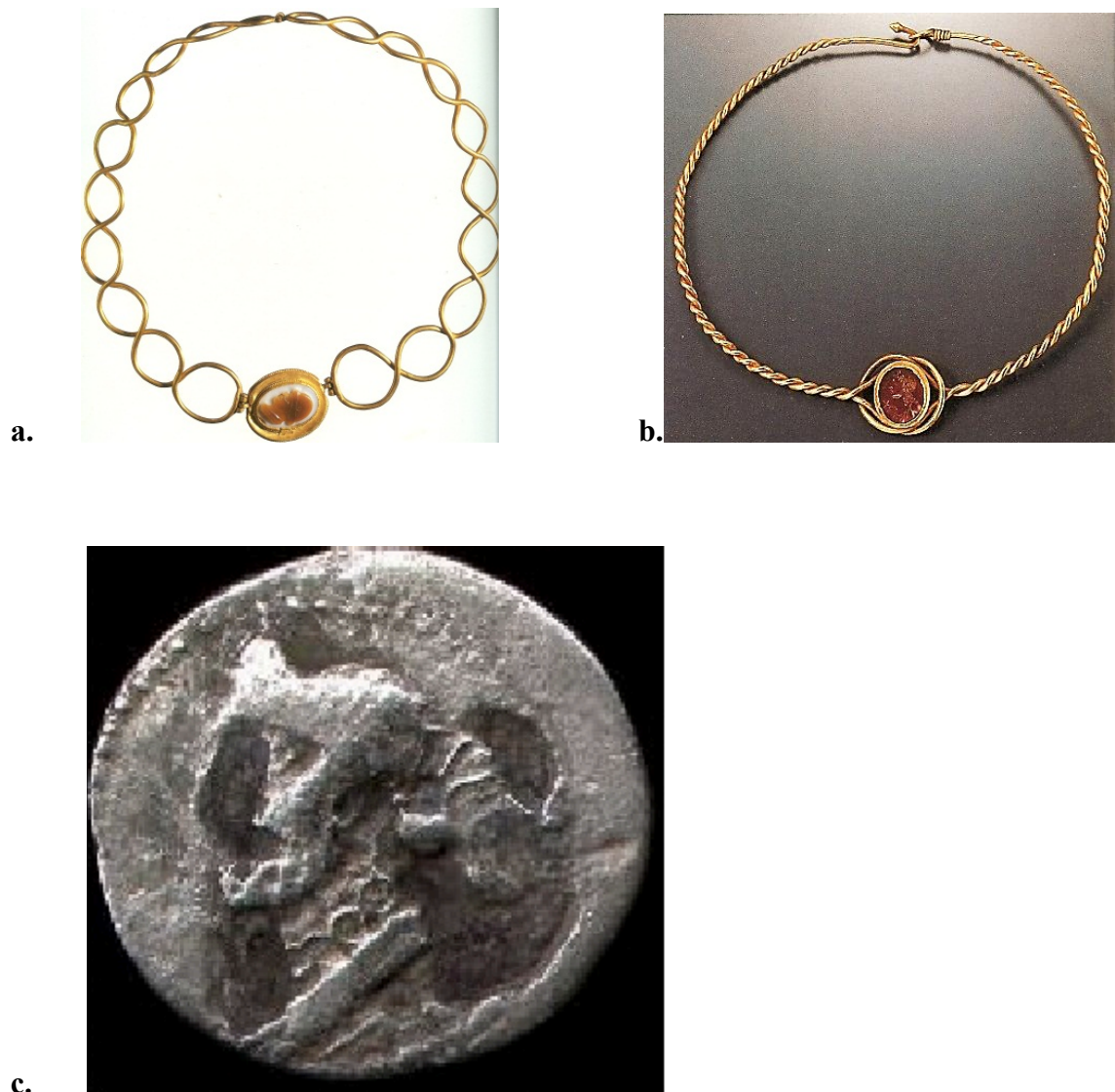
Fig. 0 – 7 Quadrilobe Daggers

a Dagger, hilt and scabbard, grave IV, Tillya-tepe, second half of the 1st century CE, iron, gold, turquoise, dagger length 37.5cm, scabbard 23.5cm, NMA. SCHILTZ 2008, pls. 113, 114, pp.272-273.

b Dagger scabbard, Isakovka, Leather-covered wood, black and red lacquer, gold and turquoise inlays, 3rd - 2nd century BCE. KORYAKOVA 2006, fig.12, p.110.

c Iron dagger with gold hilt and scabbard, inlaid with, grave I, Dachi, third quarter of 1st century CE, iron, gold, turquoise, cornelian, dagger 33cm length, scabbard 27.1cm. Azov Museum. SCHILTZ, 2001, p.214.

d Drawing of Dachi scabbard in **7c**.

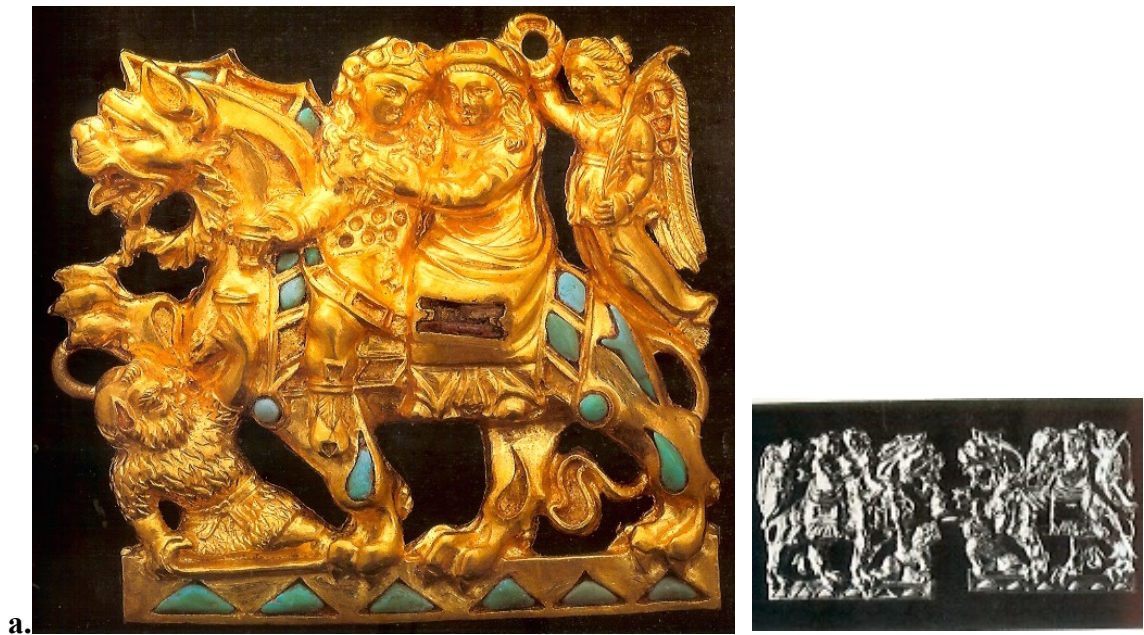
Fig. 0 – 8 Tillya-tepe Warrior's necklace and comparanda

a Gold necklace with cameo, grave IV, Tillya-tepe, second half of the 1st century CE, diam. 21cm, cameo 4cm x 3.5cm x 0.7cm. NMA. SARIANIDI 1985, pl.68.

b Gold necklace with carnelian cameo, Kerch, 1st century CE, 16.4cm x 17cm. Azov Museum. TOKYO 1992, cats. 158 and 159, p.133.

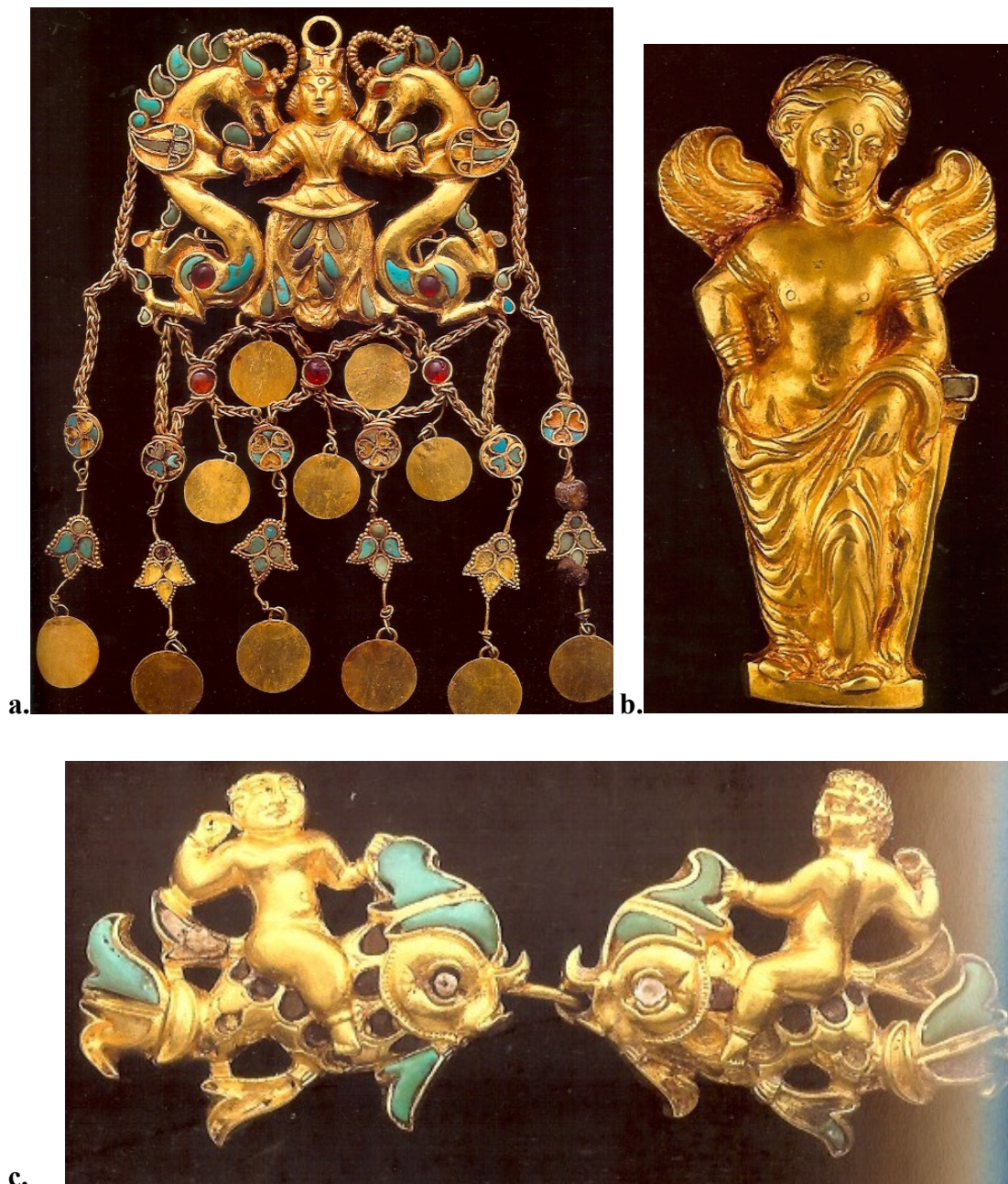
c Bronze tetradrachm coin depicting Gondophares, ca. 20 – 46 CE, ERRINGTON AND CRIBB 1992, cat.31, p.64.

Fig. 0 – 9 Figurative Clasps from Tillya-tepe



a Pair of gold clasps with turquoise inlay, grave VI, Tillya-tepe, second half of the 1st century CE, 6.5 x 7cm. NMA. SCHILTZ 2008, cat.136, p.287; SARIANIDI 1985, p.254.

b Pair of gold clasps, grave III, Tillya-tepe, second half of the 1st century CE, 9.0 x 6.3cm. NMA. SCHILTZ 2008, cat.79, p.255.

Fig. 0 – 10 Figurative art from Tillya-tepe

a Pair of 'Master of the animals' pendants, grave II, Tillya-tepe, second half of the 1st century CE, 12.5 x 6.5 cm, gold, turquoise, garnet, lapis lazuli, carnelian, pearls. NMA. SCHILTZ 2008, cat.61, p.247.

b 'Aphrodite of Bactria', applique, grave VI, Tillya-tepe, second half of the 1st century CE, 5.0 x 2.6cm, gold, turquoise. NMA. SCHILTZ 2008, cat.135, p.288.

c Pair of clasps, grave II, Tillya-tepe, second half of the 1st century CE, 4.2.x 4.9cm, gold, turquoise, mother-of-pearl. NMA. SCHILTZ 2008, cat.80, p.256.

Fig. 0 – 11 Steppe nomadic plant imagery



a Leaf motif on saddle fitting, Tuekta, *ca.* 5th century BCE, wood, 10cm x 8cm approximately. HMSP. RUDENKO 1960, pl.LXXXIII.

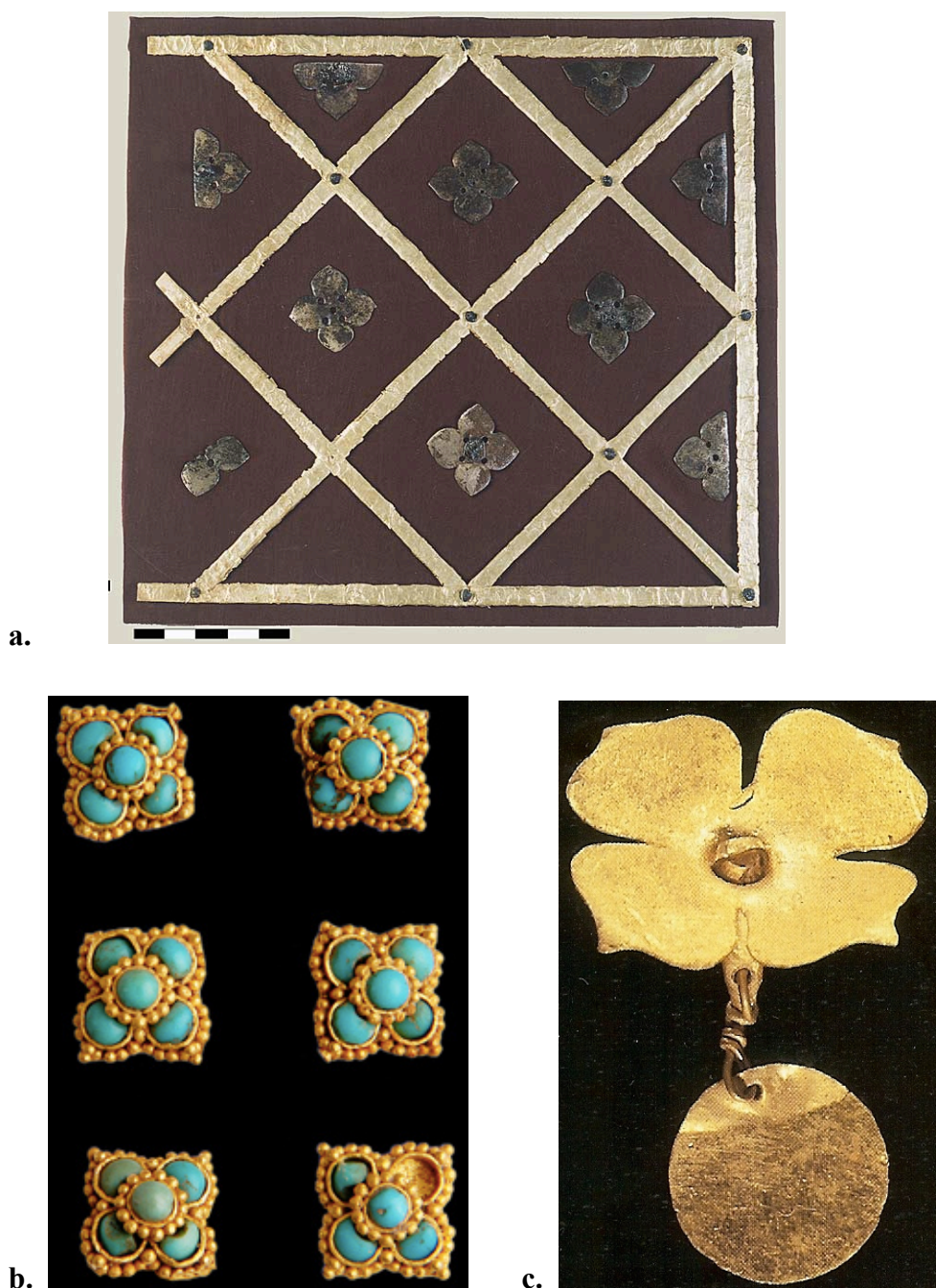
b Enthroned 'goddess' (detail), hanging, kurgan V, Pazyryk, *ca.* 252-238 BCE, felted wool, entire size 640 x 450cm. HMSP, inv.1687/94. Author's photograph.

Fig. 0 – 12 Steppe nomadic floral imagery: simple quatrefoil



a Saddle-cloth (detail), kurgan V, Pazyryk, *ca.*252-238 BCE, felted wool, flowers diam. 3.5cm, HMSP, inv.1687/98. Author's photograph.

b Rug (detail), kurgan V, Pazyryk, *ca.*252-238 BCE, felted wool, 110cm x 80cm. HMSP, inv.1687/1. Author's photograph.

Fig. 0 – 13 Steppe nomadic floral imagery: square quatrefoil

a Coffin decoration (reconstructed), gold foil, tomb 54, Sudzha cemetery, Transbaikalia. <https://depts.washington.edu/silkroad/archaeology/mongolia/xiongnu/xiongnuarchhist/xiongnuarchhist.html> (accessed June 2015).

b Ornaments, Gol Mod tomb 20, 1st century CE, gold and turquoise. BROSSADER 2007, p.83.

c Plaque, grave II, Tillya-tepe, second half of the 1st century CE, gold, rosette diam. 2cm, NMA. SARIANIDI 1985, pl.101, p.159.

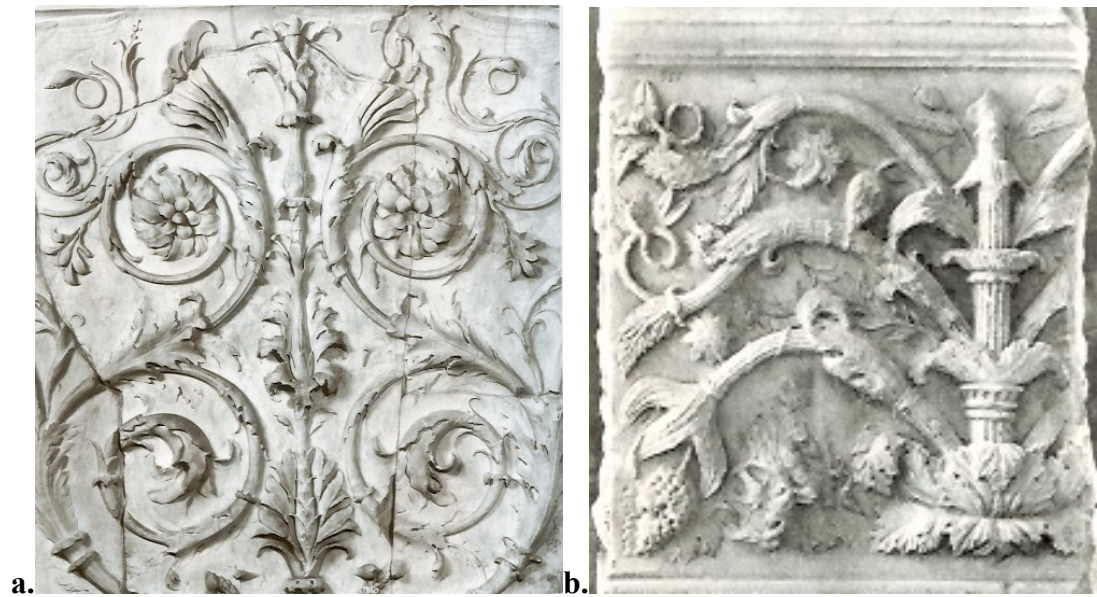
Fig. 0 – 14 Hellenistic flowers



a Amphora, Chertomlyk, 4th century BCE, part-gilded silver, ht. 70cm, diam. 40cm. HMSP. SCHILTZ 1994, p.195.

b Coffin lid, Vitjazevo, near Gorgippia, 3rd century BCE, painted wood. HMSP. PFROMMER 1993, fig. 23, p.28.

Fig. 0 – 15 Ara Pacis and Pergamene floral ornament



a Ara Pacis, Rome, commissioned 13 BCE, marble. ROSSINI 2014, p.84

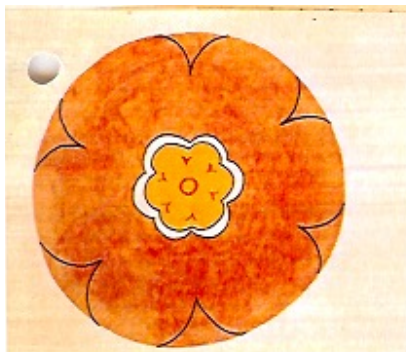
b Slab, Pergamon, 2nd century BCE, marble. Archaeological Museum, Istanbul.
CASTRIOTA 1995, fig. 47.

Fig. 0 – 16 Flowers in wall-paintings

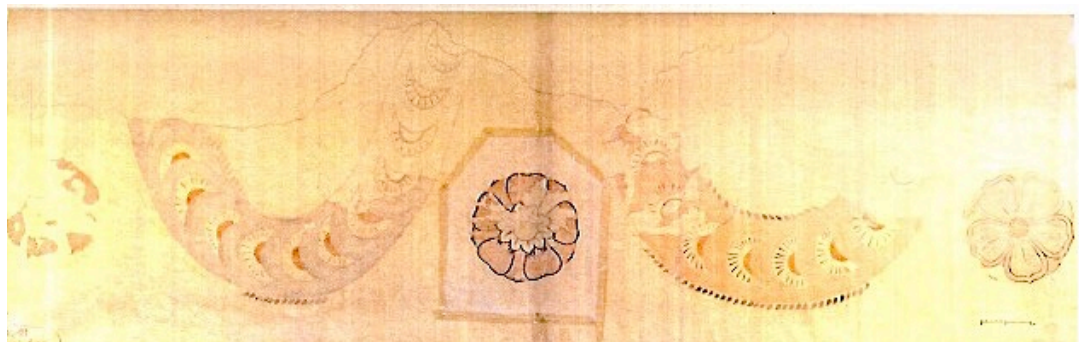




b.



c.



d.

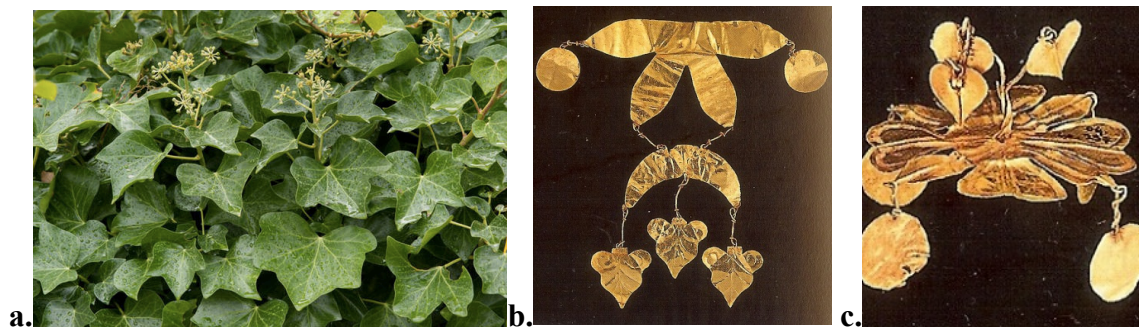
a Six monks attending the Buddha (detail), Mirān, 1st – 3rd century CE, wall-painting. National Museum of New Dehli, India. ROWLAND 1974, frontispiece.

b Figure with garlands (detail), shrine V, Mirān. National Museum of New Dehli, India. ROWLAND 1970, colour plate p.41.

c Single flowers, reconstructed wall-painting, Great Stupa, Butkara I, *ca.* 2nd century CE. FACCENNA 1980, vol.5.1, pl.M.

d Swag and flowers, reconstructed wall painting, Great Stupa, Butkara I, *ca.* 2nd century CE. FACCENNA 1980, vol.5.1, pl.G.

Fig. 0 – 17 Ivy and heart motifs at Tillya-tepe



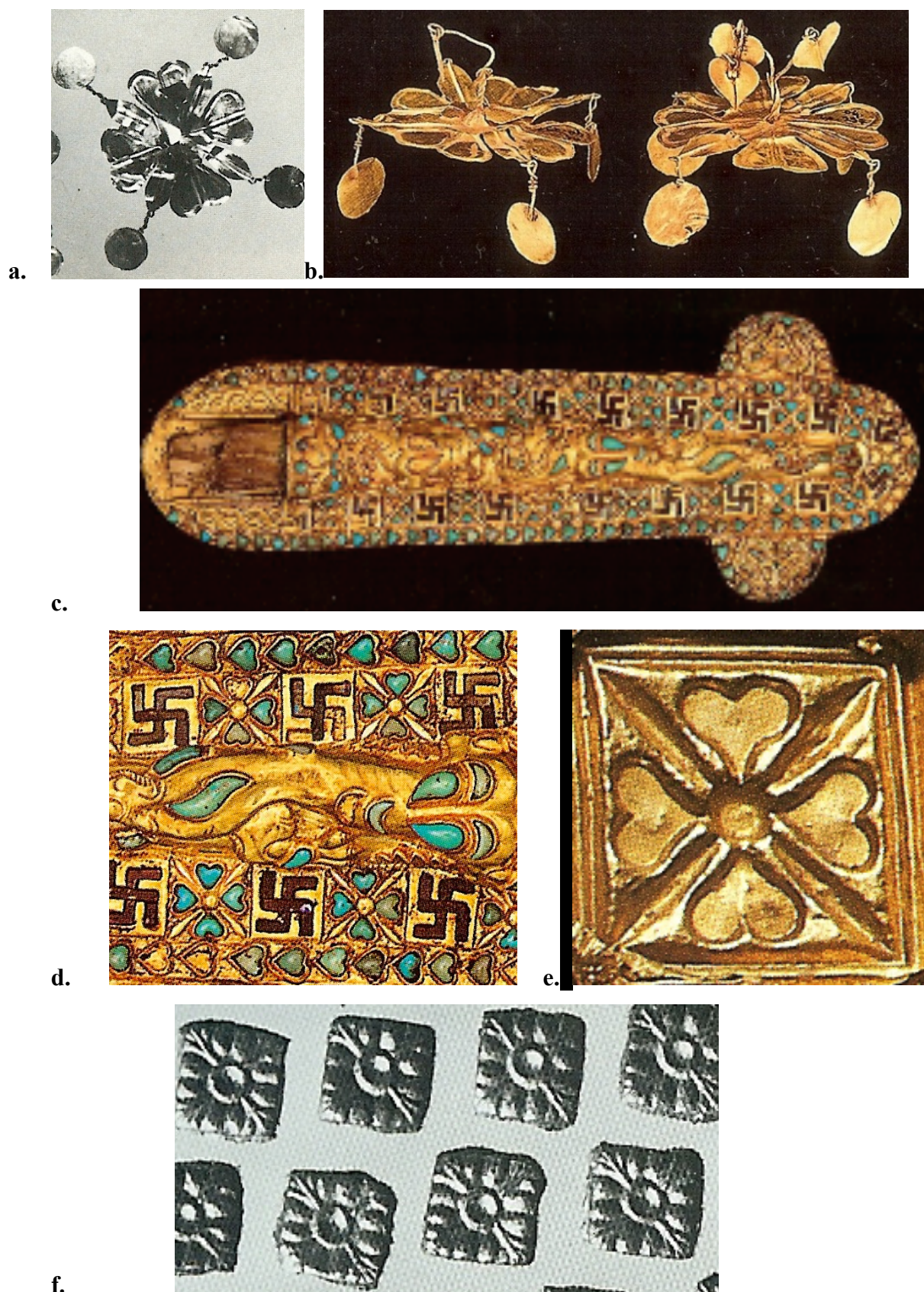
a *Hedera Helix*, common ivy, <http://www.kew.org/science-conservation/plants-fungi/hedera-helix-common-ivy>.

b Hairpin, grave I, Tillya-tepe, second half of the 1st century CE, gold, diam. flower 6.5cm, NMA. SCHILTZ 2008, cat 38, p.234.

c Pair of hairpins, grave I, Tillya-tepe, second half of the 1st century CE, gold, diam. 4cm, NMA. SCHILTZ 2008, cat.41, p.235.

5.2 Case Study I: Flowers comprising four petals and sepals

Fig. 1 – 1 Four cordiform-petalled flowers with sepals at Tillya-tepe



a Pair of hairpins, grave I, Tillya-tepe, second half of the 1st century CE, gold, diam. 4cm. NMA. SARIANIDI 1985, cat.1.6, p.227.

b 1a from the correct angle, SCHILTZ 2008, cat.41 p.235.

c Bi-lobed knife case, grave IV, Tillya-tepe, second half of the 1st century CE, gold, turquoise, length 26cm, SCHILTZ 2008, cat.115, p.273.

d Detail of **1c**.

e Appliqués, grave IV, Tillya-tepe, second half of the 1st century CE, gold, ht. 1.4cm. NMA. SARIANIDI 1985, pl.6, cat.4.13, p.248.

f Appliqués, grave IV, Tillya-tepe, second half of the 1st century CE, gold, 1cm x 1cm. SARIANIDI 1985, cat.4.14, p.248.

Fig. 1 – 2 Four-sepalled flowers



a Tormentil flower, *Potentilla erecta*, drawing by Carl Axel Magnus Lindman (1856-1928). <http://www.pfaf.org/user/Plant.aspx?LatinName=Potentilla+erecta> (accessed July 2015).

b Mustard flower, *Sinapis alba*. <http://www.gbif.org/species/3047584> (accessed July 2015).

Fig. 1 – 3 Roman imagery

a Pavement mosaic (detail), Porto Fluviale, Pietra Papa, Rome, *ca.* 125 CE, total size 296 x 246cm. PMAT, inv.124526. Author's photograph.

b Mosaic pavement (detail) of showing a Poet, Thuburbo Majus, Tunisia, 3rd century CE. Bardo Museum, Tunisia. KHADER 2003, cat.211, pp.528-52.

c Wall-painting of a Roman garden (detail), House of the Golden Bracelet, Pompeii, 1st century CE. JASHEMSKI and MEYER 2002, fig.147, p.159.

d Detail of the wild rose in **3c**.

e House of the Calavii, detail of Venus and Erotes scattering flowers, fresco, Pompeii, 1st century CE. JASHEMSKI 2012, fig.104, p.123.

Fig. 1 – 4 Wild roses

a *Rosa canina*. <http://www.gbif.org/species/8395064> (accessed July 2015).

b *Rosa rubiginosa*. <http://www.gbif.org/species/8174785> (accessed July 2015).

Fig. 1 – 5 Sepalled roses

a *Opus sectile* panel (detail), granite, marble and porphyry, 30 x50 cm, Domus Tiberiana, Palatine Hill, Rome, ca.54-68 CE. Author's photograph.

b Coptic textile (fragment), ca.5th century CE, wool. HMSP. Image courtesy of Michael Fuller <http://users.stlcc.edu/mfuller/HermitageCopticTextile.html> (accessed July 2015).

Fig. 1 – 6 Early conventions for roses



a Coin, Rhoda, Girona , *ca.* 300 BCE, silver, diam. 20mm. Museu Nacional d'art de Catalunya, Barcelona.

<http://www.museunacional.cat/en/colleccio/drachma/rhode/020491-n> (accessed July 2015).

b Aphrodite at her toilet, medallion, 3rd - 2nd century BCE, silver and gilt-silver, Taranto, 9.3cm diam. BM. Image © Trustees of the British Museum.

http://www.britishmuseum.org/research/collection_online/collection_object_details/collection_image_gallery.aspx?partid=1&assetid=361931&objectid=463247 (accessed July 2015).

c Sarcophagus of Lucius Corneliu Scipio Babatus, tomb of the Scipios, Via Appia, Rome, 280 BCE. Vatican Museum, Rome.

<http://ancientrome.ru/art/artworken/img.htm?id=4602> (accessed July 2015).

d Detail of 6c.

e Sarcophagus of Seianti Hanunia Tlesnasa, Poggio Canterello, Tuscany, ca. 150-140 BCE, total length 1.83 metres. BM. Image © Trustees of the British Museum, GR 1887.4-2.1.

f Detail of 6e.

Fig. 1 – 7 ‘Hellenistic-style’ rose in Sarmatian territory



Chariot fitting, Vasjurina Gora, late 3rd – 1st century BCE, bronze, 16.9cm x 11.4cm, 19.9 x 11.2 cm. HMSP. TROFIMOVA AND KALASHNIK 2007, cat.174, p.285.

Fig. 1 – 8 Roman Floor Mosaics

a Pavement mosaic (detail), Pietra Papa, Rome *ca.* 125 CE. PMAT, inv.124526.

Author's photograph.

b Entirety of pavement shown in **8a**.

c Mosaic (detail), Via Imperiale, Rome, 2nd century CE. PMAT. Author's photograph.

Fig. 1 – 9 Jewellery from the north Pontic area

a Dress-pin in with mosaic cloisonné, grave I, Artyukhov, 1st century BCE – 1st century CE, gold, emerald, garnet, glass. HMSP. DESPINI 2006, fig. 177.

b Detail of **9a**.

c Ring bezel with mosaic cloisonné, Grave I, Artyukhov, 1st century BCE – 1st century CE, gold, bezel 1.5cm. HMSP. DESPINI 2006, p.207.

d Round medallion with mosaic cloisonné, grave I, Kosika, 1st century BCE – 1st century CE, gold, glass, diam. 1.1cm. Astrakhan Museum. BONORA 2005, cat.98, p.142.

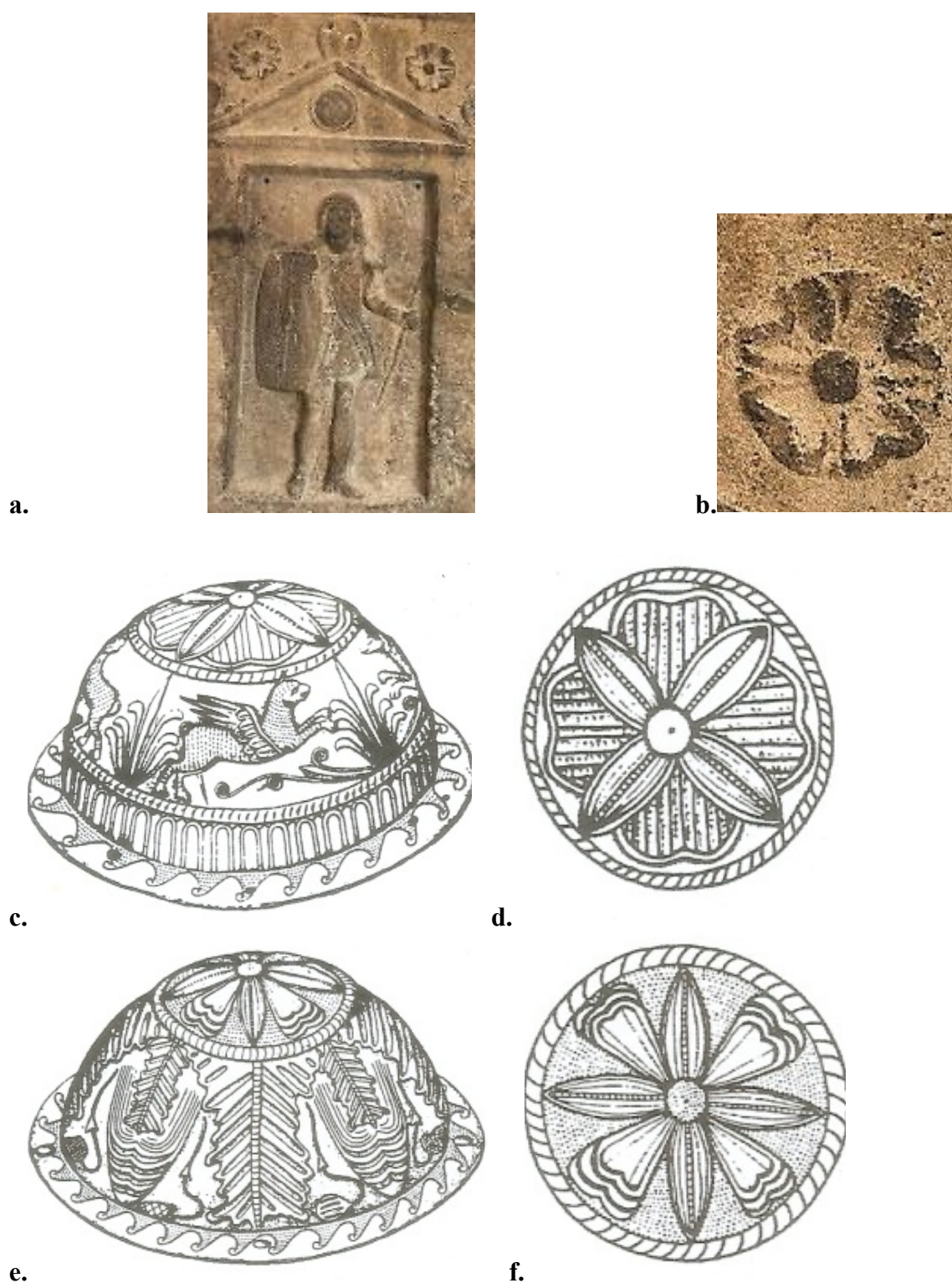
e Rhomboid medallion with mosaic cloisonné, grave I, Kosika, 1st century BCE – 1st century CE, gold, glass, length 1.6cm. Astrakhan Museum. BONORA 2005, cat.99, p.143.

Fig. 1 – 10 Wall-paintings in Kerch tombs



a Copy of a wall-painting, Soldiers in Landscape, '1872 crypt', Kerch, *ca.* 1st – early 2nd century CE. ROSTOVTZEFF 1913, pl.LXXXI.

b Copy of a wall-painting, Lion and Eros, '1872 crypt', Kerch, *ca.* 1st – early 2nd century CE. ROSTOVTZEFF 1913, pl.LXXVI.

Fig. 1 – 11 Kerch stela and Thracian Phalerae

a Gravestone of Staphilos, son of Glaukias, ht. 119cm, 1st – 2nd cent CE, limestone, 119cm. Kerch Museum. TOLSTIKOV 2013, cat.I.10, p.224.

b Detail of 11a

c Phalerae or bowl, Tvardica, 1st century BCE – 1st century CE, silver diam. 15.9cm, ht. 8.3cm. MORDVINCEVA 2001, pl. 43, p.80.

d Overview of 11c.

e Phalerae or bowl, Tvardica, 1st century BCE – 1st century CE, silver.
MORDVINCEVA 2001, pl. 43, p.80.

f Overview of 11e.

Fig. 1 – 12 Roses at Ephesus



a.



b.

a Octagon monument, Ephesus, 1st century BCE, marble. Kunsthistorisches Museum, Wien. OBERLEITNER 1978, p.97.

b Detail of the tomb relief on the Octagon monument. Author's photograph.



c.

a Façade of tomb (detail), Maqāti‘ Ābūd, 1st century CE. AVI YONAH 1981, fig. 25, p.70.

b Gemini panel, Khirbet edh-Dharih, limestone, ht. 94.9cm, late 1st or early 2nd century CE. VILLENEUVE and AL-MUHEISEN 2003, pl.78, p.95.

c Statuette of soldier, Roman imperial era, bronze, ht. 24 cm. Louvre Museum. HANSEN *et al.* 2010, cat.10, p.245.

Fig. 1 – 14 Roses at Palmyra

a Wall-painting from the Tomb of the Three Brothers, Palmyra, *ca.* 160 CE.
<http://users.stlcc.edu/mfuller/palmyratombs.html/> (accessed August 2015).

b Detail of **14a** showing rose with thorny stems.

c *Rosa rubiginosa*, http://www.pfaf.org/user/plant.aspx?LatinName=Rosa+rubiginosa_
 (accessed July 2015).

Fig. 1 – 15 The Terentius wall-painting, Dura-Europos



a ‘Julius Terentius offering incense to the gods’, Temple of the Palmyrene Gods, Dura-Europos, *ca.* 239 CE, paint on plaster, 107cm x 165cm. YUAG. CHI *et al.* 2011, p.6.

b Detail of **15a**.

c Reconstruction drawing of a Roman soldier, based on Dura-Europos figures, JAMES 2010, pl.11.

d Battling soldier from a mosaic at Villa Romana del Casale, Piazza Armerina, Sicily, *ca.* 300 CE. Author’s photograph.

Fig. 1 – 16 More roses at Dura-Europos



a Banqueting scene, south wall of house W, Block M7, Dura-Europos, paint on plaster, 194 CE, 148.6 x 183.5 x 12.7mm. YUAG. PERKINS 1973, fig.25.

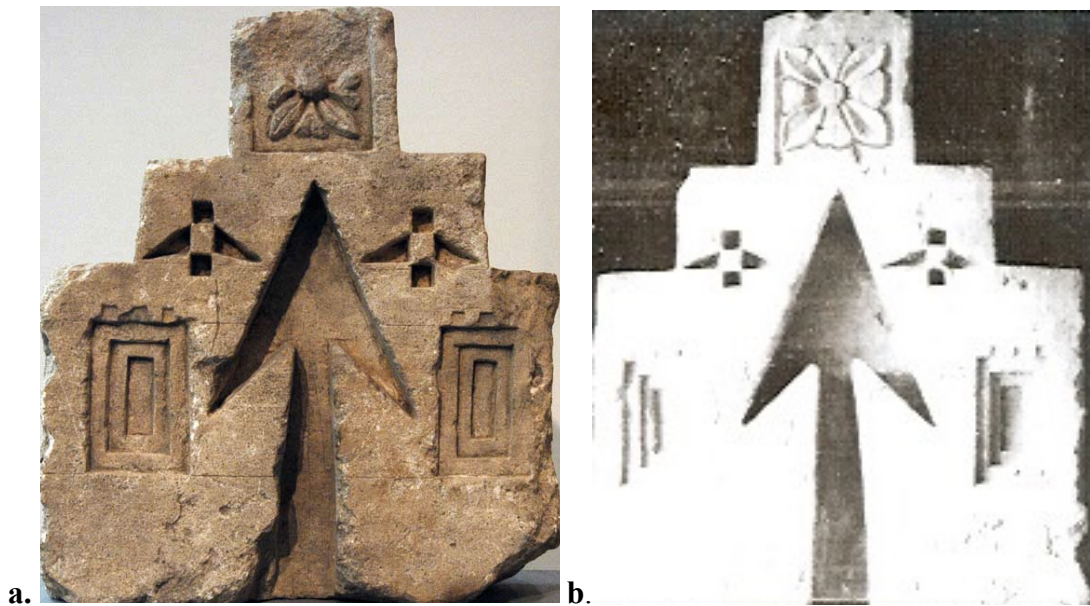
b Ceiling tile, Synagogue, Dura-Europos ca.245 CE, painted plaster, 39cm x 39cm. YUAG. CHI *et al.* 2011, pl.2-16, p.51.

c Tapestry fragment (detail), mid-3rd century CE, wool, 6.4-7.2cm x 6.3-6.6cm. Dura-Europos, PFISTER AND BELLINGER 1945, frontispiece.

Fig. 1 – 17 Tomb of a military dignitary at Durostorum



Wall-painting, tomb of a military dignitary, Silistra, 4th century CE. ATANASOV 2007, fig.5, p.463.

Fig. 1 – 18 Roses at Surkh Kotal

a Crenellation with damaged rose decoration, Surkh Kotal, *ca.* 2nd century CE (or later), limestone, ht. 39.5cm, width 35.5cm. NMA.

<https://depts.washington.edu/silkroad/museums/mg/fondukistan.html> (accessed July 2015).

b Crenellation with rose decoration, Surkh Kotal, 2nd to 3rd century CE, limestone, ht. 43cm, width 35cm. NMA. SCHLUMBERGER *et al.* 1983, pl.56-164.

Fig. 1 – 19 Textiles at Noin Ula and Shanpula



a Embroidered textile, kurgan VI, Noin Ula, *ca.* 1st century CE, wool, original full size 125cm x 170cm. HMSP, Inv. MIK176. Author's photograph.

b Detail of 19a.

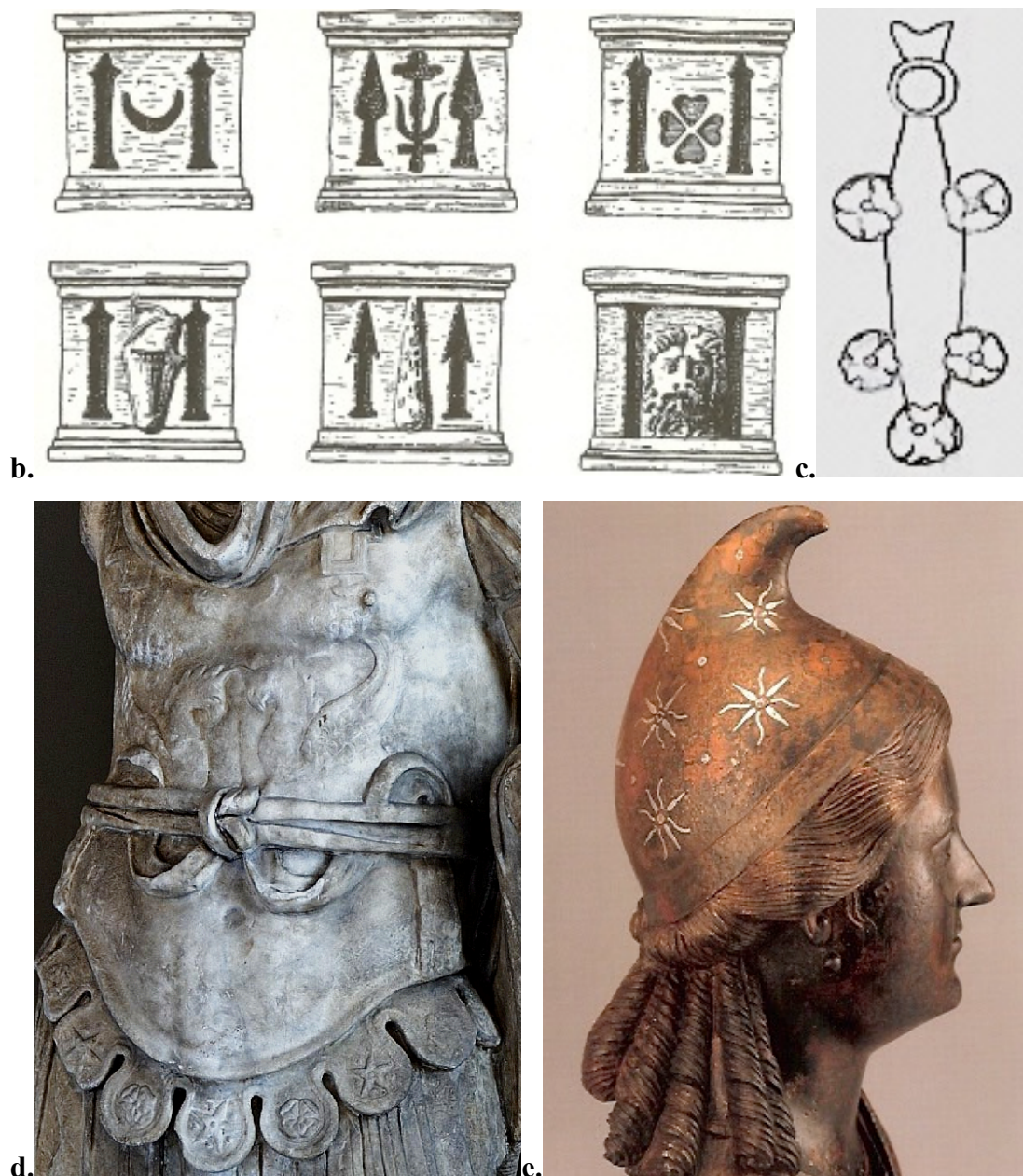
c Upper section of woven textile fragment, tomb *ca.* 1st century CE, wool. Shanpula. Xinjiang Autonomous Region Museum. <http://www.penn.museum/silkroad/gallery.php> (accessed July 2015).

d Lower section of textile in 19c, showing the soldier.

e Fragment of a wall-painting, Khalchayan, 1st century CE. PUGAČENKOVA 1966, fig.85, p.146.

Fig. 1 – 20 Non-sepalled roses





a Cameo gem, Ptolemy II Philadelphos and Arsinoe II, *ca.*278-269 BCE, sardonyx, 11.5cm x 10.2cm. Antikensammlung, Kunsthistorisches Museum, Vienna. PICÓN AND HEMINGWAY 2016, cat.129, pp.208-209.

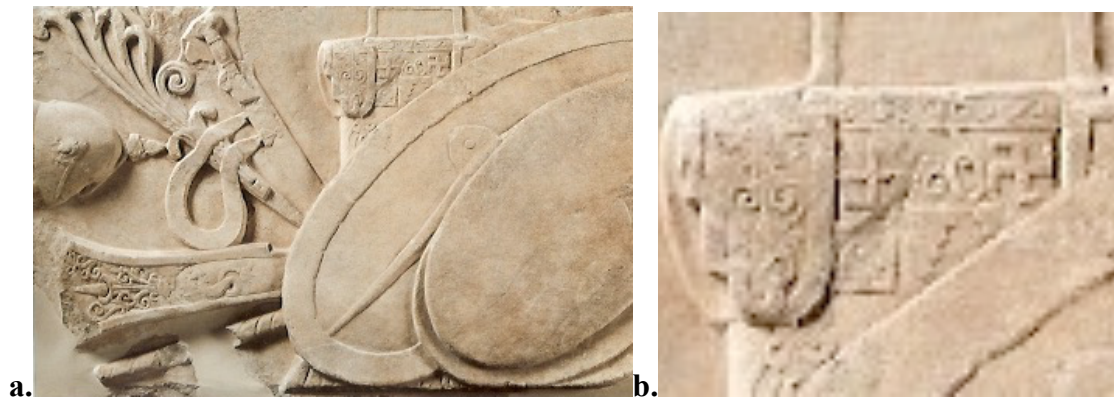
b Metopes, Square Hall, Old Nisa, Turkmenistan, 2nd century BCE, terracotta. COLLEDGE 1977, p.97.

c Detail of Antiochos I's quadrilobe dagger scabbard, Nemrud Dağı, mid-1st century BCE. Author's sketch from SANDERS 1996, Vol.II, fig.347.

d Detail of headless statue of Nero, 1st century CE, marble, ht. approximately 1 metre. Archaeological Museum, Istanbul, Turkey, inv. 506T. Author's photograph.

e Bronze bust of woman, Shirokaya Balka, *ca.*30 CE, copper and silver inlays, bust height 25.8cm. HMSP. TROFIMOVA AND KALASHNIK 2007, Fig. 85b, p.186.

Fig. 1 – 21 Military Swastika

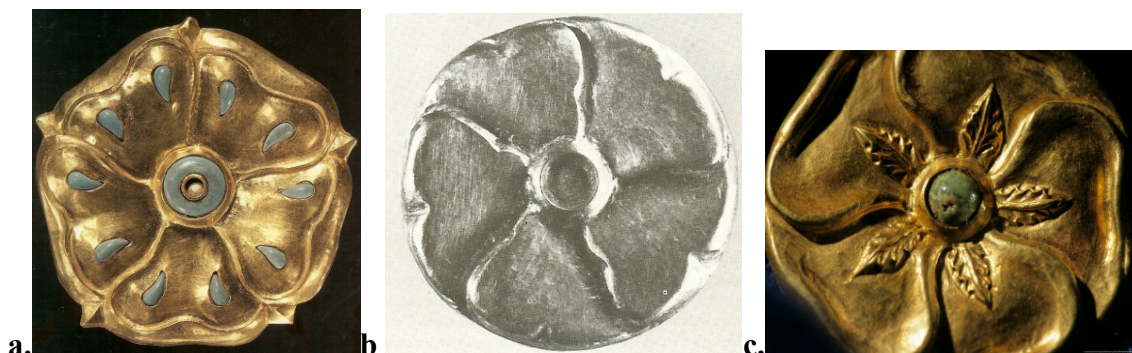


a Left slab of balustrade relief with military spoils, Pergamon, *ca.*180 BCE, marble, 142 x 65 cm. Antikensammlung, Staatliche Museen zu Berlin. PICÓN AND HEMINGWAY 2016, cat.109b, p.189.

b Detail of **21b** showing armour breastplate.

5.3 Case Study II: Flowers comprising five heart-shaped petals

Fig. 2 – 1 Tillya-tepe flowers with five meander-edged petals

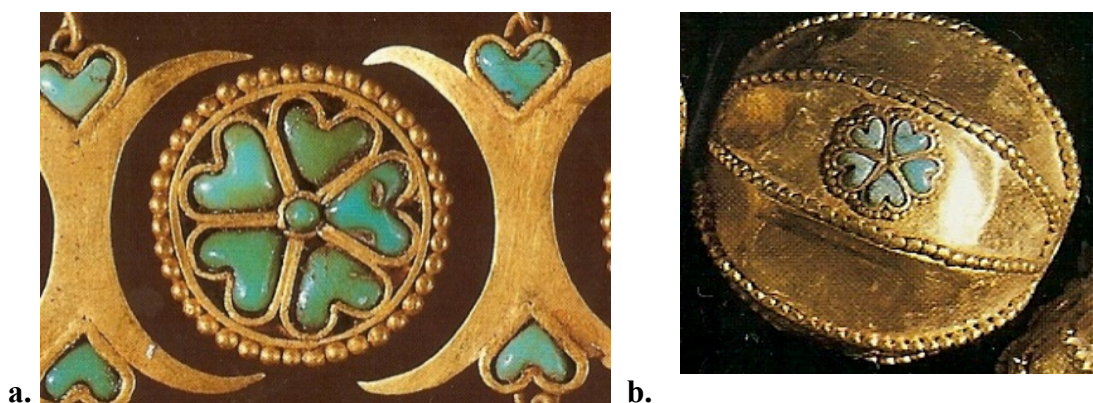


a Brooch, grave I, Tillya-tepe, second half of the 1st century CE, gold, turquoise, diam. 5cm. NMA. SARIANIDI 1985, pl.43.

b Brooch, grave II, Tillya-tepe, second half of the 1st century CE, gold, diam. 3.1cm, NMA. SARIANIDI 1985, cat.2.32, p.235.

c Brooch, grave VI, Tillya-tepe, second half of the 1st century CE, gold, turquoise, diam. 3.2cm, NMA. Image courtesy of Alamy stock photography.

Fig. 2 – 2 Tillya-tepe flowers with five cordiform-petalled flowers



a. Composite appliqués (detail), grave II, Tillya-tepe, second half of the 1st century CE, gold, turquoise, diam.1.5cm, NMA. SARIANIDI 1985, pl.60.

b. Seed-shaped bead, grave VI, Tillya-tepe, with one of 48 five-petalled flowers, second half of the 1st century CE, gold, turquoise, 2.5 x 2.7cm, NMA. SARIANIDI 1985, pl.67.

Fig. 2 – 3 Five-petalled flowers from Tillya-tepe



a Composite-flower ornaments, grave III, Tillya-tepe, second half of the 1st century CE, gold, diam. 7.5cm, NMA. SARIANIDI 1985, pl.19.

b One of two appliqués, second half of the 1st century CE, gold, petal diam. 4.4cm, NMA. SARIANIDI cat.3.33, p.240.

c Gold flower, one of a pair, grave VI, Tillya-tepe, second half of the 1st century CE, gold, diam. of petals, 3.0cm, NMA. Schiltz 2008, cat.144, p.291.

Fig. 2 – 4 Seed Necklace from Tillya-tepe



a.



b.



c.

a Necklace, grave VI, Tillya-tepe, second half of the 1st century CE, gold, turquoise, bead 2.8 x 2.5 cm, NMA. SARIANIDI 1985, pls. 66, 67.

b and c Details of a single seed-shaped bead, **4a**.

Fig. 2 – 5 Poppy capsules in art and nature: the adaptation of the seed's shape from its natural form



a.



b.



c.



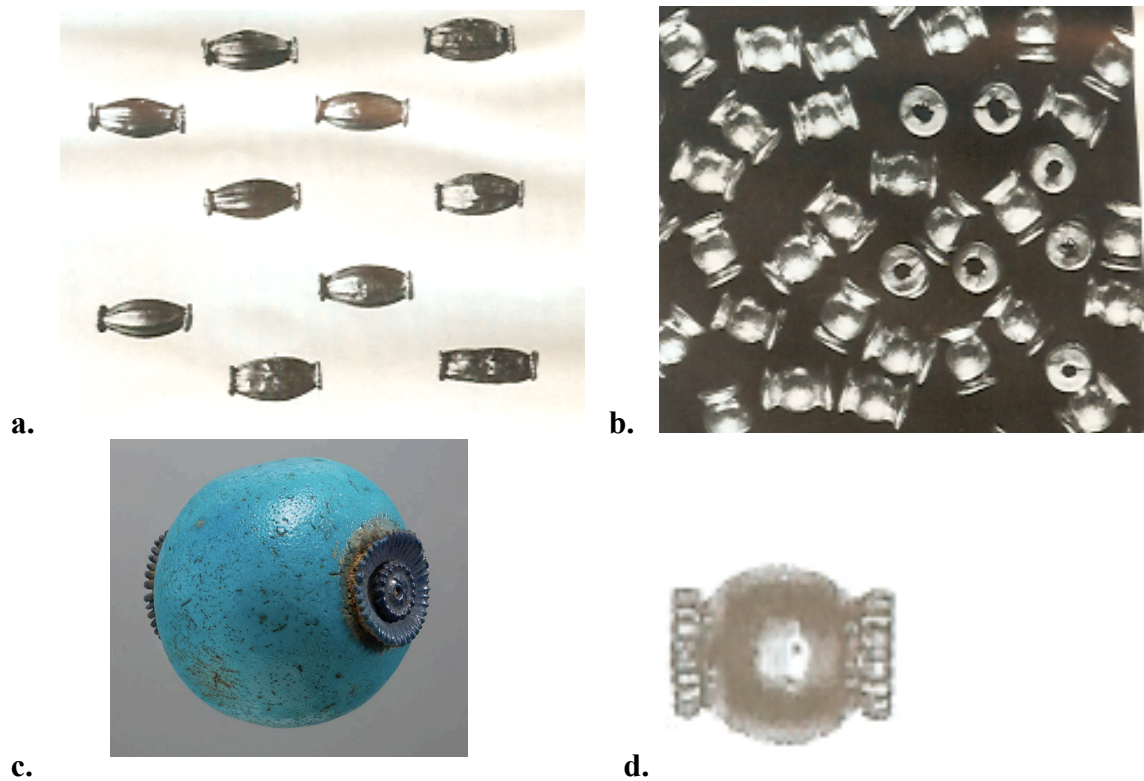
d.

a Mature, dried-out poppy seedheads from nature, F.E. Köhler *Medizinal Pflanzen*, Gera 1887: <http://mv.picse.net/alkoloids/poppies/the-opium-poppy/> (accessed July 2015).

b Pinhead, Lydia, *ca.* late 7th to early 6th centuries BCE, silver, 7.1cm long, diam. head 1.1cm, Ephesus Museum. OZGEN 2010, cat.143.

c Bead, Sardis, *ca.* 575-540 BCE, gold, length 0.95cm. Archaeological and Ethnographical Museum, Sardis. OZGEN 2010, cat.153.

d Pendant, Cyprus, *ca.* 450 BCE, gold, height 2.9cm, MMA. WILLIAMS and OGDEN, 1994, cat.183, p.247.

Fig. 2 – 6 Double-ended poppy capsules

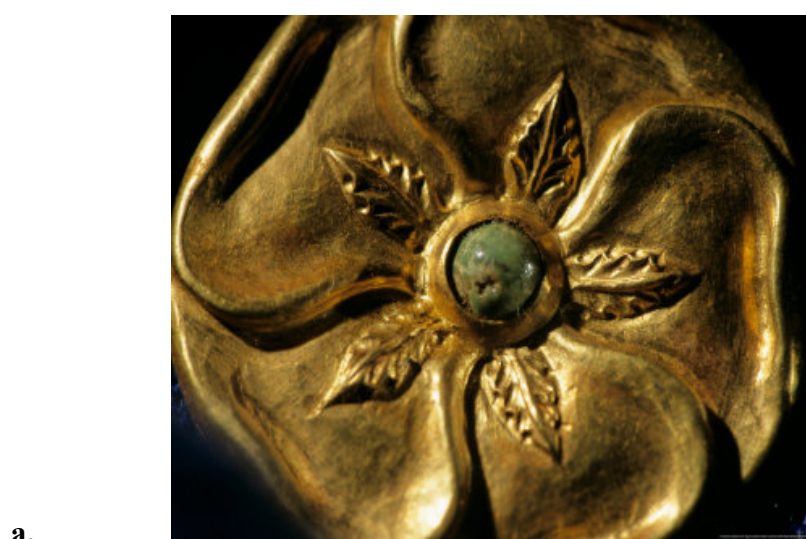
a Ten beads, grave II, Tillya-tepe, 2nd half of the 1st century CE, gold, length 1.3cm. NMA. SARIANIDI 1985, cat.2.28, p.234.

b Sixty-six beads, grave I, Tillya-tepe, 2nd half of the 1st century CE, gold, length 0.8cm, NMA. SARIANIDI 1985, cat.1.18, p.228.

c Double-ended poppy, Egypt, 16th – 11th century BCE, faience, length 4.8cm. Louvre Museum. http://cartelfr.louvre.fr/cartelfr/visite?srv=car_not&idNotice=3799 (accessed July 2015).

d Bead, votive offering, the Artemision, Ephesus, 6th century BCE, gold, length 0.6m, diam. 0.5m. Ephesus Museum. PULZ 2009, col.pl.12. no.183; p.256.

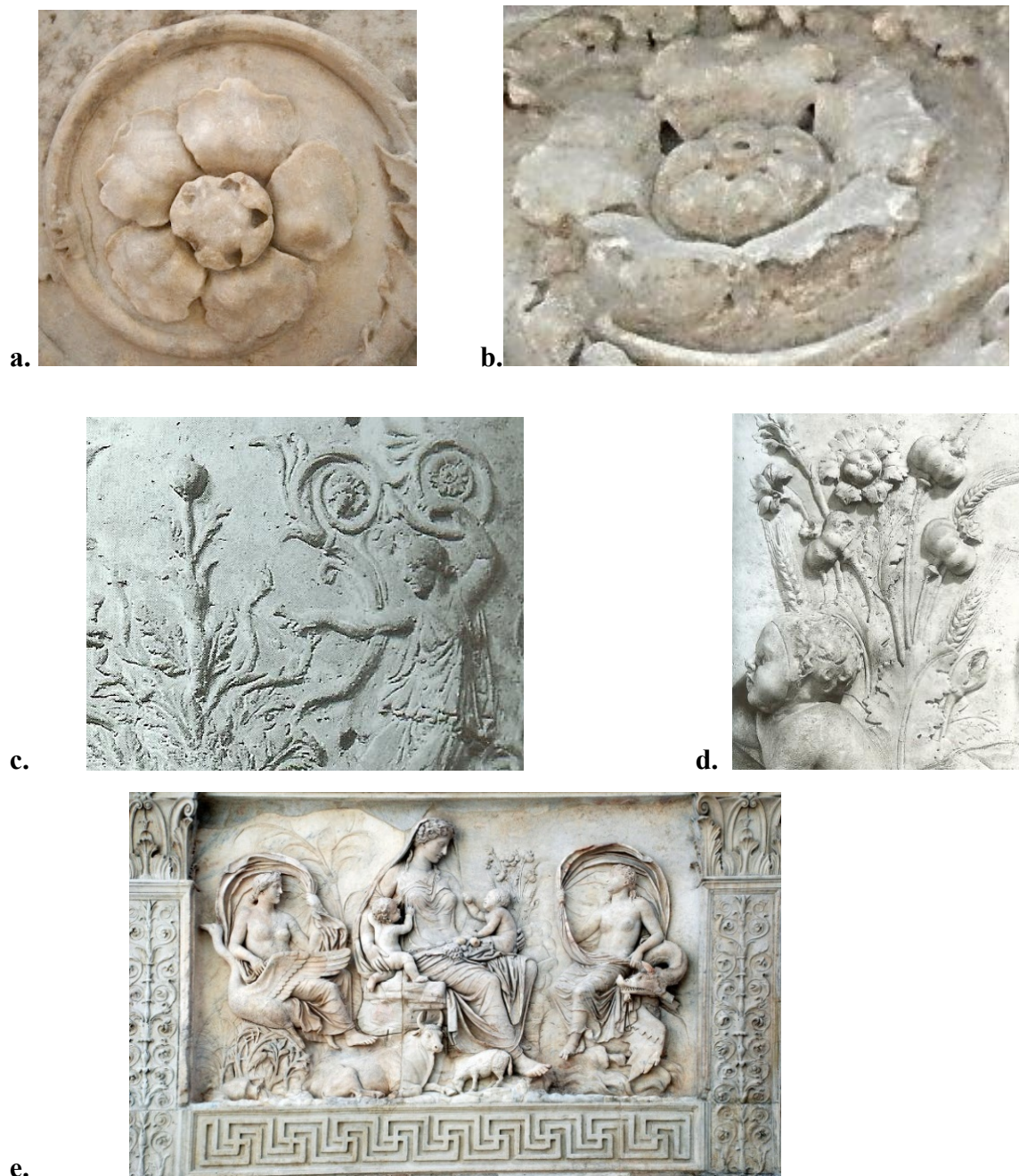
Fig. 2 – 7 *Papaver somniferum* from Tillya-tepe and in nature



a Brooch, grave VI, Tillya-tepe, 2nd half of the 1st century CE, gold, turquoise, diam. 3.2cm. NMA. Image courtesy of Alamy stock photography.

b Botanical illustration of *Papaver somniferum*, ca.1885, Prof. Dr. Otto Wilhelm Thomé, Gera: <http://www.fs.fed.us/wildflowers/ethnobotany/medicinal/index.shtml> (accessed July 2015).

Fig. 2 – 8 Roman sculpture with poppy flowers



a Flower in lower register of frieze (detail), Ara Pacis, Rome, commissioned 13BCE, marble. Author's photograph.

b Tomb of Cartinia (detail), Falerii, 1st century CE, marble, approx 30cm. Pergamon Museum. Author's photograph.

c Plaque, Campana, Roman, 1st century CE, terracotta. CASTRIOTA 1995, pl.80.

d Tellus Relief (detail), Ara Pacis, Rome, commissioned 13BCE, marble. SAURON 2000, Fig.9, p.41.

e Tellus relief. SAURON 2000, Fig.9, p.41.

Fig. 2 – 9 Floral jewellery**a.****b.****c.**

a One of a pair of ornaments, grave III, Tillya-tepe, second half of the 1st century CE, gold, diam. 7.5cm, NMA. SARIANIDI 1985, pl.19.

b One of seven composite rosettes, Bolshaya Bliznitsa, late 4th century CE, gold, diam. 2cm. HMSP. WILLIAMS and OGDEN 1994, cat. 130, p.195.

c Fibula, kurgan 7, tomb 13, Razdol'naya, 3rd – 2nd century BCE, diam. 4cm. Krasnodar Museum. TOKYO 1991, cat.52, p.53.

Fig. 2 – 10 Multi-layered decoration on silverware

a Silver lid, *pyxis*, ca. 260 BCE, Taranto, Italy. PFROMMER 1987, pl.33-b.

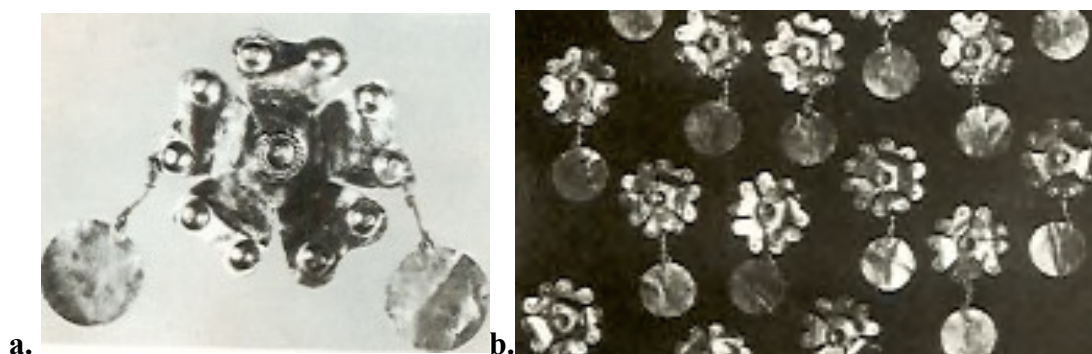
b Boss, allegedly from Nihavand, ca. 1st century BCE, part-gilded silver, ht. 2.4 cm, diam. 8.7cm, Brooklyn Museum.

<https://www.brooklynmuseum.org/opencollection/objects/96782> (accessed February 2015).

c Central medallion of a bowl, 1st century BCE, part-gilded silver, entire diam. 26.6cm, ht. 5 cm. BM. Image © Trustees of the British Museum, Inv. no.134303.

d Silver phalera, grave I, Vasjurina Gora, late 3rd – 1st century BCE. TREISTER 2009, fig.9.2, p.98.

Fig. 2 – 11 Objects from Grave VI, Tillya-tepe



a.

b.



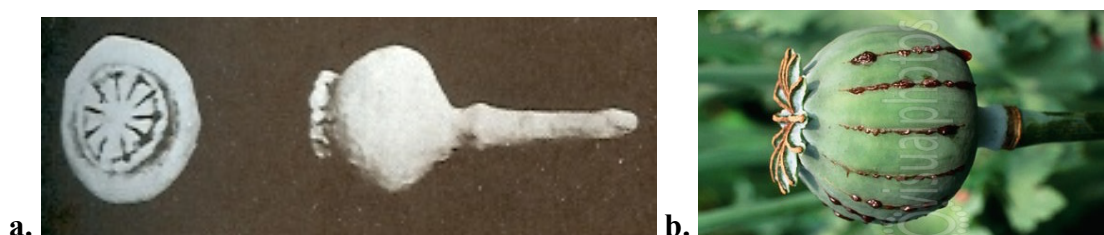
c.

a Appliqué, grave III, Tillya-tepe, second half of the 1st century CE, gold, diam. of petals, 4.4cm, NMA. SARIANIDI 1985, cat.3.33, p.240.

b Appliqués, grave III, Tillya-tepe, second half of the 1st century CE, gold, diam. of petals, 4.4cm, NMA. SARIANIDI 1985, cat.3.34, p.240.

c Bell-shaped censer (?), grave VI, Tillya-tepe, second half of the 1st century CE, gold, turquoise, ht. 2.9cm, NMA. Image courtesy of Alamy stock photography.

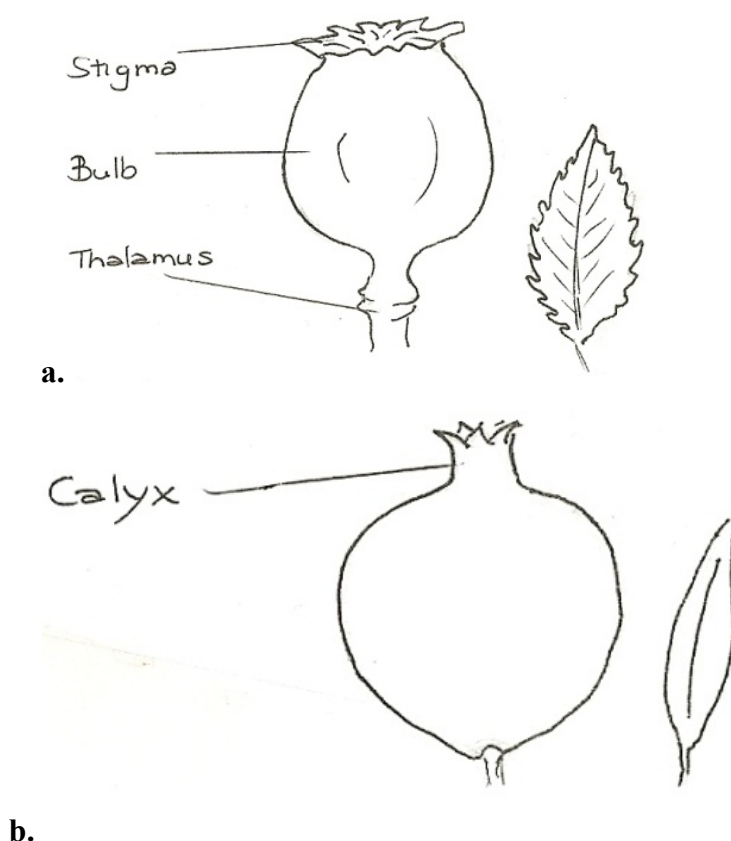
Fig. 2 – 12 The immature capsule of *Papaver somniferum*



a. Terracotta model of a ripe poppy capsule, from the Sanctuary of Hera or Demeter, Solygeia, near Corinth, 'Archaic period', length 6.5cm. WILLIAMS AND BOOKIDIS 2003.

b Unripe seed capsule of *Papaver somniferum*, pierced for opium extraction. Photograph courtesy of Dr Jeremy Burgess, Science Photo library.

Fig. 2 – 13 Parts of *Papaver somniferum* and *Punica granatum*



a *Papaver somniferum*, opium poppy, ripe capsule and leaf, diam. 2.5cm approx. Author's sketch.

b *Punica granatum*, pomegranate, fruit and leaf, diam 7cm approx. Author's sketch.

Fig. 2 – 14 Hellenistic and post-Hellenistic five-petalled flowers



a Heads, Taranto, *ca.* 400-350 BCE, terracotta, height 8cm, Louvre Museum.

Author's photograph.

b Earrings, *ca.* 4th century BCE, gold, glass paste. BM. MARSHALL 1911, pl.XXXI-1682

c Earrings, Taranto, late 2nd century BCE, gold, glass paste. DE JULIIS 1984, pl.11, p.47.

d Bronze statuette of Aphrodite (Venus), Tartus, Syria, 1st century CE, 6cm, Louvre Museum. Author's photograph.

Fig. 2 – 15 ‘Bactrian’ bowl from the Miho collection



a.



b.

a Profile of a bowl, parcel-gilt silver with garnet or glass inlays, 2nd half of the 1st century BCE, diam. 10cm. Miho Museum. MIHO MUSEUM 2002, pl.32, p.47, pl.31.

b Underside of bowl, detail of 15a.

Fig. 2 – 16 Jewellery from the Saka-Parthian layers at Sirkap-Taxila

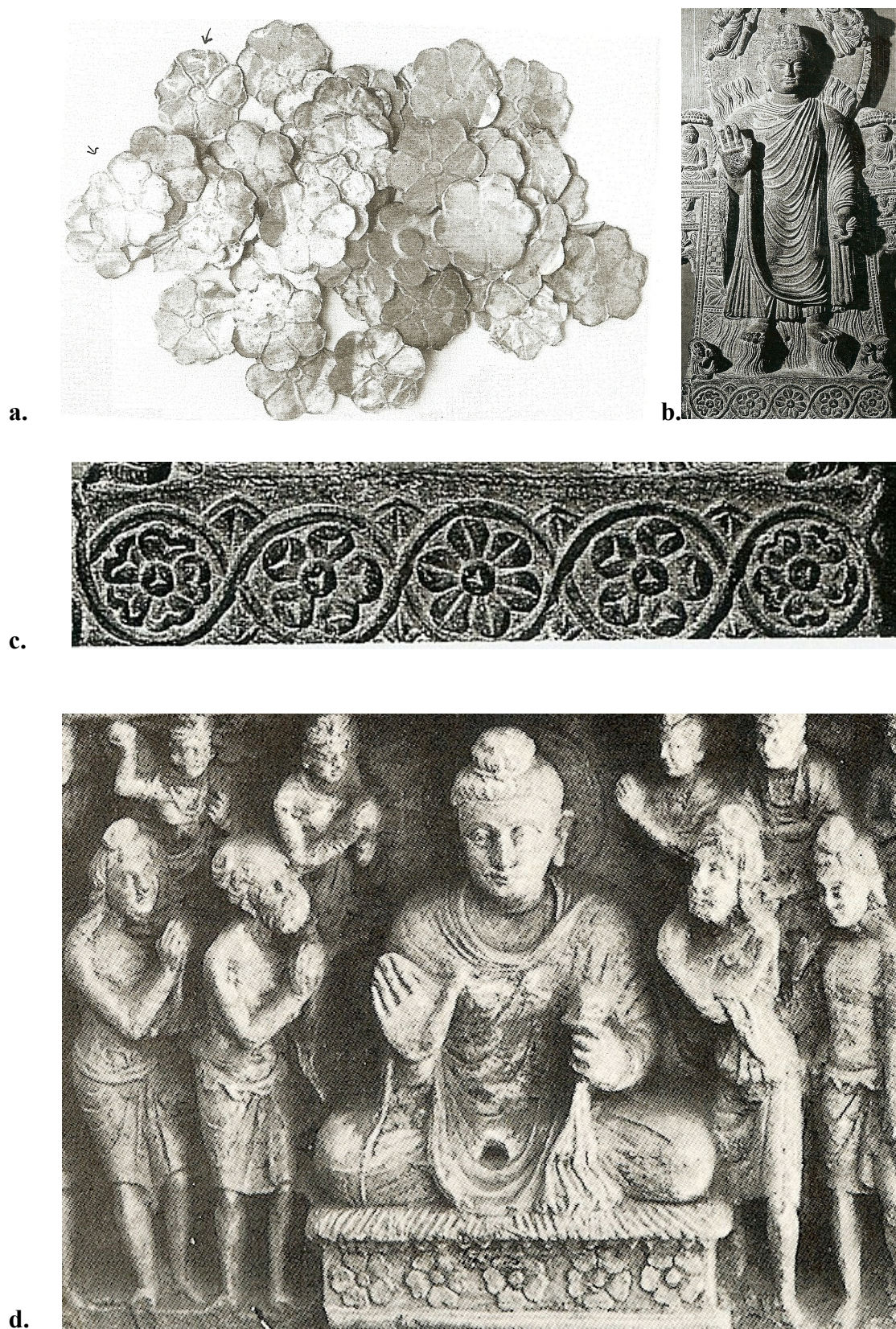
a Pendant, Saka-Parthian levels, Block D, Sirkap-Taxila, 1st century CE, gold, blue glass, ht. 9.5cm, width 5.3cm. National Museum of Pakistan. ROSEN STONE 2008, pp.80-81; cat.32, p.99.

b Detail of 16a.

c Gold brooch, Saka-Parthian levels, Block D, Sirkap-Taxila, 1st century CE, diam. 3cm. National Museum of Pakistan. ROSEN STONE 2008, cat.30, p.99.

d Clasp on a pair of earrings, Saka-Parthian levels, Block D, Sirkap-Taxila, 1st century CE, gold, length 12cm. Taxila Museum, Pakistan. ROSEN STONE 2008, cat.267, p.345.

Fig. 2 – 17 Five-petalled flowers from Buddhist contexts





e.



f.



g.

a Five-petal rosettes from a stupa reliquary, possibly Eastern Afghanistan, *ca.*15–30/40 CE, gold, 1.5-1.6cm. SALOMON 2005, p.392, fig.14.

b Buddha Śakyamuni's throne on a stela depicting 'The Great Miracle at Shravasti', Shotorak, *ca.*3rd century CE, schist. Musée Guimet. ROSENFELD 1967, fig.106.

c Detail of the base of **17b**.

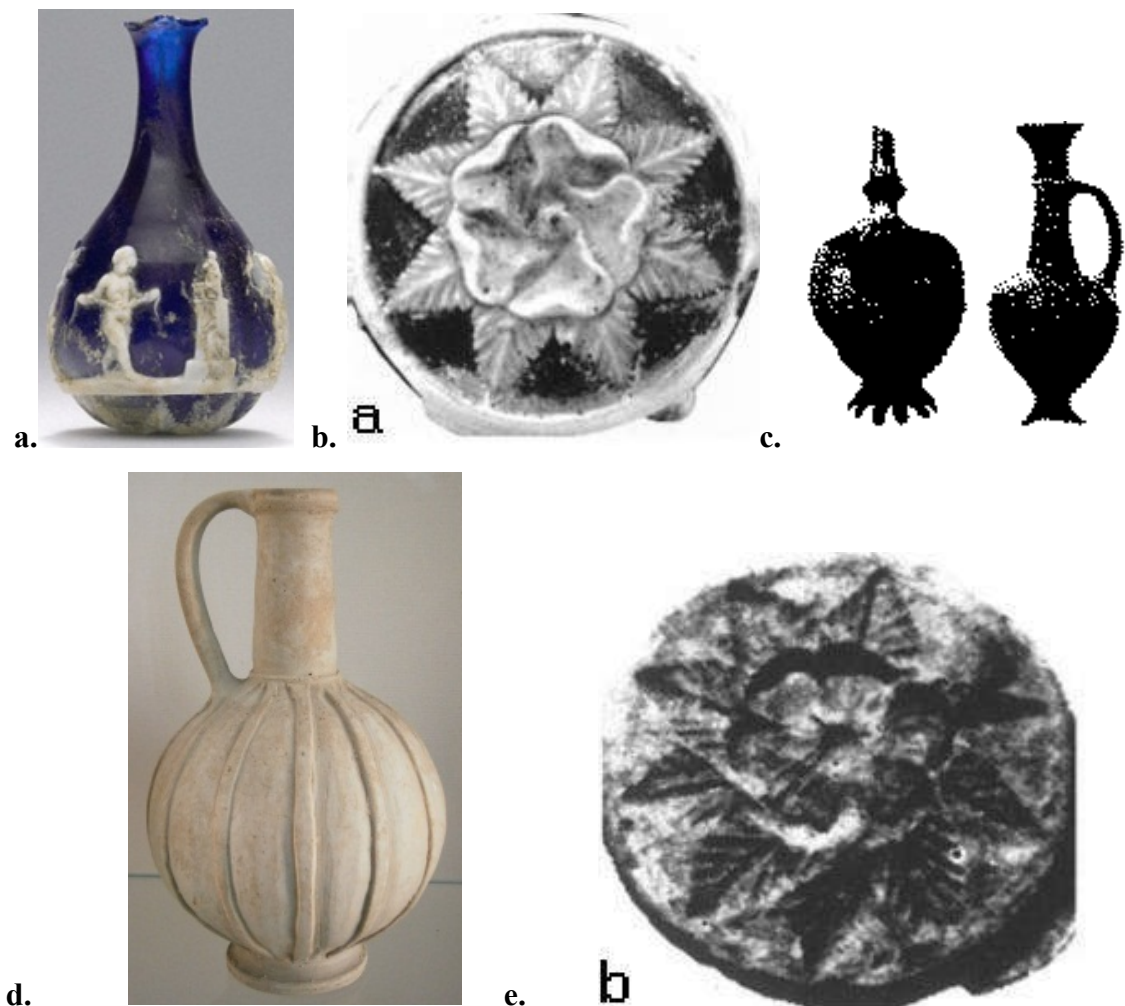
d Stela of 'Buddha flanked by Kaśyapas and donors' Buddha Śakyamuni's throne (detail), Shotorak, *ca.*2nd century CE, schist. NMA. ROSENFELD 1967, fig.98.

e Reliquary, 2nd century CE, gold, garnet and glass, ht. 7.8cm. diam. 4.2cm. Al-Sabah collection, Kuwait. CARTER 2015, cat.73, pp.262-263.

f Bearer with floral garland and birds, Swat (?), 2nd – 3rd century CE, ht. 47.9cm, width 28.9cm. BOPEARACHCHI *et al.* 2003, cat.236, p.275.

g Detail of **17f**.

Fig. 2 – 18 Poppies from the Roman Empire and some precedents



a Roman glass opium(?) 'balsamarium', late 1st century BCE to 1st quarter 1st century CE, 7.6 x 4.1 cm. Getty Museum.

<http://www.getty.edu/art/gettyguide/artObjectDetails?artobj=12918> (accessed March 2015)

b Detail of base of **18a**

c Poppy capsule vases, Cyprus, *ca.* 15th century BCE, ceramic, 6cm high approx. KRITIKOS and PAPADAKI 1967, 'Poppies in Cyprus'.

d Vase, Enkomi, Cyprus, *ca.* 1250-1050 BCE, ceramic, 12cm approx. Louvre Museum AM2884. Author's photograph.

e Mould with 'poppy' design, Kyme, second half of 2nd century BCE, stone, diam. 4cm. BOUZEK 1975, fig.2.14.

Fig. 2 – 19 Roman Funerary and Commemorative Architecture

a Funerary stela of Lucios Aelios Melitinos, Rome, 1st century CE, *ca.* 600 x 40cm. Capitoline Museum, Rome. Author's photograph.

b Pediment of a cinerarium, 1st century CE. CUMONT 1942, pl.XI, p.162.

c ‘Tomb of the Falerii’ (detail), Rome, 1st century CE, marble. Pergamon Museum. Author’s photograph.

d Flower in lower register of the frieze, Ara Pacis, Rome, commissioned 13BCE. Author’s photograph.

e Funerary Altar, Tomis, 2nd century CE. Archaeological Museum, Constanța. Author’s photograph.

Fig. 2 – 20 Poppies at Palmyra



a.



b.

a Pediment above entrance to the tower tomb of Iamliku, Palmyra, 83 CE, limestone. HENNING 2013, pl.45d.

b Pediment above entrance to tower tomb of Nebuzabad, Palmyra, 120 CE, limestone. DEGEORGE 2001, p.29 .

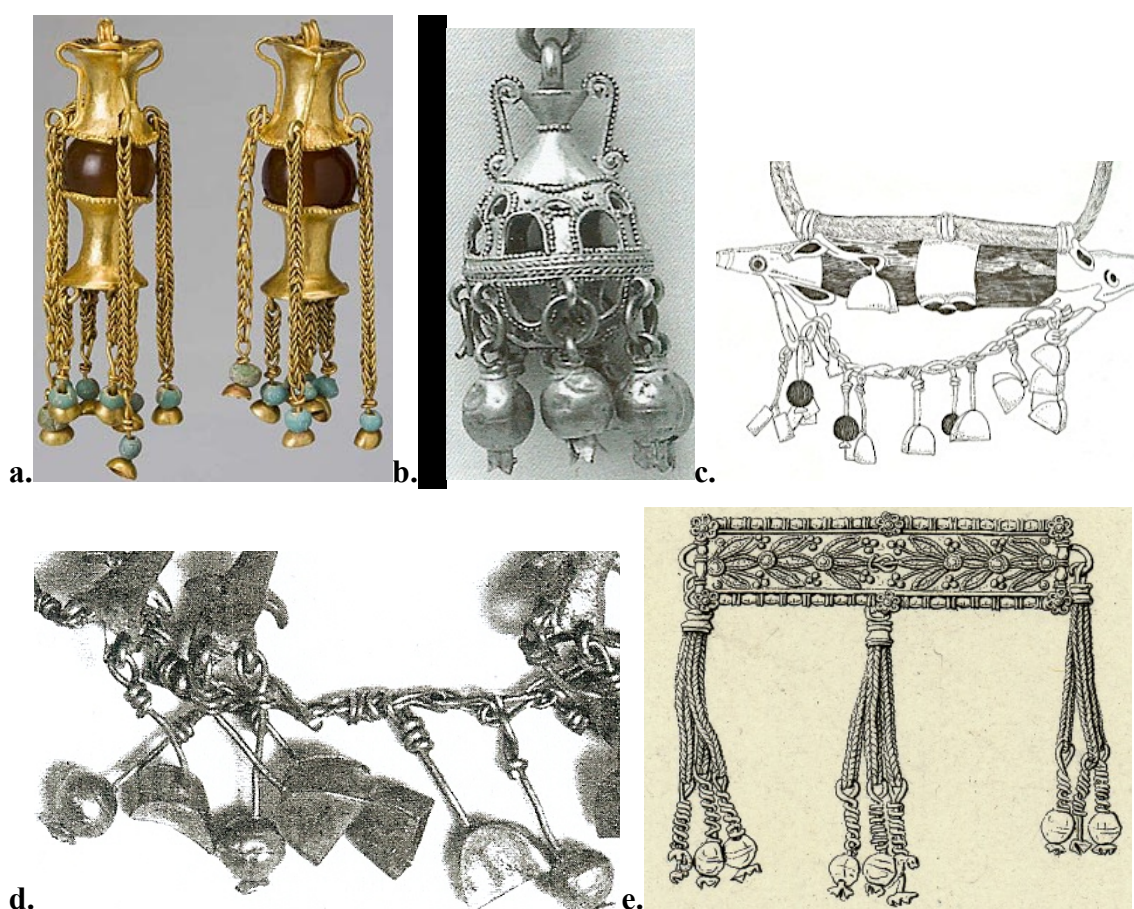
Fig. 2 – 21 Poppy capsules on early north Pontic jewellery



a Necklace, kurgan VIII, 'Five Brothers' burials, Elizavetovski, Lower Don, second half of 4th century BCE, gold, capsules 0.6cm long. CERNUSCHI 2001, cat.81, p.117.

b Detail of 21c with poppy plant.

c Crescent pectoral, Bolshaya Bliznitsa, ca.330-300 BCE, gold and enamel, diam.18.4cm. SCHILTZ 1994, pl.310, p.385.

Fig. 2 – 22 Jewellery from north Pontic or Parthian workshops

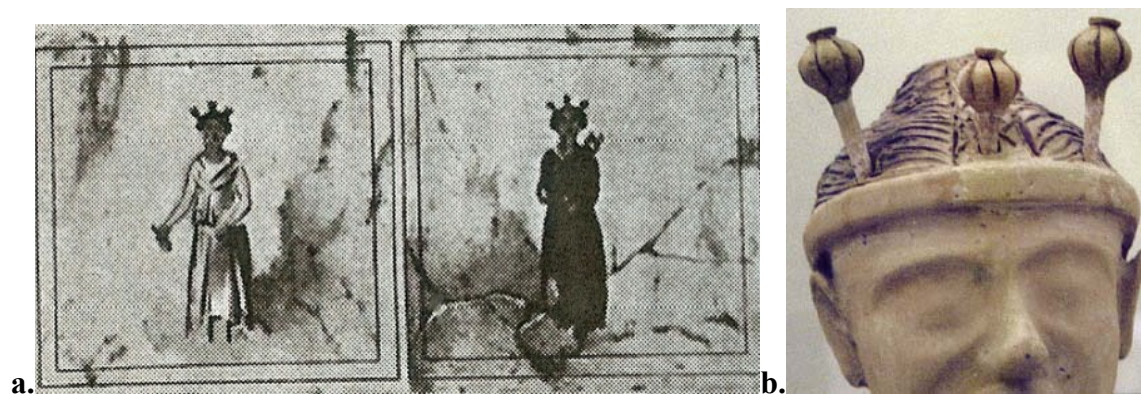
a Earring, Burial 1, kurgan 14, Sladkovski Farm, late 1st - early 2nd century CE, gold, glass, length with chains 5.15 cm. Azov Museum. SCHILTZ 1995, p.99.

b Parthian earring with pomegranate pendants, 1st to 2nd century CE, gold, ht of entire earring 5.8cm. MMA. <http://www.metmuseum.org/art/collection/search/328744> (accessed March 2015).

c Pendant, allegedly from the south-west Caspian area, 1st - 2nd century CE, gold, agate. PORADA 1967, pp.99 – 103.

d Detail of **22c** showing bells and poppies.

e Necklace, near Kerch, 3rd – 2nd century BCE or later, gold. TREISTER 2010, fig. 686, p.285.

Fig. 2 – 23 Poppy Diadems

a Wall-painting (detail), Tomb of Anthesterius, Kerch, 1st century CE. MINNS 1913, p.313.

b 'Poppy goddess' (detail), Gazi, Crete, *ca.* 1350 BCE, clay, ht. 77.5cm. Archaeological Museum, Heraklion. Photograph: University of Oklahoma, <http://www.ou.edu/finearts/art/ahi4913/aegeanhtml/minoansculpture3.html> (accessed March 2015).

Fig. 2 – 24 Poppy capsules from further east

a. Incense burner lid, 1st – 3rd century CE, terracotta, 8cm x 6.5cm. Photograph courtesy of Peter Linenthal, due for publication in LINENTHAL AND JÄGER, forthcoming 2017, cat.146.

b. Textile, Kondrat'ev kurgan, Noin Ula, 1st – 2 century CE, wool, plant ht. around 12cm, RUDENKO 1969, pl.LXIX.

Fig. 2 – 25 Poppy capsules from 7th century BCE women's graves



a.



b.

a Poppy capsule pendants, Southern Italy, 7th century BCE, iron, length 5cm approx. Louvre Museum Inv. BR4652–4655. Author's photograph.

b Pierce opium capsules from a female burial, Axioupolis, Macedonia, 2nd half of 7th century BCE, bronze, lengths 3.75-5.36 cm. Louvre Museum Inv. BR4573. Author's photograph.

5.4 Case Study III: The six-petalled flower

Fig. 3 – 1 Six-petalled flowers from graves I and II, Tillya-tepe



a Hairpin, grave I, Tillya-tepe, second half of the 1st century CE, gold, diam.flower 6.5cm. NMA. SCHILTZ 2008, cat 38, p.234.

b Appliqués, grave I, Tillya-tepe, second half of the 1st century CE, gold, diam. 3.5cm, NMA. SARIANIDI 1985, cat.1.5, p.226.

c Roundel, grave II, Tillya-tepe, second half of the 1st century CE, gold, turquoise, diams. 2 cm, 1.4cm. NMA. SARIANIDI 1985, pl.11.

d Hairpin, grave II, Tillya-tepe, second half of the 1st century CE, gold, turquoise and pearls, diam of roundels, 1.5cm, 2.7cm. NMA. SCHILTZ 2008, cat.76, p.253.

Fig. 3 – 2 Six-petalled flowers from graves III, IV and VI, Tillya-tepe



a Flower, grave III, Tillya-tepe, second half of the 1st century CE, gold, diam. 5cm.

NMA. SARIANIDI 1985, cat.3.44, p.241.

b Crown of headdress (detail), grave IV, Tillya-tepe, second half of the 1st century CE, gold, ht. 9cm. NMA. SARIANIDI 1985, pl.121.

c Folding crown (detail), grave VI, Tillya-tepe, second half of the 1st century CE, gold, turquoise, flower fillet length 45cm, ht. of tree 13 cm. NMA. SARIANIDI 1985, pl.12.

d Hairpin (one of a pair), grave VI, Tillya-tepe, second half of the 1st century CE, gold, diam. flower 7.0cm. NMA. SCHILTZ 2008, cat.142, p.291.

Fig. 3 – 3 *Lilium* genus in nature and art



a *Lilium candidum*, BAUMANN 1993, pl.342, p.171.

b White lilies in a garden, Villa at Amnisos, Crete, *ca.* 1600-1580 BCE, fresco, ht. 1.8m. MARINATOS 1960, pl.XXII, p.55.

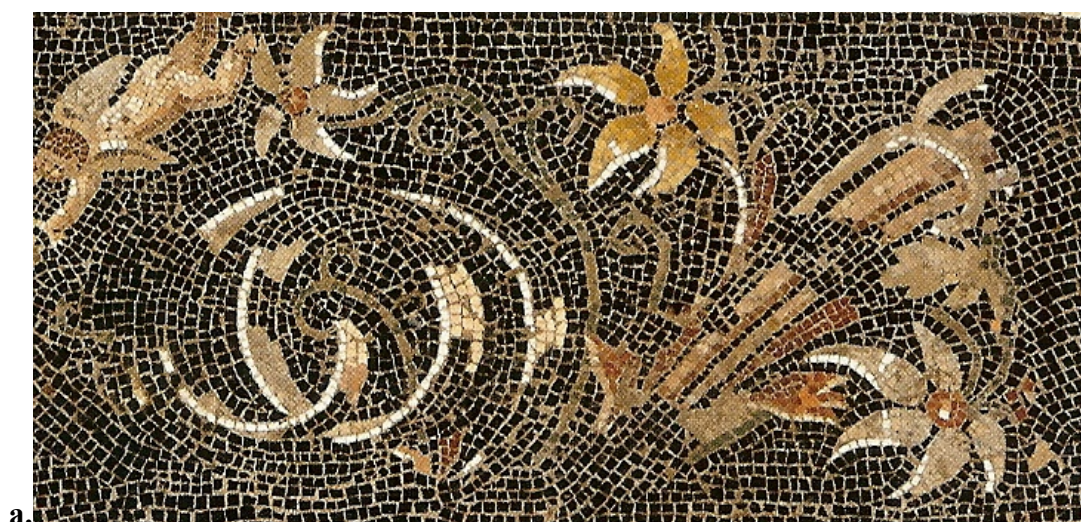
c Pebble mosaic border, Pella, Greece, *ca.* 310 BCE, 3.10 x 3.10m. ANDREAE 2003, pl.23, p.23.

d Mosaic border (detail), Palace V, Pergamon, *ca.* 184 BCE. ANDREAE 2003, pls.45-3, p.45.

Fig. 3 – 4 Images of genus *Narcissus*

- a** *Narcissus poeticus*, Royal Horticultural Society,
<http://apps.rhs.org.uk/plantselector/plant?plantid=5701> (accessed January 2015).
- b** *Narcissus tazetta* (multi-bloomed), Photograph courtesy of Ken Bailey, Royal Botanical Gardens, Kew.
- c** *Narcissus pseudonarcissus*, Royal Botanical Gardens, Kew:
<http://www.kew.org/plants-fungi/Narcissus-pseudonarcissus.htm> (accessed January 2015).
- d** *Narcissus serotinus*, <http://en.botanic.co.il/articles/Show/2> (accessed January 2015).

Fig. 3 – 5 Naturalistic images of Narcissi



a.



b.



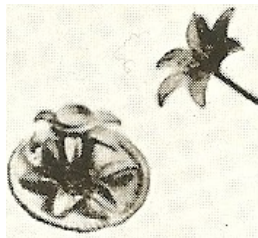
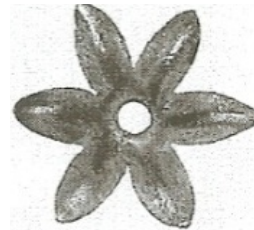
c.

a Mosaic border, Palace V, Pergamon, detail showing *Narcissi*, 184 BCE.

Antikensammlung, Staatliche Museen, Berlin. ANDREAE 2003, pl.45-1, p.45.

b Mosaic fragment, Egypt, *ca.* 1st century CE, glass, 7cm high. Christie's New York, 5th December 2012, sale 2605, part lot 218.

c As **5b**.

Fig. 3 – 6 Anatolian and Eastern Greek Jewellery**a.****b.****c.****d.****e.****f.**

a Pendants, Tralles, second half of 7th century BCE, gold. Istanbul Museum.

BOARDMAN 1994, pl.2.11, p.27.

b Detail of 6a showing flower within roundel.

c Brooch, Rhodes or Melos, ca. 630-620 BCE, gold, 4.5cm diam, Cabinet des Médailles. JACOBSTHAL 1956, plate 152a, p.216.

d Pendant, Delos, 7th century, gold 1.9 x 2.4cm cm. Staatliche Museum, Berlin. LAFFINEUR 1978, cat.2, p.192 and pl.2-2.

e Flowers, Ephesus, 2nd half of 7th century, gold, electrum. BM. JACOBSTHAL 1956, pl.152, p.216.

f Flower, Artemision, Ephesus, 7th century BCE, gold, 1.4cm diam, Ephesus Museum. PULZ 2009, cat.248.

Fig. 3 – 7 A 5th century statue from Idalion, Cyprus



a Bearded male, Sanctuary of Apollo-Reshef, Idalion, *ca.* 480-450 BCE, limestone, ht.1.04m. BM, GR1917,0701.233. Author's photograph.

b *Quercus petraea*, courtesy of www.rhs.org (accessed February 2015).

c Detail of **7a** (lower part of figure) with laurel leaves clasped in his hand.

d *Laurus nobilis*, courtesy of www.rhs.org (accessed February 2015).

Fig. 3 – 8 5th century statues from Cyprus



a.



b.

a Bearded male, *ca.* 475-450 BCE, limestone, ht.164.5 cm. Cesnola Collection, MMA. KARAGEORGHIS 2000, cat.336, p.209.

b Head of a youth, Sanctuary of Apollo-Reshef, Idalion, *ca.* 450-400 BCE, limestone, ht.18cm. BM, GR1872,0816.56. Author's photograph.

Fig. 3 – 9 Hellenistic Jewellery and Coffin decoration



a Medallion, 4th century BCE, gold, diam. 9.6cm. Private collection. HOFFMANN and DAVIDSON 1965, cat.93, p.230.

b Detail of **9a**

c Fragment of diadem, *Erotes* tomb, Eretria, northern Greece, late 3rd century BCE, gold, carnelian and glass, length 18.5cm, Museum of Fine Arts, Boston. HOFFMANN and DAVIDSON 1965, cat.3, pp.61.

d Detail of **9c** showing narcissus flower-head.

e Herakles knot, 4th century, gold, length 3.85cm. HOFFMANN and DAVIDSON 1965, Cat.88, p.220.

f Wreath, Kassandreia, Chalcide, Greece, *ca.* 250 BCE, gold. TSIGARIDA 2011, cat.11.

g Coffin decoration (detail), Vitjazevo, near Gorgippia, 3rd century BCE, giltwood on red ground. Hermitage Museum, St. Petersburg. MINNS 1913, fig.236, p.326.

Fig. 3 – 10 North Pontic jewellery and Tillya-tepe

a Centrepiece of ‘Loeb’ diadem, Kerch, 1st century BCE to 1st century CE (?), gold, garnet, carnelian, sardonyx, diam. 23.1cm. Staatliche Antikensammlungen, Munich. PICÓN AND HEMINGWAY 2016, cat.157, pp.223-224.

b Detail of dress-pin, tomb I, Artyukhov kurgan, Taman peninsular, 1st century BCE to 1st century CE (?), gold, emerald, glass paste, JACOBSTHAL 1956, plate 328, p.169.

c Nike from the Loeb diadem, **10a**. HOFFMANN AND DAVIDSON 1965, cat.1, p.51.

d Detail of Dionysos and Ariadne, grave VI, Tillya-tepe, second half of the 1st century CE, NMA. SARIANIDI 1985, pl.79, p.135.

Fig. 3 – 11 Narcissi and roses (?) at Sirkap-Taxila



a Detail of gold earring, Block D, Sirkap-Taxila, 1st century CE, earring ht.12cm, rosette diam. 0.6cm. Taxila Museum, Pakistan. ROSEN STONE 2008, cat.267, p.345.

b Stone vessel, Block G, Sirkap-Taxila, mid-to-late 1st century CE, ht. 4.75cm. Taxila Museum, Pakistan. MARSHALL 1975, vol. III, pl. 141, s=103.

c Stone vessel, Block E, Sirkap-Taxila, mid-to-late 1st century CE, ht. 6.2cm. Taxila Museum, Pakistan. JONGEWARD 2012, p.254.

Fig. 3 – 12 Roman Narcissi

a Zephyrus, Tower of the Four Winds, *ca.* 50 BCE, engraving by James Basire.

STUART AND REVETT 1762, vol.1, ch.3, pl.18.

b Detail of 12a.

c Wall-painting, House of Diomedes, Pompeii, 1st century CE. JASHEMSKI 1993, Fig. 438, pp.372.

d Detail of 12c.

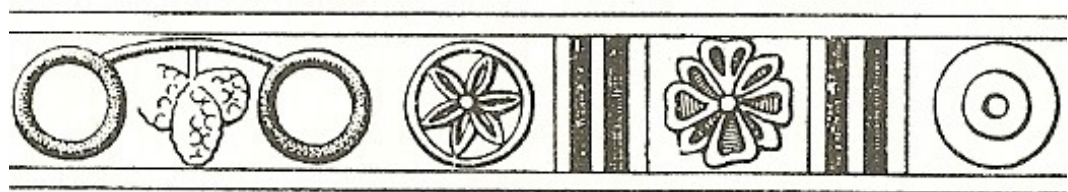
e Mosaic, Villa del Castel Guido, 1st century CE, total 467 x 296cm. Palazzo Massimo alle Terme, Rome, Italy, inv.571832. Author's photograph

f Detail of 12e.

Fig. 3 – 13 Funerary narcissi



a.



b.

a Marble *cinerarium* containing the ashes of Tiberius Claudius Victor, Roman, 1st century CE. CUMONT 1942, pl. XI.

b Jewish tomb at Maqāti' Ābūd, Palestine, 1st century CE. AVI YONAH 1981, fig.25, p.70.

Fig. 3 – 14 Mosaic of Echo and Narkissos, Antioch



a.



b.

a Mosaic with *Echo and Narkissos*, House of the Buffet Supper, Antioch, *ca.* 210-220.

CIMOK 2000, pp.115-116.

b Detail of **14a**.

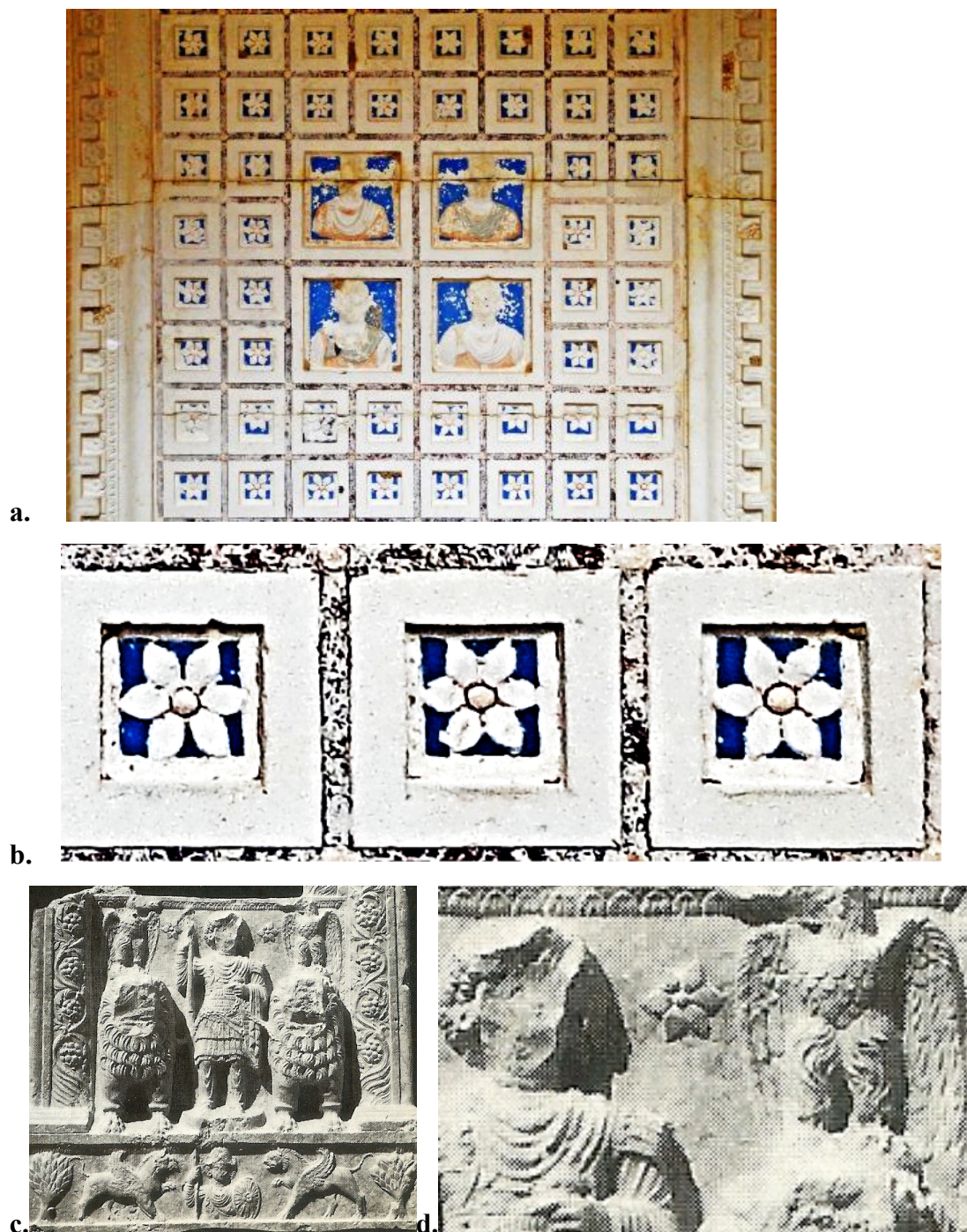
Fig. 3 – 15 Kerch stelae

a Funerary stela with Kleon, Kerch area, 1st – 2nd cent CE. HMSP. TREISTER 2010, pl.1:1.

b Limestone funerary stela with couple, Kerch, 1st – 2nd cent CE, ht. 167cm. HMSP. TOLSTIKOV 2013, cat.1.7, p.222.

c Detail **15b** showing quadrilobe dagger on warrior's thigh.

Fig. 3 – 16 Narcissi at Palmyra



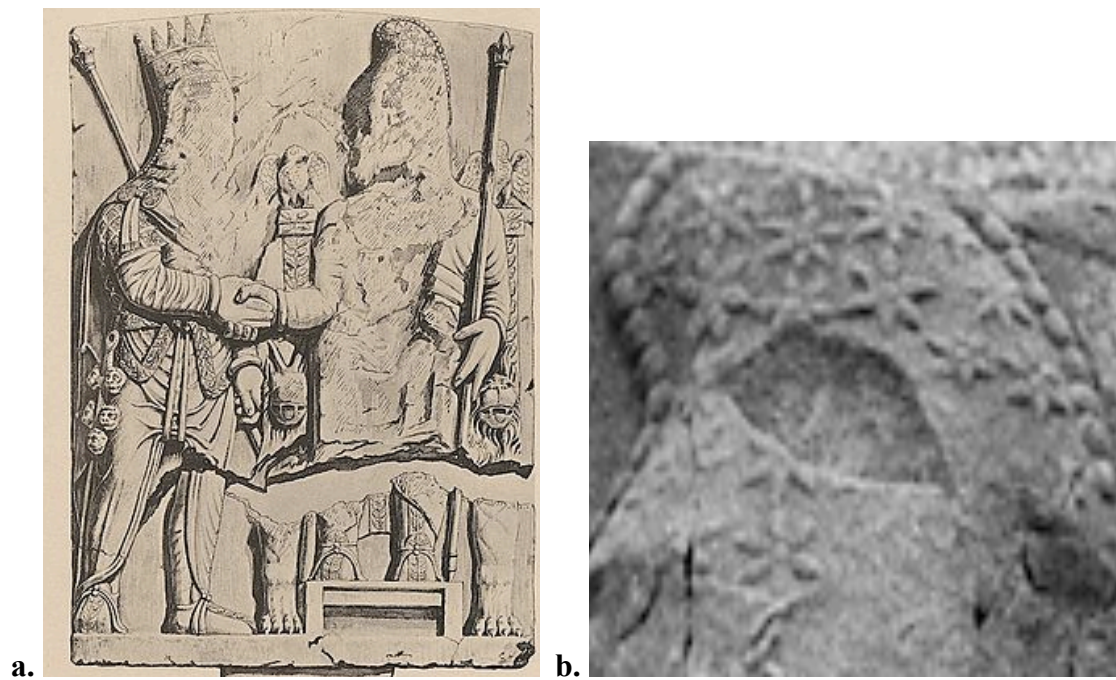
a Ceiling in Tomb of Elahbel, Palmyra, 103 CE. Photograph courtesy of Dr Agnes Henning.

b Detail of 16a.

c Lower section of carved sanctuary wall-niche from Agora, Palmyra, 2nd century CE, ht. 99cm, width 92cm. Damascus Museum. COLLEDGE 1976, pl.11.

d Detail of 16c.

Fig. 3 – 17 Nemrud Dağı



a. Drawing of *dexiosis* with Zeus-Oromasdes and Antiochos, West Terrace, Nemrud Dağı, 1st century BCE, sandstone, height of stela 3.04m. HUMMAN AND PUCHSTEIN 1890.

b. Detail of 17a showing the Persian-style tiara worn by Zeus-Oromasdes, SANDERS 1996, vol. II, fig.281, p.158.

Fig. 3 – 18

The six-petalled motif on Parthian and Sasanian coins



a.



b.

a Silver drachm of Gotarzes I, *ca.* 91- 87 BCE. Photograph courtesy of the Classical Numismatic Group.

b Gold coin of Ardashir (reigned AD 224-241). BM. Image © Trustees of the British Museum.

Fig. 3 – 19 Six-petalled motif in Bactria



a Detail of landscape, Aï Khanoum, *ca.* 3rd – 2nd centuries BCE, diam. of entire dish 25 cm. NMA. BERNARD 2008, cat.23, p.119.

b Terracotta wall decoration, Dilberjin, *ca.* 2nd century CE. NMA. KRUGLIKOVA AND PUGAČENKOVA 1977, fig.76.

Fig. 3 – 20 The Tillya-tepe folding crown



a Folding crown, grave VI, Tillya-tepe, second half of the 1st century CE, gold, imitation turquoise, ht. 9cm. NMA. SCHILTZ 2008, p.284.

b Detail of the reverse of one tree, part of **20a**.

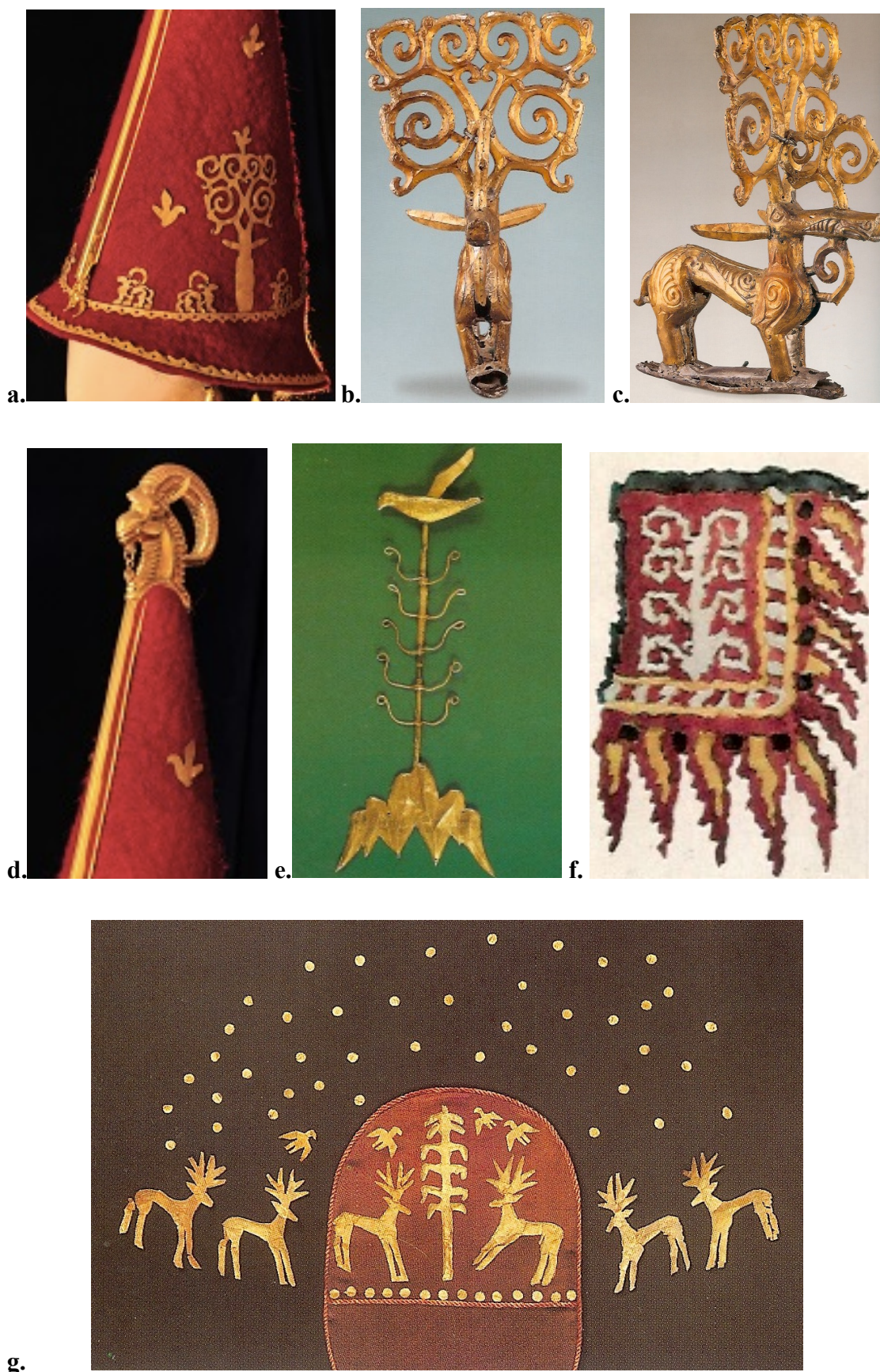
c Detail of the reverse of the crown showing the folding mechanism, part of **20a**.

Fig. 3 – 21 The Tillya-tepe warrior's crown finial



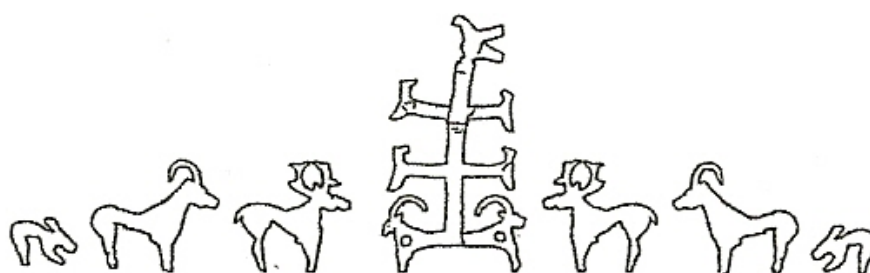
‘Tree’ finial, grave IV, Tillya-tepe, second half of the 1st century CE, gold, pearls, ht. 9cm. NMA. SCHILTZ 2008, cat.121, p.277.

Fig. 3 – 22 ‘Steppe’ crowns and tree details





h.



i.

a Reconstructed crown, Taksay 1, 5th - 4th century BCE, gold.

<http://en.tengrinews.kz/science/Reconstruction-shows-how-ancient-Scythian-Princess-255482/> (accessed January 2015).

b Stag, Filippovka, giltwood, silver, bronze, ht. 49cm, width of antlers 30cm. Ufa Archaeological Museum. ARUZ *et al.* 2000, cat.1/4, p.74.

c Alternative view of **22b**, ARUZ *et al.* 2000, cat.1/1, p.72.

d Apex of the Taksay 1 crown shown **22a**.

e Tall crown, Issyk, 4th to early 2nd century BCE, wood, gold, ht. 14.5, width 5.6cm. Central State Museum, Almaty. AKISHEV 1978, p.85.

f Saddlecloth decoration, Achaemenid carpet, kurgan V, *ca.* 252-235 BCE (date of site, not carpet) Pazyryk, wool. HMSP. RUDENKO 1970, pl.176, detail.

g Crown elements, kurgan X, Kobiakovo, late 1st – early 2nd century CE, gold, ht. of tree 11.4cm. Taganrog Museum. SCHILTZ 2001, cat.239, p.222.

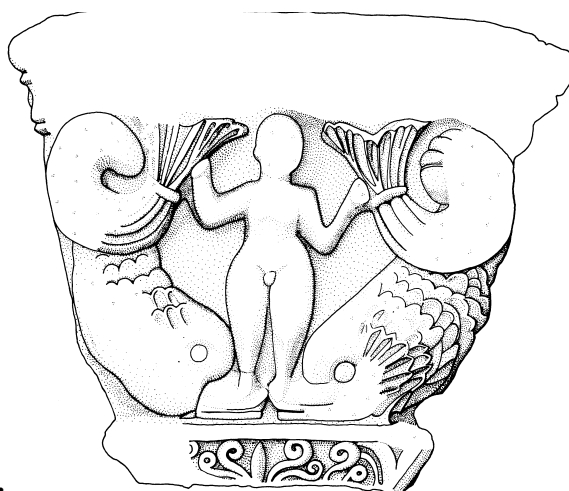
h Crown, Khokhlach, third quarter of 1st century CE, gold, amethyst, almandine, turquoise, coral, glass, length 61cm, ht.15cm. HMSP. ZASSETSKAIA 1995, cat.85-86, pp.58-59.

i Diadem ornament, tomb 46, Ust'-Labinskaia, early 2nd century CE, gold, ht of tree 11.4cm, ht of deer 7.8cm. Azov Museum. LEBEDYNSKY 2014, fig.2, p.284.

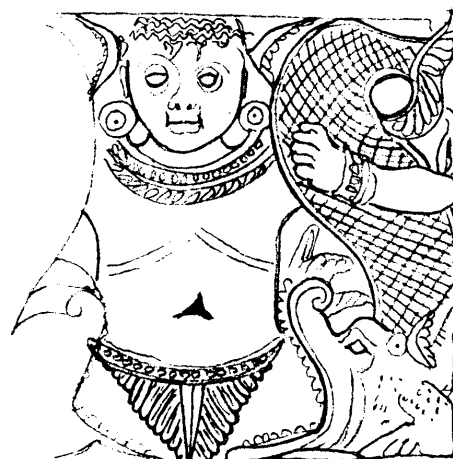
Fig. 3 – 23 Tillya-tepe ‘Mistress of the animals’ and related art



a.



b.



c.



d.



e.



f.



g.

a 'Mistress of the animals' temple pendant, grave VI, Tillya-tepe, second half of the 1st century CE, gold, ht.5.8cm, width 4.6cm. NMA. SARIANIDI 1985, pl.50, p.107.

b Column capital with 'Mistress of the animals', Qal'eh-i Yazdigird, 2nd century CE, stucco, *ca.* 55 cm high. KEALL 1980, p.24

c Ivory figure with dolphins, Begram, Afghanistan, 1st century CE. BOARDMAN 2003a, fig.12, p.362.

d Compartmentalised seal, *ca.* 3rd-2nd millennium BCE. SARIANIDI 1998a, fig.37, p.16.

e *Potnia Theron* pendant, Kamiros, Rhodes, 7th century BCE, gold, ht.5.2cm. HIGGINS 1961, pl.19E.

f Aphrodite relief, 1st century CE, terracotta, ht. 23.5cm, width 12.8. Dresden State Art Collection. <http://skd-online-collection.skd.museum/en/contents/show?id=683943> (accessed July 2015).

g Winged goddess, Yanchokrak, 2nd – 1st century BCE. SÎRBU and BÂRCĂ 2009, fig.6.4, p.277.

Fig. 3 – 24 Crescent hairpins and related imagery





a Pair of hairpins, grave VI, Tillya-tepe, second half of the 1st century CE, gold, pearls, flower diam. 7.0cm. NMA. SARIANIDI 1985, pl.16, p.76.

b Hairpin, grave I, Tillya-tepe, second half of the 1st century CE, gold, diam. flower 6.5cm, Kabul Museum. SCHILTZ 2008, cat.38, p.234.

c Hairpin, grave III, Tillya-tepe, second half of the 1st century CE, width crescent 5.7cm, NMA. SCHILTZ 2008, cat. 87, p.259.

d Hair decoration, Hama, *ca.* 1st century CE. MUSCHE 1988, p.36, Pl.IV, fig. 2.1.

e Bridle ornament with griffin protome, Barrow 1, Tuekta, 6th – 5th century BCE, wood, ht. 18cm, width 13cm. HMSP 2179/906-7. Author's photograph.

f Saddle-cloth with crescents, discs and commas, Bashadar, 6th – 5th century BCE, wool. RUDENKO 1960, pl.CXX.

g Disc and crescent, gold, probably from coffin lid, tomb 64, Takhiltyn Khotgor, 1st century CE. MILLER *et al.* 2009, p.306.

Fig. 3 – 25 The women in grave VI with crown and sceptre



Head and upper body of the woman in grave VI, in situ, Tillya-tepe, second half of the 1st century CE. CAMBON *et al.* 2007, p.57.

6 LIST OF TABLES

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7 BIBLIOGRAPHY

ACSS = Ancient Civilisations from Scythia to Siberia

BOAI = Bulletin of the Asia Institute

BMP = British Museum Press

CAH = The Cambridge Ancient History

CRAI = Comptes rendus des séances de l'Académie des Inscriptions et Belles-Lettres

CUP = Cambridge University Press

HUP = Harvard University Press

ISAW = Institute for the Study of the Ancient World at New York University

LIMC = Lexicon Iconographicum Mythologiae Classicae

MMA = The Metropolitan Museum of Art

OUP = Oxford University Press

SRAA = Silk Road Art and Archaeology

YUP = Yale University Press

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Brooklyn Museum, New York

<https://www.brooklynmuseum.org>

Oriental Institute, Chicago

<https://oi.uchicago.edu/gallery/>

Staatliche Kunstsammlungen, Dresden

<http://skd-online-collection.skd.museum/en/contents/show?id=683943>

The J. Paul Getty Museum, Los Angeles

www.getty.edu/museum/

Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York

<http://www.metmuseum.org/>

Museum of Wales

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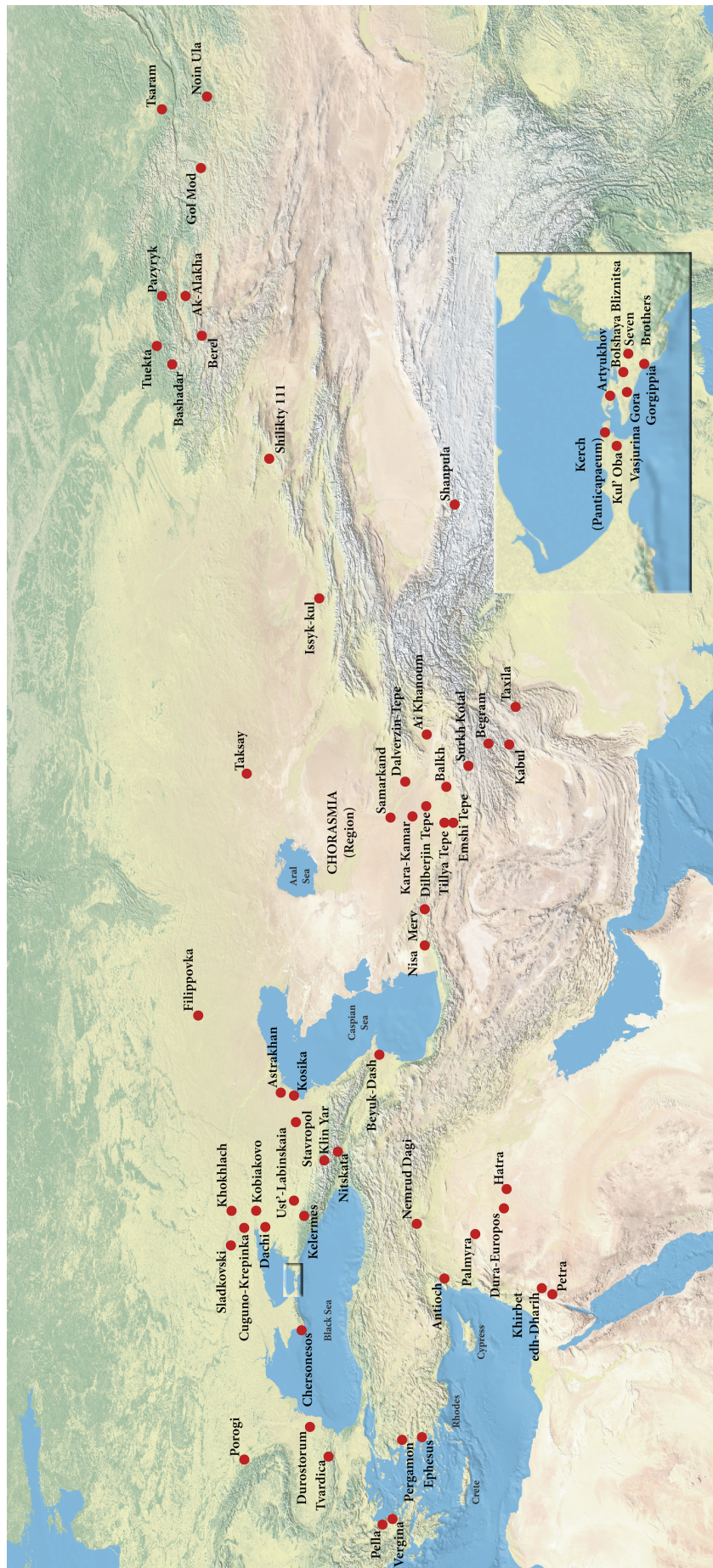
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APPENDIX II INDEX OF KEY SITES

This list is supplied for the convenience of readers. Where sites were occupied over a number of centuries, dates are given for the period most relevant to Tillya-tepe, as discussed in the thesis. These dates are based on academic sources, although in many cases they are disputed. The most familiar names for sites are used, whether ancient or modern.

Site	Date	Region
Ai Khanoum	To 145 BCE	Bactria, Afghanistan
Ak-Alakha,	5 th century BCE	Ukok, Altai, southwestern Siberia
Aphrodisias	Early 2 nd century CE	Tralles, Asia Minor
Armaziskhevi	3 rd century CE	Mtskheta, Georgia
Artyukhov	1 st century BCE – 1 st century CE	Taman peninsular, Krasnodar, southern Russia
Bashadar	6 th – 5 th century BCE	Southern Altai, Russia, Ukraine
Begram	1 st or early 2 nd century CE	Northeast Afghanistan
Berel	4 th century CE/early 3 rd ¹²³⁸	Bagartay, Altai, E Kazakhstan
Bolshaya Bliznitsa	ca. 330-300 BCE	Taman Peninsular, Krasnodar, southern Russia
Boscotres	1 st century CE	Campania, Italy
Chersonesos	4 th century CE	Southern Crimea, Ukraine
Chertomlyk	Mid-to-late 4 th century BCE	Nikopol, Ukraine
Chorasmia	n/a	Lower Oxus, southern bank of Aral Sea, Uzbekistan
Commagene	1 st century BCE	Southeastern Anatolia
Čuguno-Krepinka	Late 1 st – early 2 nd century CE	Donetsk, Crimea, Ukraine
Dachi	3 rd quarter 1 st century CE	Rostov-on-Don, southern Russia
Dalverzin-tepe	1 st – 3 rd century CE	Bactria, modern Uzbekistan
Dura-Europos	2 nd – 3 rd century CE	Eastern Syria
Durostorum	4 th century CE	Thrace, modern Silistra, northeastern Bulgaria
Ephesus	1 st century CE	Western Turkey
Filippovka	4 th century BCE	Urals
Gol Mod	1 st century CE	Mongolia
Gorgippia	Mid-2 nd – 3 rd century CE	Krasnodar, southern Russia
Hatra	2 nd – 3 rd centuries CE	Al-Jazira region, northern Iraq
Isakovka	3 rd – 2 nd century BCE	Southwestern Siberia
Issyk	3 rd – 2 nd century BCE	Semirechye, southern Altai, southwestern Kazakhstan

¹²³⁸ FRANCFORT *et al.* 2000, p.804: dated to 294 BCE using dendrochronology evidence

Kelermes	Mid-7 th – 6 th century BCE	Krasnodar, southern Russia
Kerch, (Panticapaeum)	1 st – 2 nd century CE	Crimea, Ukraine
Khalchayan	1 st century CE	Southern Uzbekistan
Khirbet edh-Dharib	1st – 2nd century CE	Southern Jordan
Khokhlach	3 rd quarter of the 1 st century CE	Lower Don, southern Russia
Klin-Yar	2 nd – 5 th cent CE	Stavropol, southern Russia
Kobiakovo	Late 1 st – early 2 nd cent. CE	Lower Don, southern Russia
Koktepe	1 st century CE	Near Samarkand, Uzbekistan
Kosika	2 nd half of 1 st century BCE – 1 st century CE	Astrakhan, southern Russia
Maqāṭi' Ābūd	1 st century CE	West Bank, Palestine
Nemrud Dağı	Mid-1 st century BCE	Southeastern Turkey
Nihavand	1 st century CE	Western Iran
Nisa	2 nd – 1 st century BCE	Near Ashgabat, Turkmenistan
Noin Ula	1 st century CE	Transbaikalia, Mongolia
Palmyra	1 st – 3 rd century CE	Syria
Pazyryk	Early 3 rd cent BCE ¹²³⁹	Ukok, Altai
Pergamon	2 nd century BCE	Aegean coast of Turkey
Pompeii	To 79 CE	Central southern Italy
Porogi	Last quarter of 1 st century CE	Middle Dneister, Ukraine
Prokhorovka	5 th – 4 th century BCE	Urals, Southern Urals
Qal'eh-i Yazdigird	2 nd century CE	Western Iran
Sengileevskoe-2	4 th century BCE	Stavropol, southern Russia
Shanpula	1 st – 2 nd century CE	Tarim Basin, Xinjiang
Shilikty III	<i>ca.</i> 810 – 750 BCE	South of Altai mountains, Eastern Kazakhstan
Sirkap-Taxila	Saka-Parthian level 1 st century CE	Northwest Pakistan
Sladkovski	Late 1 st - early 2 nd century CE	Lower Don, southern Russia
Sudzha	1 st century BCE – 1 st century CE	Transbaikalia, Russia
Surkh Kotal	2 nd – 4 th century CE	Baghlan province, Afghanistan
Taksay 1	6 th – 4 th century BCE	Terekty, Central Kazakhstan
Taranto	3 rd – 1 st century BCE	Southern Italy
Tuekta	6 th – 5 th century BCE	Altai, Russia
Tvardica	1 st century BCE – 1 st century CE	Southeastern Bulgaria
Ust'-Labinskaia	Early 2 nd century CE	Krasnodar, Taman peninsular, southern Russia
Vasjurina Gora	Late 3 rd – 1 st century BCE	Krasnodar, Taman peninsular, southern Russia
Vitjazevo	3 rd century BCE	Anapa, Taman peninsular, Russia

¹²³⁹ Estimates between 300-238 BCE depending on the grave, MALLORY et al., p.210.

APPENDIX III DEFINITION OF TERMS

SARMATIANS¹²⁴⁰

The term ‘Sarmatian’ refers to tribes who occupied the Caspian and Pontic steppelands area, and were differentiated from the Greek population. Sarmatians are widely considered to have been Iranian peoples who migrated westwards from Central Asia, and displaced the Scythians from the late 4th to the early 3rd century BCE.¹²⁴¹ This a generalised designation since the Sarmatians were not an ethnically homogenous group of people, and the nature of their culture was diverse and complex according to their interactions with local Greek settlers, the expanding Roman empire, pressures from incoming nomadic peoples and other factors.¹²⁴²

In the period around the 1st century CE, the Sarmatians were situated at the end of a transcontinental Eurasian steppe communication route on the so-called Northern Silk route which passed north of the Caspian Sea, the south Ural basin and via the Lower Volga and Don basins, ending at the core of Sarmatian territories in the Bosporan kingdom of the north Pontic area.¹²⁴³

The most relevant peoples in the period contemporary with Tillya-tepe were generally, although not exclusively, buried in the north Pontic area (the Crimea, Taman peninsular, the Lower Don) and the Kuban (between the Black and Caspian Seas). In general, they are described as Middle Sarmatians on the basis of archaeological materials, burial type and rituals, and they occupied the area between the beginning of the 1st century CE and the early 2nd century CE.¹²⁴⁴ Those archaeological sites which are discussed in relation to Tillya-tepe, such as Dachi, Kobiakovo and Porogi (see however remarks on Alans below), are often described as Sarmatian.¹²⁴⁵

ALANS

The Alans were a group of nomadic tribes with different ethnicities. They were first mentioned in Chinese historical sources¹²⁴⁶ and are also known through Graeco-Roman

¹²⁴⁰ Russian research on the definition of Sarmatians is summarised in BÂRCĂ 2006; MORDVINTSEVA 2013a; OLBRYCHT 2000.

¹²⁴¹ MORDVINTSEVA 2015; OLBRYCHT 2000, especially pp.113-114; pp.116-126.

¹²⁴² MORDVINTSEVA 2013a.

¹²⁴³ SIMONENKO 2001, p.53.

¹²⁴⁴ OLBRYCHT 2009; BÂRCĂ 2006.

¹²⁴⁵ MORDVINTSEVA 2010. See also SIMONENKO 2010, 2001; TREISTER 2010, 2004a, 2004c, 2001.

¹²⁴⁶ ALEMANY 2000, pp.398-402.

literary sources from the 1st century CE onwards,¹²⁴⁷ as neighbours in the northeastern boundary of the Roman Empire.¹²⁴⁸ Their arrival in the Sarmatian heartland of the Pontic steppes is often dated to the mid-1st century CE,¹²⁴⁹ and they may thus be considered under the umbrella of Middle Sarmatians. North Pontic sites such as Kosika, Kobiakovo and Sokolova Mogila are sometimes described as Alan, on the basis of elements from the Central Asian steppes such as polychromatic decoration on jewellery, a new version of the ‘animal style’ of art, and the presence of imported Chinese mirrors in graves,¹²⁵⁰ all characteristics found at Tillya-tepe.

Assigning the names Sarmatian or Alan to tribal groups is problematic since the names arose from external sources and there is no evidence that these particular peoples called themselves by this name. Therefore there is no attempt in this thesis to differentiate between the various tribes described by Greek and Roman writers.¹²⁵¹ Due to the frequent lack of absolute differentiation between the Sarmatians and the Alans, I sometimes use the term Sarmatian-Alan, or Sarmatian where the scholarly literature determinedly uses that designation, but generally different groups of people are referred to by their geographic location.

YUEZHI AND KUSHANS

The areas of Central Asia were which had been conquered by Alexander the Great in the 4th century BCE were over-run by nomadic peoples between the mid-2nd and mid-1st centuries BCE.¹²⁵² In the 1st half the 1st century CE, these peoples were under the domination of the Yuezhi.¹²⁵³ The Chinese *Hou Hanshu, Chronicles of the Western Regions*, compiled in 398-446 CE and recounting the history of the Han Empire, (25-221 CE),¹²⁵⁴ described the kingdom of Da Yuezhi, comprising five ruling Yuezhi *xihou*

¹²⁴⁷ ALEMANY 2000, pp.11-29 for Latin textual sources, including remarks on their pro-Roman political stance in the 1st century CE, p.27; pp.79-115 for Greek written sources.

¹²⁴⁸ ALEMANY 2000, p.1.

¹²⁴⁹ OLBRYCHT 2000, p.128: ca.50 –60 CE; p.131: ca.35 –60; LEBEDYNSKY 2014, pp.79-99, pp.203-221.

¹²⁵⁰ OLBRYCHT 2000, p.128; SIMONENKO 2001.

¹²⁵¹ Marek Jan Olbrycht has extensively researched the relationships between different tribal groups, with reference to the Greek and Roman authors, OLBRYCHT 2000.

¹²⁵² GRENET 2012, p.1. For theories on the Yuezhi's earlier history, HILL 2009, pp.312-318.

¹²⁵³ GRENET 2012, p.1.

¹²⁵⁴ HILL 2009, p.XXV.

(‘princes’) who ruled *Daxia* (Bactria).¹²⁵⁵ It is generally accepted that in the Greek texts these people were identified as Tocharians.¹²⁵⁶

The *Hou Hanshu* records that: ‘the prince (*xihou*) of Guishuang, named Qiujiuque (Kujula Kadphises) attached and destroyed the four other *xihou*’.¹²⁵⁷ The Guishuang were equated with the Kushans, who as the leading clan of the Yuezhi, established rulership over southern Central Asia, including Bactria, and northern India.¹²⁵⁸ Kushan coinage provides important evidence of their presence in these areas, provides the sequence of kings, and reflects their cultural influences. This information has been reinforced by the discovery of the Rabatak inscription, *ca.* 128 CE, listing Kanishka and the Kushan kings, their kingship bestowed by the goddess Nana and other other gods.¹²⁵⁹

Since the date of Tillya-tepe is still debated, when the reference is not to a specific figure such as Kujula Kadphises, these tribal groups are referred to collectively here as Yuezhi-Kushan.

¹²⁵⁵ The location is disputed, see HILL 2009, p.319-320.

¹²⁵⁶ GRENET 2012, p.7; HILL 2009, p.311.

¹²⁵⁷ HILL 2009, p.29.

¹²⁵⁸ GRENET 2012, p.1. Chronology: FALK 2015a, pp.5-10; HILL 2009, pp.591-610.

¹²⁵⁹ SIMS-WILLIAMS and CRIBB 1996