

Tillya Tepe, Tomb VI

THE SIXTH TOMB WAS LOCATED in the western section of a corridor which encircled the former temple. It was well preserved, and at the top took the form of a 3.0 by 2.5 meter rectangle, narrowing to 2.5 meters by 1.2 meters at a depth of 1 meter and then continuing down for a further meter. The shelf so created had an earth-covered mat, similar to that of Tomb IV. Free space remained between the ceiling and the cist. The coffin was made of boards and was 2 meters long, 50 centimeters wide, and about 40 centimeters high. It rested on brick supports, placing it at around 20 centimeters above the base. The coffin was probably unlidded and like the other was probably wound in a cloth decorated with gold and silver roundels.

The occupant, a young female of around 20 and of average height (1.52 meters), lay on her back with her head to the west. An unusual detail was that, like the woman in the grave at Koktepe near Samarkand, Uzbekistan, her skull was intentionally deformed, in accordance with a practice then current among the upper levels of society in Central Asia.

Her head, bearing a tall golden crown (no. 215), rested on a small silver plate. Pins with pendants had been attached to her hair (no. 223), while on either side of her face was a large gold pendant with a depiction of a goddess with two animals (no. 218). The woman wore earrings showing winged cupids (no. 219). Her jaw was held closed with a golden band. In her mouth lay a silver Parthian coin bearing a countermark, probably coming from Margiana, a region in the present border area of Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan, and Afghanistan. Around her neck was a chain of gold beads inlaid with turquoise (no. 225), and around each arm was a bracelet with a lion head (no. 222). In her right hand she held a sort of gold scepter, in her left hand, which bore a gem ring (no. 220), a Parthian coin (no. 227). She wore gold anklets, inlaid with turquoise (no. 221). Her clothing consisted of either a long robe or more probably a tunic and trousers, and was decorated at the breast, shoulders (no. 226), and sleeves with rows of numerous appliques and bracteates bearing various motifs. The central ornament in the middle of the chest was the "Aphrodite of Bactria" (no. 217), covered by a smooth molded appliqué and with three attachment rings, two in the region of the wings and one by the feet. Clasps showing an embracing man and woman (no. 216) closed the neck of the garment. The appliques found in the area of the feet indicate that the deceased was dressed in leather or felt slippers.

A silver Chinese mirror lay on her breast. A second mirror with an ivory handle lay at her feet, next to a large silver vessel.

Outside the coffin lay a woven basket containing a clay vessel, the remnants of iron toilet articles, three glass bottles, two ivory boxes, two miniature silver pots, and a cosmetics plate with a file and pins.

134 THE CROWN CONSISTS OF A BAND in the form of a diadem, with five elements attached, which together form "trees." The band is cut out of gold sheet and decorated with 20 six-leaved rosettes from which hang gold roundels. Each rosette has a round recess with a granulated finish, containing a turquoise. To the rear of the band are five vertical tubes made of rolled gold sheet, securing the five "trees" to two identical tubes attached to each of the five "tree branches," and also joining the trees together. This ingenious system allows this superb nomadic headdress to be dismantled and transported.

Four of the "trees" are identical and spread their branches symmetrically on either side of the trunk, which is decorated with an excised motif of two opposed hearts with a crescent between them. On the upper branches are two birds, their wings extended, reaching up with their heads to the top of the tree, appearing to touch it with their bill. Each tree is decorated with six rosettes with six leaves, bearing round pendants. The fifth (middle) tree lacks the birds, but is decorated with rosettes and pendants; on either side of the broad trunk ascend two branches, which meet above, forming a round opening in which a rotating ornament is placed.

This type of crown has many parallels among the nomads, but it is not found among the Greeks, the Parthians, or the Kushans. As early as the end of the fourth century B.C., the high headgear worn by the young warrior from the kurgan mound at Issyk in Kazakhstan was decorated with birds in the crown, which undoubtedly represented the Tree of Life. The same combination of tree and birds is found at the start of the modern era at the Sarmatian site at Khokhlach near Novocherkassk, and also on the diadem of the princess from Kobayakovo, a little to the west near the mouth of the Don River. Similar headdresses, consisting of a diadem decorated with tree and bird motifs, were also found from fifth and sixth century sites on the eastern edge of Asia, in the burial mounds at royal Silla in the southeast of Korea.



**215
Crown**
Tillya Tepe, Tomb VI
Second quarter of
the 1st century A.D.
Gold, imitation
turquoise
45.0 x 13.0 cm
National Museum
of Afghanistan
04.40.50



216 THE CLASPS ARE BOTH provided at the back side with a smooth appliqué, but one bears a loop while the other is fitted with a hook. On the front they each have almost identical tableaux, one a mirror image of the other. A man and a woman are shown in an embrace, seated on a monster who is striding forward, one forepaw raised. The man sits astride, the woman side-saddle. He wears a short robe which exposes his knees, she has a long robe reaching to her feet. The man is turning tenderly toward his companion, placing an arm around her shoulders. However, it is to a hairy figure with pointed ears and a flat nose, half slumped on the ground, that he passes a ribbed, two-handled chalice. In one hand this figure holds a shepherd's staff, which has fallen to the ground, with the other hand he lifts a rhyton (drinking horn) toward the chalice, as though asking for more; at the same time the precious liquid runs into his mouth from the bottom end of his cup, which is shaped like a horned head, like rhytons found in the old Parthian capital of Nisa. For a Greek there would be no doubt: This balding figure's bushy face, here dressed in an animal skin secured with a Hercules knot, is Silenus, a god who makes prophecies during his frequent bouts of drunkenness, and who was regarded in Nisa as the foster-father of Dionysus. Here, Dionysus himself gives him a drink. The god is clad in the nebrid, his characteristic fawn-skin. The spots of the animal's skin can be seen below his arm, and even its foot is shown. His features are Asian, in his long curling hair is a wreath, probably of ivy, and he is shod in short boots decorated with palmettes, with a heart-shaped recess in the toe. His companion, with less slanted eyes, is none other than Ariadne. She also wears a wreath. Around her neck is not so much a necklace as a decoration of the neck opening of her robe, as worn by the women in the tombs at Tillya Tepe (no. 129), which extends to a round ornament on her shoulder. Behind her hovers Nike, in both cases holding in her left hand a palm branch, which rests on her shoulder, while with the right hand she holds a wreath above the heads of the couple. The goddess wears a tunic, belted in tightly at the waist, with a long robe beneath. She is barefoot and has bracelets on her wrists and upper arms. This tableau, decidedly Greek in inspiration, bears witness to the success of Dionysiac motifs from Bactria to India. On the other hand, Parthian period bronze belt buckles found in Sakastan (now the border area between Iran, Pakistan, and Afghanistan) show a man and woman, sitting facing or beside one another and embracing (Ghirshman 1979, pl. I



and pl. III, 1). This kind of explicit unity between man and woman is unknown in the iconography of both the Greeks and the settled Iranians, but seems to fit more naturally into the world of the nomads, where women played an important and recognized role. Perhaps we can take this unity of man and woman on their animal mount to symbolize the woman's status as consort to the leader, and her apotheosis in death.

Leaving aside the meaning of the clasps and their 'gold and turquoise' style ornamentation, there is a further element connecting them to the world of the steppes, namely the unusual mount ridden by Dionysus and Ariadne, which is also given a saddle-cloth decorated with turquoises, with two round turquoise pompoms at the corners. Neither a bull, nor an ass, nor even an Indian panther, the monster has its ears pointing ahead, a pointed tongue protruding from two rows of sharp teeth. It has the folded muzzle of a lion, the beard of a goat, the crest of a dragon, a long tail with a plume, and the clawed feet of a predator. It provides a nice example of the hybrid monsters that were a favorite motif in the art of the steppes.

**216
A pair of clasps
showing Dionysus
and Ariadne**

Tillya Tepe, Tomb VI
Second quarter of
the 1st century A.D.
Gold, turquoise
Both 6.5 x 7.0 cm
National Museum
of Afghanistan
04.40.53



217
Appliqué "the
Aphrodite of Bactria"
Tillya Tepe, Tomb VI
Second quarter of
the 1st century A.D.
Gold, turquoise
5.0 x 2.6 cm
National Museum
of Afghanistan
04.40.9

217 THIS APPLIQUÉ SHOWS a winged female figure. Her left elbow rests on a pillar with two recesses, one of which still contains a turquoise. With stretched fingers she loosely holds the garment falling over her right hip, which leaves her lower belly largely bare. This seductive figure, clearly inspired by Hellenistic models, might indeed pass for Aphrodite. While her posture suggests that, nevertheless in reality she conforms to a quite different and non-Greek ideal of beauty, as witness the rounded face, lengthened eyes, the rather squat posture and the folds that give the neck and body a certain plumpness. Furthermore the goddess has short sickle-shaped wings, she wears various bracelets on her wrist and upper arms, her hair is parted in the middle and she wears a woven hair-band decorated with sequins. Accentuated hollows (dimples?) emphasise the corners of the mouth. On her forehead between the eyebrows is a dot in the Indian way. Should she therefore be given an Indian name rather than 'Aphrodite', or perhaps she is Parthian or Iranian? Surely not; and yet it is certain that she had a real significance, and that the nomad's daughter or granddaughter whose breast she adorned believed strongly in her powers.



218 THESE TWO PENDANTS show identical images in a rectangular frame, with a rosette of four heart-shaped leaves, top center, and a bird, shown in profile, at each corner. With their claws, their imposing heads and their large eyes they remind us of owls. At the lower corners are two fish heads, greatly reminiscent of the "dolphins" described earlier (nos. 140 and 161). The world above is therefore populated by birds, the world below by fish. The ordering of the world is illustrated by animals. It is therefore no great surprise that the panel within the frame shows a "Mistress of the Animals." She is shown frontally, just like her male peer the "Dragon Master" (no. 142), and exhibits a femininity confirmed by her breasts, decorated with an X-shaped ornament, as well as the diadem from which her curling locks emerge, and her bracelets. The large, heart-shaped turquoises behind her shoulders may represent wings. Her robe, which is really more like a veil, spreads out at the bottom into a tripartite ornament with a slash in the middle, reminiscent of the Dragon Master's acanthus leaf "skirt."

With a gesture that appears more a fond caress than a restraint, the goddess has placed her hand on the belly of one of these strange beasts. With the other hand she holds a round fruit, an apple or pomegranate, seeming to offer it to us.

Nana? Anahita? Ardokhsho? With this figure, too, it is for the present impossible to identify a deity described or depicted in any pantheon which this might represent. However, in view of the gesture of offering made by the goddess, together with her accentuated nakedness and her surroundings, including both plants and various kinds of animal, she is clearly associated with productivity, fertility, and rebirth, themes which underlie the conception that all Iranian peoples and especially the nomads have of the world.

219 THESE IDENTICAL EARRINGS consist of a bent gold rod, terminating at one end in a small horn and at the other end in a winged cupid figure, backward arched putto (cherub) with a crescent above the forehead.

This type of earring, depicting a bent body, is familiar from Greek goldsmiths' work, particularly that from Tarentum (Taranto). Each earring is surrounded by a ring consisting of two circles of beads.

These adornments show clear signs of wear.



218 (above)
A pair of pendants showing the "Mistress of the Animals"
Tillya Tepe, Tomb V
Second quarter of the 1st century A.D.
Gold, turquoise
5.8 x 4.6 x 0.5 cm
National Museum of Afghanistan
04.40.52



219 (left)
A pair of earrings decorated with cup
Tillya Tepe, Tomb V
Second quarter of the 1st century A.D.
Gold
7.0 x 1.5 cm
National Museum of Afghanistan
04.40.7

TEPE *Tomb VI*



220 THE RING IS CAST in solid gold. The dark stone shows the left side of a male head depicted in profile; he has a straight nose and a band in his curly hair, which reaches down to his neck.

222 THESE TWO IDENTICAL BRACELETS, cast in gold, have lion heads at each end; they have wide eyes, gaping jaws and clearly indicated teeth, and flattened ears and horns. Like the bracelets from Tomb II (no. 139), these objects show marked similarities with bracelets from the Siberian collection of Peter the Great in the Hermitage in St. Petersburg (Rudenko 1962, pl. XIII and XV) and with others from Taxila in Pakistan (Marshall 1951, pl. 182, nos. 133–136).



220 (opposite, top left)

Ring with gem

Tillya Tepe, Tomb VI
Second quarter of
the 1st century A.D.
Gold, carnelian
2.0 x 1.7 cm
National Museum
of Afghanistan
04.40.45

221 (opposite, top right)

Pair of anklets

Tillya Tepe, Tomb VI
Second quarter of
the 1st century A.D.
Gold, turquoise
L. 21.2 cm
National Museum
of Afghanistan
04.40.3

222 (opposite, bottom)

**A pair of bracelets
with horned lion heads**

Tillya Tepe, Tomb VI
Second quarter of
the 1st century A.D.
Gold, turquoise
L. 18.5 cm
National Museum
of Afghanistan
04.40.5

223 (top right)

Two hair ornaments

Tillya Tepe, Tomb VI
Second quarter of
the 1st century A.D.
Gold, silver, pearl
Diam. 7.0 and 1.8 cm;
L. 4.0 cm
National Museum
of Afghanistan
04.40.1

224 (right)

**Two ornaments in
the form of flowers**

Tillya Tepe, Tomb VI
Second quarter of
the 1st century A.D.
Gold, pearls
Diam. 3.0 cm; L 5.7 cm
National Museum
of Afghanistan
04.40.2



223 EACH ORNAMENT, comparable to one found in Tomb I (no. 38), consists of a gold ornament on a pointed silver rod of low silver content. The object is made from the gold sheet cut into the form of a flower with five petals. The center of the flower is an open disk with a granulated border holding a tube in rolled gold sheet. The rod was to be inserted in this tube. Round pendants are attached to two of the petals. The petals at the front are held together with a thread to which are attached a crescent and a further three round. Decorative beads are still attached to some of the threads.

224 THE FLOWERS have five heart-shaped petals and two pendants.

TEPE *Tomb VI*

225 THE NECKLACE consists of ten round and two elongated beads, the latter serving as a fastening. The beads are divided into segments by granulated lines. Alternate segments contain a rosette with five heart-shaped leaves inlaid with turquoise.

226 THIS ORNAMENT is a combination of roundels alternating with double crescents, similar to finds from Tomb I (no. 117), Tomb II (nos. 153 and 154), and Tomb V (no. 210). The only point of difference is that the disk here is decorated with a motif of four hearts arranged in a cloverleaf pattern and inlaid with turquoise. The heart motif can also be found as the spacing pieces between the opposed crescents.

227 PARTHIAN COIN. Obverse: A bearded king, turned to the left, wearing a horned tiara, its points indicated by three rows of dots. The lower outline of the hair is also indicated with dots. At the front of the coronet is a prone deer, a motif which probably also appeared on top of the crown, but cannot be seen properly because of defective stamping of the coin. An oval countermark is visible behind the head, with a face depicted frontally.

Reverse: A figure on a throne, turned to the left, holding a bow in his outstretched right hand. There are traces of an inscription, which can be reconstructed as follows: above is BASILEÏS, to the right MEGALOU, below ARSAKOU, and left, on two lines THEOPATOROS/NIKATOROS.

The coin is a local imitation of silver Parthian coins of Gotarzes I (95–90 B.C.), probably issued halfway through the first century B.C. It is made of gold, rather than the silver or bronze which was generally used for Parthian and Greco-Bactrian coinage; this suggests that minting currency was not of much commercial importance, but rather a symbol of prestige for the lesser rulers within the sphere of influence of the Parthian Empire and of the Arsacid dynasty.



225 (above)
Necklace
Tillya Tepe, Tomb VI
Second quarter of
the 1st century A.D.
Gold, turquoise
Diam. of the beads
2.8 x 2.5 cm
National Museum
of Afghanistan
04.40.51

226 (opposite, top)
Part of an ornament
Tillya Tepe, Tomb VI
Second quarter of
the 1st century A.D.
Gold, turquoise, pearls
Diam. 1.7 cm; L. 4.6 cm
National Museum
of Afghanistan
04.40.47



227 (left)
**Parthian coin, imitation
of coin of Gotarzes I**
Tillya Tepe, Tomb VI
Middle of the
1st century B.C.
Gold
Diam. 1.8 cm
National Museum
of Afghanistan
04.40.16