

AFGHANISTAN

Hidden Treasures from the National Museum, Kabul



An Educator Resource Packet

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Cover: Crown, 100 BCE–100 CE. Afghanistan; Tillya Tepe, Tomb 6. Gold and imitation turquoise. *National Museum of Afghanistan*.

Dear Educator,

The Asian Art Museum of San Francisco is proud to share with you this teacher's resource packet which accompanies the 2008–09 special exhibition, *Afghanistan: Hidden Treasures from the National Museum, Kabul*. The collection on display includes 146 artifacts from four major archaeological sites. Each of these sites illustrates a facet in Afghanistan's long and distinguished history:

- Tepe Fullol, a bronze age burial ground dating to approx. 2000 BCE;
- Ai Khanum, a Greco-Bactrian city founded in approx. 300 BCE by a follower of Alexander the Great;
- Begram, an ancient Silk Road trading center from which objects of widely diverse origins have been recovered (Indian-style sculpture; Chinese lacquer bowls and boxes; and bronze, glassware, plaster medallions, and alabaster items from the Roman world);
- Tillya Tepe, a nomad burial site considered of singular archaeological importance. Those buried here are thought to have been a part of a nomad migration that led to the founding of a large and successful empire in central, southern, and western Asia known as the Kushan dynasty.

In addition, the exhibition itself is of historic importance. The objects from the National Museum of Afghanistan, Kabul have survived three decades of recent political conflict through the dedicated efforts of archaeologists and museum professionals. Remarking on the launch of this special exhibition, Said Tayeb Jawad, Afghanistan's ambassador to the U.S., said:

Afghanistan has always been the heart of the Asia. Afghanistan's centrality in the Silk Road created a rich mosaic of cultures and civilizations. Although this mosaic was shattered by war and terror, both the spirit of the Afghan people and our cultural heritage survived. These priceless artifacts are a testament to the Afghan people and the heroism of the brave and selfless Afghans who preserved and protected them. This exhibition is a celebration of Afghanistan as much as it is an expression of our appreciation for the global community and our friends in the United States.

The Asian Art Museum invites you and your students to explore the history of Afghanistan through the exquisite works in this special exhibit.

Sincerely,
Stephanie Kao
Manager of School and Teacher Programs, Asian Art Museum

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**Introduction to
the Exhibition**



A farmer overlooks his terraced wheat fields descending to the Kunar River. Photo by Frank & Helen Schreider, copyright 2008 National Geographic. Reprinted with permission.

Afghanistan lies at the juncture of West Asia (the Middle East), South Asia, and East Asia. For millennia, it has been a center of trade and cultural exchange. At the center of the Silk Road—the routes for the exchange of goods and ideas across Asia—Afghanistan was the historic crossroads linking China and India with ancient Persia, West Asia, and the West. Trade between East and West passing through Central Asia was significantly expanded with Alexander the Great’s conquest of this region around 328 BCE. The area that would become modern Afghanistan continued to serve as a nexus of international trade and commerce on the Silk Road through the 1300s, although the importance of this trade system began to decline with the end of Mongol rule of China in 1368. In subsequent centuries, Afghanistan continued to be a crossroads and a frontier, home to various ethnic and cultural groups and subject to the forces of ongoing imperial ambitions.

In recent history, Afghanistan has been associated with political upheaval and forces detrimental to its artistic and cultural heritage. Much of the thousands-year-old cultural property of the nation was believed destroyed in past decades by military and fundamentalist forces. *Afghanistan: Hidden Treasures from the National Museum, Kabul* shows the proud and glorious heritage of this nation now emerging from decades of strife. Against great odds, and due to the courage and heroism of many individuals in Afghanistan, hundreds and thousands of works of art believed to have been lost or destroyed in fact survived. In the words of President Hamid Karzai of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan, “This exhibition... is nothing less than a miracle.”

After the Soviet invasion in the 1980s, followed by years of civil war, the fundamentalist Taliban seized control of Afghanistan from 1996 through 2001, with profoundly disastrous results for human rights as well as material culture. In December 2001, Hamid Karzai was sworn in as head of a newly established government.

One of the most remarkable aspects of the post-Taliban period in Afghanistan has been the rediscovery of many of its greatest works of art, in some cases preserved by individuals, and in others strategically hidden away by museum staff of the National Museum of Afghanistan, Kabul, or by other public officials and civil servants. First imperiled during the Soviet conflict from 1982–1992, most of the collections from the National Museum of Afghanistan (previously known as the Kabul Museum) were believed to have been lost or destroyed. Revealed in 2004 in a presidential bank vault in Kabul, these artworks are being examined and exhibited again for the first time in 25 years. This exhibition reflects collaborative efforts among Afghan museum officials, the Afghan government, and the National Geographic Society in Washington, DC. Dr. Fredrik Hiebert, an expert on Central Asia and a National Geographic Society Fellow who has worked on major archeological excavations in Afghanistan, led the inventory of the once-hidden historic treasures from the National Museum that resulted in the objects exhibited in this show. From the sensuous ivory figural sculpture from Begram to the breathtakingly exquisite gold ornaments, crowns, coins, and vessels of Tillya Tepe, the quality and craftsmanship of these works are truly extraordinary and bring the world's attention to the profound artistic heritage of this little-understood country.

Approximately 200 works appear in this exhibition. The objects date from roughly 2200 BCE to the second century CE, covering the Bronze Age through the early centuries of the Kushan Dynasty, centered in western and southern Asia. All the objects in this exhibition predate the arrival of Islam to the region, which began in the seventh century.

Among the revelations of the show is the breadth of subject matter and styles from many cultural arenas of the ancient world. Reflecting the Greek and Hellenistic (Greek-related and Greek colonial) presence in the area that spanned several centuries, from the 300s BCE through the 600s CE and beyond, the art depicts numerous figures from classical mythology. Examples include Cybele, the goddess of nature, represented on a gilded silver plate, Herakles (Roman: Hercules), the Greek epic hero represented in bronze (Image 1), and Dionysus, the god of wine, represented with his consort Ariadne on a golden turquoise clasp. A gold brooch depicting Aphrodite, the Greek goddess of love, reflects Greek, Indian, and East Asian influences (Image 19). Intricately detailed carved ivories related to Indian sculptural models depict scenes of court life, including sensual female figures representing courtesans and palace attendants, as well as more elaborate scenes of palace activities.

A major theme of this show is that Afghanistan was not simply a passive avenue for trade. Rather, as the center of the exchange of goods and ideas across Asia, it was an engine of Silk Road trade and the nucleus of cultural, artistic, and economic activity. Both nomadic and sedentary peoples in Afghanistan's continental network contributed to the creation of artworks of great sophistication, originality, and beauty.

Art historical and archaeological discoveries continue to be made in Afghanistan. In February 2008, researchers announced that at the Buddhist site of Bamiyan, cave paintings with Buddhist themes had been discovered that used an oil-based binder. Researchers suggest that these seventh-century paintings represent the first use of oil-based paint in existence, predating the European and Mediterranean traditions by 100 years. These discoveries were made in the course of ongoing



Balkh, the major city of ancient Bactria, is located at the foot of the central highlands in northern Afghanistan. Photo © Kenneth Garrett, National Geographic Society.

archaeological and preservation work at the site. In another example of its central importance to cultural transformation and art history, Afghanistan was the area of transmission of Buddhism from its home in India along the Silk Road to East Asia. The well-known site of Bamiyan, whose largest colossal standing Buddha images were destroyed by the Taliban in 2001, is only one example of the profound and vast Buddhist cultural legacy in this region.

All of the objects in this exhibition, and the diverse cultures, artistic styles, artisanal techniques, and creativity they express, recall the motto of the Kabul Museum: “A nation stays alive when its culture stays alive.”



**Archaeological
Sites**

TEPE FULLOL

Tepe Fullol in northeastern Afghanistan is a Bronze Age site whose artifacts date primarily from 2800 to 2500 BCE, with another group belonging to approximately 2000 BCE. These objects are thus approximately 2,000 years older than most of the other material in this exhibition. Like the later objects produced in Afghanistan, they represent high-quality craftsmanship, a range of media, and distinctive local styles. The material from Tepe Fullol includes a hoard of gold and silver bowls. The site has been interpreted as a cache of treasure and also as a burial ground.

Metalwork from this site reflects various techniques including hammering, engraving, and repoussé (creating design by pounding a metal sheet from behind). A variety of motifs decorate the bowls and vessels, including scenes of hunting, primarily of wild boar, lions, and oxen, as well as geometric motifs. The survival of the gold bowls is especially remarkable because gold was often melted down to make new objects.

An interesting aspect of the material at the site is the existence of distinctive styles that do not clearly resemble those elsewhere in Afghanistan or in nearby regions from the same period. This



Fragment of a bowl depicting bearded bulls, 2200–1900 BCE. Afghanistan; Tepe Fullol. Gold. *National Museum of Afghanistan*.

may suggest the diversity of styles in the Bronze Age world and the high level of craftsmanship that existed locally, as well as the extent of material that has been lost and destroyed in much of Central Asia. Some archaeologists have suggested connections with Mesopotamian themes and details from roughly 3000 to 2000 BCE. Trade with far-off regions was certainly important in this locality. Tepe Fullol is located in northeastern Afghanistan near quarries of lapis lazuli, the blue gemstone mineral prized throughout the ancient world. Lapis lazuli was highly sought after for its use in jewelry, and equally valued as the source for blue pigment in painting. This site was the essential source of this precious material on the Silk Road, and its importance with trade to Mesopotamia was well established by 2000 BCE.

AI KHANUM (Images 1–5)

Founded around 300 BCE by a follower of Alexander the Great, Ai Khanum is one of the most celebrated Greek cities in Afghanistan. This site is also described as Greco-Bactrian, referring to the kingdom of Bactria in north-central Afghanistan whose territory would eventually become a large part of the modern Afghan nation. Bactria was the major province in the eastern area of Alexander's empire, established after his conquest of the Persian Empire in 334–323 BCE. The archaeological materials here reveal that foreign influences had a strong and persistent impact on local culture. During the roughly 150 years of its existence as a colonial city, Ai Khanum was inhabited by Greeks,



Ai Khanum. The end of the royal Greek city of Ai Khanum (meaning “Lady Moon”) came suddenly around 145 BCE at the hands of nomads from the northeast, who set fire to the palace and robbed the treasury. Photo copyright Musée Guimet/DAFA. Reprinted with permission.



Corinthian capital, palace main courtyard, Ai Khanum. Photo copyright Musée Guimet/DAFA. Reprinted with permission.

Persians, and various indigenous groups. City rulers and leading families were Greek, and residents participated in traditional Greek activities including theater performances and gymnastics. Spoken and written Greek was the language of the colonists here.

The name Ai Khanum means “Lady Moon” and refers to an Uzbek (Central Asian) princess who inhabited a castle on the acropolis; the original Greek name for this site is not known.

The city was roughly triangular in shape, delimited by the confluence of the Oxus and the Kokcha rivers, and on its third side by an acropolis 60 meters high. The location’s strategic importance to fertile agricultural land accounted for its interest to Greek colonial rulers.

The site was a royal city with a palace at its center. Architectural style here reflects a synthesis of Greek, Persian, and indigenous elements. Greek taste is especially present in terracotta plaques known as antefixes, which line the roofs of buildings, and the three classical orders of columns: Doric, Ionic, and Corinthian. The last of these three was especially favored at the site, characterized by adornment with florid organic motifs.

The major areas excavated at the site include the palace treasury, the temple sanctuary, the administrative quarters, the theater, the gymnasium, and the acropolis. The principal temple reflects a Central Asian and Mesopotamian design more than a Greek one, with sun-dried masonry, flat roof, and indented niches decorating the exterior. Greek gods and goddesses, however, were honored at the temples and throughout the city, as reflected by their many representations among the objects in this exhibition.

Primarily excavated by French archaeologists from 1964 to 1978, the material found at Ai Khanum is impressive in its scope of subject matter and range of artistic media and design. A great variety of themes from the classical world are represented. Styles, techniques, and motifs combine Greek, Central Asian, Persian, northern Indian, and the uniquely local and indigenous styles. A particular innovation of Greco-Bactrian sculptors was the creation of statues of unfired clay or stucco on wooden frames (in some cases with lead sticks for hands). This sculptural technique was widely employed throughout Central Asia. In another technique taken from the Greeks, a type of sculpture called acrolith involved creating figures from different materials; the extremities were made of stone or marble, while the main body was made of wood (often painted or gilded) or softer

stone. This technique was popular for monumental figures. Smaller images survive in limestone, and a few examples in bronze, although the latter material is rare as it was often melted down. Ivory imported from India was used in figurines as well as decorative objects including furniture. Luxury items include imports such as semiprecious stones from India. Objects from daily life that were more widely produced include earthenware vessels of Greek and local forms, compartmentalized stone bowls, and lidded stone vessels.

Ai Khanum met its demise in approximately 145 BCE, when it was invaded by nomadic conquerors from the northeast who burned and looted the city. Nevertheless, Greek culture persisted in Central Asia for centuries to come, including in areas that would become contemporary Afghanistan and Pakistan. In the second century CE, the Roman historian Plutarch wrote that the people of the East were still reading Homer and performing the tragedies of Euripides and Sophocles. Cities such as Ai Khanum with their theaters, gymnasiums, temples, and refined classical literati kept ancient Greek culture alive for centuries in a remote, multicultural environment. In Bactria, post-Greek cultures drew on a classical heritage until the Islamic conquest beginning in the seventh century. A tradition of figural sculpture would continue here, evolving in the early centuries CE to include prolific production of Buddhist imagery.

BEGRAM (Images 6–13)

In terms of the value and quantity of materials discovered, Begram and Tillya Tepe are the two most important archaeological sites in Afghanistan, and perhaps in all of Central Asia.

The site of Begram is found at the confluence of Silk Road trade routes, and at the juncture of two major rivers, only about 40 miles from modern Kabul. French archaeologist Alfred Foucher, who worked at Begram in the 1920s and 1930s, theorized that Begram was the ancient city of Kapisi, the summer capital and residence of the Kushan emperors. The Kushan dynasty was founded by Central Asian nomadic conquerors who ruled northern India, parts of Central Asia, and the areas encompassing contemporary Pakistan and Afghanistan from the first through third centuries CE. More recent scholars have disputed this view of Begram as a Kushan capital city, suggesting that there is scant evidence that the site was a long-term royal residence and thus little to directly connect it to the Kushans. Although there is some debate, much of the material here is generally believed to have been produced in the first century CE. Various questions remain about the site and its interpretation.

Further archaeological work at Begram was conducted into the 1940s. Since then, minimal work has taken place at the site. Excavations remain incomplete, and publications from the archaeological teams earlier in the twentieth century were sporadic. To this day there still has not been a final summary of archaeological findings at the site.

The most celebrated materials from Begram were discovered in 1937 and 1939 in two ancient sealed rooms in an area referred to as the “New Royal City.” These two storerooms containing luxury goods from the first century CE had remained intact, their spaces bricked shut and the site abandoned. The materials discovered in these rooms included objects from many different parts of the world: Indian-style decorative and sculptural items in ivory and bone, Chinese lacquer bowls and boxes, and bronze, glassware, plaster, and alabaster items from the Roman world.

Most of the objects discovered were originally classified into three categories of origin: Roman, Chinese, and Indian. More recent studies of the objects suggest that some may have been produced



Excavation of ivory statuettes in Room 10 at Begram, 1937. Photo copyright Musée Guimet/DAFA. Reprinted with permission.

in Afghanistan itself. In particular, certain ivory and bone carvings, and plaster medallions, reveal that Afghanistan was not simply a passive recipient and conduit for these artistic goods, but an active participant in their production.

Hundreds of pieces of carved ivory and bone were found at Begram (Image 7). Many of these appear to have served as decoration on pieces of furniture, including footstools, chairs, and benches. The primary subjects depicted are women, probably palace women or perhaps courtesans, as well as occasional vegetal and animal motifs, mythical creatures, and architectural designs. The sculptural style of these ivories relates directly to Indian models, specifically the ancient Buddhist sites of Mathura, Sanchi, and Amaravati. Motifs also clearly relate to Indian subjects such as the vase of plenty representing fertility and prosperity; the makara, a fantastical aquatic creature that is part crocodile (Image 8); and the dwarf attendants of the Hindu god Shiva, with some other occasional motifs that recall Persian and Middle Eastern prototypes. Unfinished ivory pieces at the site of Begram suggest that there may have been a local workshop here, and significant evidence exists suggesting that ancient artists were itinerant, traveling to where they could find work. Begram-style ivories have been found elsewhere along the Silk Road, from Uzbekistan to Pompeii. Begram was thus apparently part of an ivory distribution network.

Most glassware from Begram is analogous to Roman models, while one type of painted glass beaker relates to glassware from Egypt and the eastern Mediterranean. The extensive glassware from this site is generally described as representing classical Roman examples, and chemical analysis of the material suggests a common source in the Roman world (Image 9). The numerous circular

plaster medallions with relief scenes clearly relate to Roman examples in their subject matter and style (Image 6). These medallions generally appear to have been made not through independent modeling, but by using molds or taking impressions from clay, stone, or metal. Some scholars have suggested that these objects are models, related to metal originals, and it has also been theorized that they were produced in Begram itself. Such models could have been used by local artists or merchants to sell and promote their wares.

Minimal quantities of Chinese lacquers have survived from Begram, as they were poorly preserved in the humid soil. Their greatest significance has been their value in dating other objects at the site. This is one of the many methods archaeologists use in dating sites. Once the date of one object inside the dig is known, archaeologists know at least the earliest possible date for the entire site. In other words, the site could not date any earlier than the manufacture of the Chinese lacquers. However, the end date is more open, since the lacquers may have already been old at the time of their burial. Examination of the aging of such objects can help determine their approximate age when interred, shedding further light on the date range of the burial.

A unique aspect of the objects from Begram is their diversity and curiosity. The unconventional nature of certain objects stands out more than their value or the value of their precious materials. Examples of such anomalies include an ostrich egg in a Greek-style drinking vessel shaped like a horn (rhyton), a bronze “aquarium” vessel with movable fish fins (Image 11), and animal-shaped appliqué (clothing ornaments).

Dr. Sanjyot Mehendale of UC Berkeley has offered an explanation for the function and significance of the site of Begram. Dr. Mehendale suggests that the site is best understood as an important transit and trading city, a center for the exchange of goods that had its own artisan workshops. The Greco-Roman plaster medallions that are found in large numbers at the site offer a strong argument for the suggestion (Image 6), in that they are not objects of material value in their own right. Because their materials are not precious, it does not make sense that they would be included in a royal collection. However, they would have been useful to merchants as examples of wares that could be created by artisans in another media, probably metal. The overall material at the site may suggest that Begram was an important manufacture and trading center along the Silk Road and on the periphery of the Kushan empire.

TILLYA TEPE (Images 13–19)

Tillya Tepe means “Hill of Gold.” Its nomenclature is certainly apt, as it was home to one of the most astonishing discoveries of gold jewelry, ornaments, and other personal items ever made in the ancient world. In 1978, more than 21,000 individual gold artifacts were found at the site, representing breathtaking quality and craftsmanship. Considered one of the greatest archaeological finds of the twentieth century, the discovery of this material by Russian archaeologist Viktor Sarianidi was equivalent in importance and sensation to the discovery of the tomb of the pharaoh Tutankhamen in 1922.

The celebrated Tillya Tepe artifacts are often referred to as the “Bactrian Hoard,” a reference to the Central Asian state of Bactria in what is now northern and central Afghanistan. The collections from this site include gold jewelry, funerary ornaments, weapons, and other items of personal adornment and ritual use. The works reflect the hybrid culture of Bactria, combining Greek, Hellenistic,



Afghan archaeologists and Russian archaeologist Victor Sarianidi investigate artifacts found from the burial site of Tillya Tepe, 1978. Photo copyright Viktor Sarianidi. Reproduced with permission.

Persian and Middle Eastern, Siberian, indigenous, and nomadic elements. In the words of archaeologist Veronique Schlitz, “... all art represents an alloy and...the Afghan soil was the crucible for this unique alloy.”

The thousands of ornaments discovered at the site reflect astonishing beauty, timeless style, the highest quality of craftsmanship and skill, and local styles and sensibility that have not been discovered elsewhere. The objects from the site may in fact have been produced in one single local workshop.

The objects discovered here are approximately 2,000 years old. They were discovered in the graves of six nomads, the site described as a “nomad necropolis.” Remains of an earlier Bronze Age temple dating to approximately 1300 BCE exist

at the site, along with evidence of various settlements predating the nomadic graves, which date to approximately 100 BCE–100 CE. We do not know the exact identity of the nomads buried here. Some archaeologists believe that this site establishes a missing link between Ai Khanum, the Hellenistic city destroyed by nomadic invaders in 145 BCE, and the later Kushan dynasty based in northern India, founded by invading nomadic conquerors.

Shortly after the discovery of this site, the objects were threatened by the looming Soviet invasion and civil war. Nevertheless, Professor Sarianidi courageously revisited the site in 1982, and published a book of photographs and a scientific account of the excavation, generously sharing his knowledge and findings with the international community. The treasures and archaeological materials were transferred to museum officials in Kabul for safekeeping. With the subsequent decades of conflict, their existence and survival were made known to the outside world only with the establishment of the post-Taliban regime in 2003, and as mentioned in the introduction, with their re-emergence from the presidential bank vault in Kabul.

The tombs at Tillya Tepe are laid out within a mound, suggesting nomadic burial traditions. A few coins discovered in the tombs provide valuable information about dating. Like the Chinese lacquers at Begram, these coins help establish the earliest possible date for the tombs. A single male is buried at the site, surrounded by at least five females. The burial site may represent the tomb of



Afghan excavator carefully uncovers the dagger from Tomb 4, Tillya Tepe, 1978. Photo copyright Viktor Sarianidi. Reprinted with permission.

a single male leader whose interment was accompanied by the sacrificial deaths of several female members of his family and entourage.

The man's weapons are typical of nomadic weaponry and accoutrements, and suggest that this individual was an accomplished warlord. The ornaments and costumes of the women reflect differing social statuses.

The great majority of objects from the site are rendered in gold, and many are inlaid with turquoise or other semiprecious stones. Types of jewelry from the site include crowns, bracelets,

necklaces, rings, amulets, earrings, hairpins, clasps, and ornaments called bracteates. Bracteates are small metal ornaments, usually relatively flat, that were sewn or attached to clothing, or otherwise used for personal adornment. Bracteates survived in particularly large quantities at the site. A spectacular gold crown, composed of numerous detachable parts, is one of the most valuable objects from the site and reflects a particularly nomadic design.

Certain repeated motifs are found among the ornaments. One of the most common design motifs is a heart shape, which looks modern to the contemporary eye and may recall love or romantic themes, but here probably represents a leaf, perhaps ivy. Nevertheless, the subject deserves further investigation. Other common motifs include triangles decorated with gold bead forms, three-leaf designs recalling lotuses, droplet shapes, square shapes with inlay, inlaid discs with mask designs, inlaid and heart designs forming petals and other motifs, stepped pyramid designs related to West Asian architectural models, combinations of roundels and other geometric forms, and designs consisting of opposing rams' heads. The ingenuity, timeless design sense, and dramatic visual appeal of these objects are remarkable.

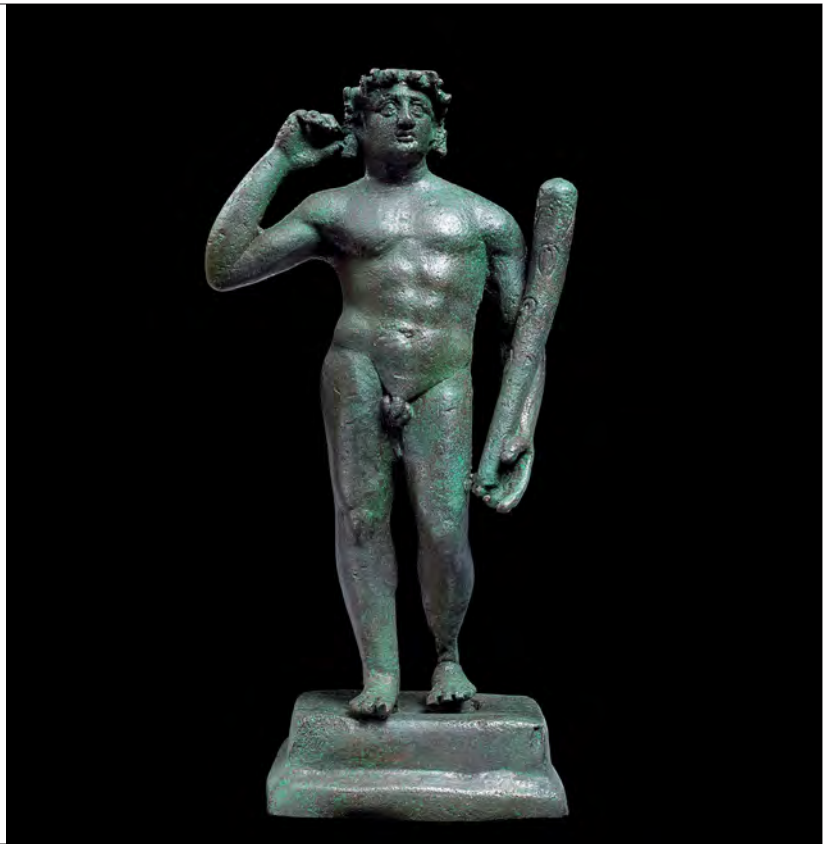
The variety of styles and subjects among these objects reflect the multicultural environment of these nomadic people. A ring illustrating Athena, the Greek goddess of learning and wisdom, and inscribed in Greek reflects the ongoing influence of the Hellenistic world (Image 16). Bracelets with creatively rendered antelope motifs express subjects and styles of the nomadic Central Asian steppes. Inlaid jewels adorning dragon forms reflect Siberian, Central Asian, and East Asian designs and tastes. Necklaces with large gold beads decorated with geometric designs may reflect indigenous styles. Weaponry such as dagger shields includes decorative and technical elements from India, Mongolia, China, Siberia, Greece, and Persia. The technical sophistication of these objects reveals that ancient Afghanistan was home to the highest quality of artistic production, and was an enduring crucible for artistic exchange for multiple cultures, from as far away as China and the Mediterranean world.



Image Descriptions

Image 1

Statuette of Herakles, 150 BCE.
Afghanistan; Ai Khanum, temple with
niches, sanctuary. Bronze. *National
Museum of Afghanistan.*



Who is represented here?

The sculpture represents Herakles (Roman: Hercules). Herakles is the hero of Greek epic literature celebrated for his strength and many feats of bravery and heroism. We can recognize the subject as Herakles because the figure holds a club in one hand, and with the other hand makes a gesture indicating that he is placing a crown upon his own head. Such a gesture is appropriate to a heroic figure, and the crown would probably have been a Greek-style headdress of leaves.

Herakles was a popular figure throughout the Hellenistic world, and was venerated throughout Greek-influenced Central Asia. An inscription at the gymnasium in Ai Khanum also mentions Herakles, and a bronze sculpture representing Serapis-Herakles (a blended Egyptian-Greek form of the god) was found at Begram.

What was the function of this object?

In Ai Khanum, Greek gods, goddesses, and mythological heroes were honored in temples and throughout the city. Many temples in the city reflect the diverse cultural influences present here. The principal temple, for example, had a Central Asian and Mesopotamian architectural design, with a flat roof, indented niches on the exterior, and sun-dried masonry. Greek gods and goddesses, however, were worshiped at the temple. Greek culture survived at this site from approximately 300

BCE until the city's demise in 145 BCE. Hellenistic culture persisted in Central Asia until the Islamic conquest beginning in the seventh century CE.

How was this object made?

The subject was made of cast bronze using the lost wax method, in which a wax model of the figure is used to create molds, in this case, of terracotta. Molten metal poured into the mold causes the wax to melt away and results in a bronze sculpture in the shape of the wax original. The style of this figure is relatively rustic and provincial. The base of the figure was cast separately from the figure, and is hollow. At one point the left foot was broken off, and was repaired with a metal pin. The repair was done somewhat awkwardly (we don't know exactly when), using molten lead to secure the feet of the statute to the base. As a result, the feet are a bit higher on the base than they probably would have been originally, and the right foot protrudes slightly. This may indicate that the base is not original to the sculpture.

The muscled torso of this figure relates to Greek sculptural models. However, the overall effect is rather two-dimensional and less naturalistic than many Greek figural sculptures. The models for this image may have been two-dimensional, originally transmitted from the Greek world through drawings or mosaics, ultimately to be reproduced and re-imagined in a remote colonial city.

Image 2

Ceremonial plaque depicting Cybele, 200 BCE. Afghanistan; Ai Khanum, temple with niches. Gilded silver. *National Museum of Afghanistan*.



Who and what is represented here?

The Greek goddess Cybele, goddess of nature, rides a chariot. She faces front, wears a crown-like headdress, and is protected by a parasol held by a Greek-style priest. In front of her is another Greek goddess, Nike, the goddess of victory, who is winged and holds the reins of the chariot. The chariot itself is drawn by two lions that traverse a rocky landscape that is also strewn with flowers. In front of the chariot entourage is a stepped altar, where another priest is seen making a sacrifice. The priests wear typical ritual garments, each with a wide belt tied three times around his waist and a conical hat. In the sky above the entire scene is the sun god Helios, with rays of light projecting from his head; the crescent moon; and a star likewise radiant. In its entirety, the subject matter here suggests that the goddess of nature is presiding over an orderly, brilliant, and well functioning cosmos.

What was the function of this object?

This object is a silver plate with gold leaf. It was originally nailed to a wooden disk. During antiquity, the object was looted and roughly torn from its wooden backing. The object was discovered in one of the sacristies (sacred areas for ritual and sacrifice) of the principal temple, but it is not clear that it originally belonged to the temple. The object may have been venerated like other divine images, or perhaps used in ceremonial processions; however we do not know for sure how it functioned.

Why is this object important?

This object is one of the oldest items found at the site of Ai Khanum, dating to the third century BCE. This style, subject, and media are unique at the site, and many consider this one of the most beautiful objects discovered at Ai Khanum. One interesting aspect of the piece is that its subject matter blends Greek and Asian themes. Cybele in a chariot drawn by lions is a popular motif from Asia Minor and the Greek Mediterranean. The figure with a parasol walking behind the chariot to venerate a divine figure is a specifically South Asian motif. The fact that the priests are barefoot (rather than wearing sandals or shoes) also reflects Asian norms. The structure of the chariot resembles ancient Persian models, and the stepped altar recalls West Asian examples, particularly from Iran and Syria.

Image 3

Corinthian capital, before 145 BCE.
Afghanistan; Ai Khanum. Limestone.
National Museum of Afghanistan.



What is this object?

This object is a capital whose original function was to top a column, and was the transitional element between the column and its supported ceiling or surmounting structure. It is Corinthian in style, referring to one of the three major Greco-Roman architectural styles and orders of column. We can identify the Corinthian style of capital because of its leafy decorative elements, as seen in the lower half of this example. Acanthus leaves are typically depicted in these capitals. In the Ai Khanum examples, a projecting element appears at each corner, called an angle volute. These are wide and massive, curling underneath themselves to create spiral forms at each of the four corners. These motifs contribute to the organic and curvilinear sense of the sculptural form.

How did capitals function in buildings?

A capital is the upper part of a column or pilaster, which is set above the shaft. In traditional classical architecture the capital supported the entablature or surmounting structures and roof elements. In classical Greek and Roman buildings, the entablature consisted of the architrave, freeze, and cornice. At Ai Khanum, capitals are found frequently, although many other building elements do not reflect classical prototypes.

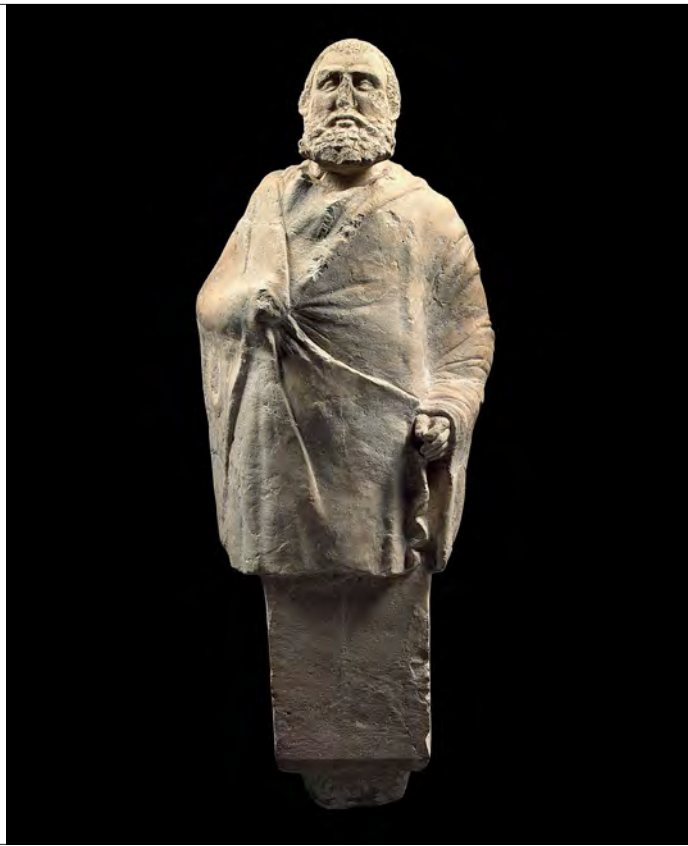
This capital was excavated from the southeastern citadel at Ai Khanum. It must have come from an important building, either a temple on the main promontory of the city or the residence of the military governor.

Why was this type of capital popular at the site of Ai Khanum?

At Ai Khanum, the three classical Greek architectural capital styles appear: Doric, Ionic, and Corinthian. Corinthian capitals were the most popular throughout the Greek colonial world, perhaps because of the visual appeal of their organic and vegetal motifs. Another popular Greek architectural element at Ai Khanum is antefixes, which appeared on roof joints and served to prevent rain infiltration. These antefixes likewise are decorated with organic and curvilinear motifs. Many grand public buildings in the United States also display this type of architectural decoration, including the Asian Art Museum of San Francisco.

Image 4

Hermaic pillar, approx. 200–150 BCE.
Afghanistan; Ai Khanum, gymnasium.
Limestone. *National Museum of
Afghanistan.*



Who is represented here?

A bearded elderly man is depicted, wearing a heavy cloak. He also wears a tight-fitting cap and would have originally held a metal rod in his extended left hand. His draped clothing and general appearance recall the norms of the classical world, although his garments are thicker and heavier than those typically worn in the Mediterranean, reflecting differences in climate.

This sculpture probably depicts an individual named Strato, who was the father of Triballos and Strato the Younger. From inscriptional evidence, we know that these last two individuals were donors who funded the rebuilding of the gymnasium at Ai Khanum, where the sculpture was found. Therefore, the sculpture may be a kind of portrait of the father of these donors, although it also reflects idealized features. Strato the father is believed to have been the director of the gymnasium, a position of significant responsibility in the Greek and Greek colonial worlds. The staff that he once held was a symbol of his authority.

What purpose did this sculpture serve?

The sculpture comes from the gymnasium at Ai Khanum, from the central niche in the northern colonnade. This type of statue, which is a pillar consisting of a human bust and figure, was common in the Greek world.

The term “Hermaic” refers to the Greek god Hermes. Hermes, the messenger god associated with athletics, and the epic hero Herakles, were protectors of the gymnasia. The donor’s inscription dedicated the gymnasium to these two figures. Hermaic pillars often depicted these or other gods and classical figures, as well as individuals associated with the gymnasium.

What does this sculpture tell us about the culture of this city?

The gymnasium is an important structure at Ai Khanum, and this sculpture expresses the continuity of classical culture here. In the Greek world, the gymnasium was a major focus of public life, where men trained for public games, and exercise and sporting events served to promote health, physical strength, civic engagement, and classical ideals about morality and masculinity. The gymnasium was also a school for teaching intellectual subjects. The combination of mental and physical exercise reflects the view, reportedly expressed by Socrates, that “the softening of the body involves the serious weakening of the mind.”

Image 5

Female figurine, before 145 BCE.
Afghanistan; Ai Khanum, sanctuary, temple
with niches. Bone. *National Museum of
Afghanistan.*



Who is represented here?

This nude female figure is probably a kind of fertility image. It is rather crudely carved, with a relatively plump body. Stiff legs are differentiated only by an engraved vertical line. Traces of red and black paint still appear on the image.

The shoulders have holes where the separately made arms were attached. The upper arm pieces shown with this figure may not have been original; they may have, in fact, belonged to another object from the site. The statue does not represent any known classical goddess or specific deity that we can identify.

What was the function of this object?

We do not know for sure how this object functioned. Its relatively small size suggests that it may have belonged to an individual or family who prized it for its associations with fertility. The rendering of this figure emphasizes the woman's lower abdomen and genitals, suggesting an association with fertility. Unlike South Asian models, her breasts are not particularly oversized, and the figure's posture is very static, implying that the model for this particular image is indigenous, rather than related to Indian examples like the many other bone and ivory carvings included in this exhibition.

Nevertheless, the image has a dot at the center of the forehead, and was originally decorated with detachable jewelry, relating to Indian models.

The image stands on a small pedestal. Many such miniature stools, carved in stone, were found at Ai Khanum. They appear to have served as small stands in shrines and private homes, although the types of objects they held are unknown.

How is this object different from others at this site?

This artifact differs from many others discovered at Ai Khanum in several ways. The medium, bone, is less commonly found here and much more associated with another site, Begram. The subject matter does not relate to those of the Greek or Hellenistic world. The style of this carving, with its rigid symmetry, stylized body, oversized head, and almost doll-like appearance, does not relate to classical norms. Rather, it depicts an indigenous style of figural representation. This object may have been produced by a local workshop specializing in bone and ivory, and creating objects to satisfy the tastes of city residents who were not Greek.

Image 6

Circular medallion with Eros and Psyche,
1–200 CE. Afghanistan; Begram, Room 13.
Plaster. *National Museum of Afghanistan.*



Who is represented here?

The subject, a charming representation of a young child, also shows a well-known classical theme. The child is Eros, son of Aphrodite, the Greek goddess of love. Here Eros is a young child with a cherubic face, who has wings shallowly rendered behind him protruding from his shoulders. Across his chest, he holds a butterfly, whose own wings fan out across his chest. This winged creature represents Psyche, the Greek goddess whose name means butterfly. Her name also means “soul.” In the well-known Greek myth, Psyche was a beautiful princess who was the object of envy by Aphrodite. When Aphrodite sent her son Eros to curse Psyche, instead he fell in love with her. Originally a mortal woman, through Psyche’s marriage to Eros and subsequent deeds and adventures, she becomes a goddess. The union of Eros and Psyche represents the allegorical joining of the human soul with the object of desire.

This theme was popular in classical mythology and associated with fertility, as well as with love and amorous desire.

What is significant about the medium of plaster?

There are many plaster molds representing a wide array of subjects that were discovered at Begram. Plaster itself, unlike bronze, gold, ivory, semiprecious stones, and other materials included in this

exhibition, is not a valuable medium. It was not expensive to create or purchase, and does not suggest that this object or others like it served as luxury objects. In the case of this object, the head rendered in a very high relief was created separately, and then attached to the rest of the piece. Use of multiple molds was effective in achieving very three-dimensional works.

What might have been the function of this object? What does this tell us about the site itself?

A current theory proposed by Dr. Sanjyot Mehendale of UC Berkeley is that this plaster object and others like it from Begram may have served as models for artists and merchants. It was not valuable on its own as a luxury item; however, it could have served as a model for objects that would be created in metal or stone. The abundance of such objects from Begram suggests that it was a major location for trade and artisan workshops. Materials from many different media and styles have been discovered at the site, suggesting that it was a very important trading center along the Silk Road.

Many other plaster models have been discovered at Begram, often illustrating classical themes such as this one. Other medallions illustrate various Greek gods and goddesses. Like this medallion, carved in extremely high relief and showcasing sculptural skill, these objects seem intended to demonstrate the virtuosity of the sculptors' work and the broad range of their repertoire.

Image 7

Large decorative plaque with women under a gateway, 1–200 CE. Afghanistan; Begram, Room 13. Ivory. *National Museum of Afghanistan*.



What subjects are represented here?

Two women, adorned in jewelry, girdle-like belts, and elaborate headgear, stand under a gateway. An archway and semicircular form further frame them in the scene. The woman at right holds a mirror in her left hand and dips her right hand into a dish, which is probably a vessel containing cosmetics.

Various Indian mythological creatures appear here, including celestial dwarves, projecting fantastical animal forms that are part lion, and human-headed figures with bird bodies. The last type of figure is also represented in the ceramic vessel included here (Image 7). The female figures are also related to classical Indian subjects. They recall female nature spirits and fertility goddesses (*yakshis*), which were often associated with temples and religious sites. They are considered auspicious and sacred. At Begram, many female figures are represented, similarly adorned and ornamented. Like many other female figures represented at Begram, these women probably represent palace attendants or courtesans, whose beauty and voluptuousness were set off by many kinds of jewelry and personal adornment.

What type of material is this object made from?

This object is made from ivory. Hundreds of carved ivory objects were discovered at Begram. Ivory was a luxury material made from the tusks of Indian elephants. The abundance of high-quality ivory objects at the site suggests that an ivory carvers' workshop existed here.

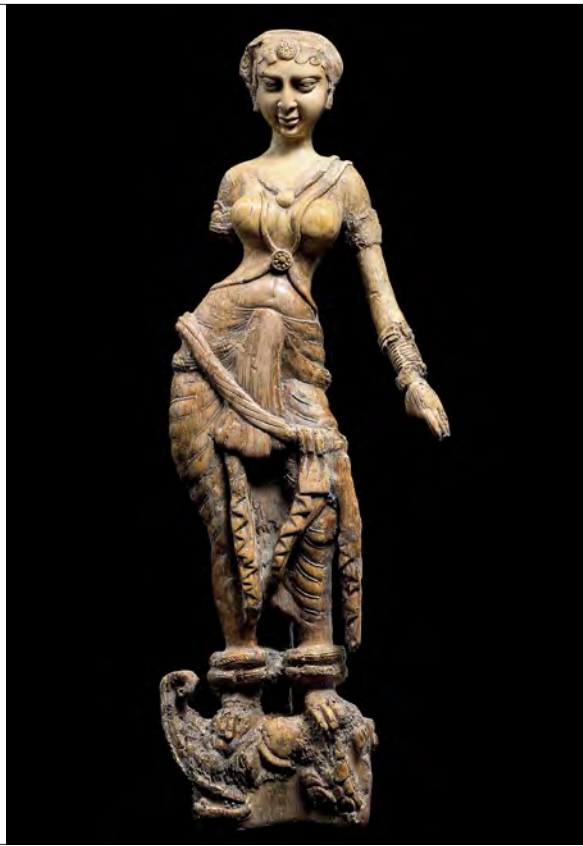
How does this object relate to other works of art? Why are these relationships important?

The style and subjects represented here directly relate to Indian models, specifically the Buddhist stupa (religious monument) sites of Sanchi and Amaravati, which date to approximately the same time as the ivory carvings at Begram. The gateway seen here, with two upright posts crossed by three decorated architraves, directly compares to the gateways found at each of the cardinal directions at these stupa sites. There are no explicitly Buddhist themes or subjects represented in this carving, however.

This object, like other ivories here, suggests that artisans were directly copying Indian models, and that Indian objects were in circulation here. Evidence suggests that many ancient artists were itinerant, and we know from inscriptional evidence that an ivory carvers' guild donated to the construction of Sanchi, the Buddhist monument in northern India. The carved ivories from Begram reflect primarily secular rather than religious motifs. While directly inspired by Indian models, carvers working here and merchants trading here no doubt catered to the taste of local patrons.

Image 8

Woman standing on a makara, 1–200 CE.
Afghanistan; Begram, Room 10. Ivory.
National Museum of Afghanistan.



What is represented here?

A voluptuous, adorned female figure stands on an aquatic Indian mythological creature (*makara*). A makara is usually a composite animal, as seen here suggesting the appearance of a fish, a crocodile, and an elephant.

A standing goddess atop the makara in Indian iconography suggests the goddess Ganga, the personification of the Ganges River. We do not know that this is the definitive subject here, but the representation may have been inspired by such models.

What do the style and details of this object suggest about how artists worked here?

This artwork suggests an interesting blend of stylistic models. The bracelets and anklets directly relate to Indian examples. The curved posture of the figure relates to the *tribhanga* or “thrice-bent” ideal of Indian posture, and also is fitting to the medium of curved elephant tusks. The lower garment of this figure is the Indian dhoti, while the artist’s interest in representing the curvilinear figure and draping sashes may relate to observation of Greco-Roman models. The upper body is adorned with two necklaces, including one that meets in a central floral medallion above the waist.

This type of ornament recalls Central Asian models and goes on to be a common detail in East Asian Buddhist sculpture. The figure originally had a larger headdress, and the surviving details of hair and ornament here may relate more to Mediterranean or Central Asian models than Indian ones. The figure's face also reflects an ideal combining different influences. The sculpture then is a fascinating illustration of the synthesis of numerous styles by artisans working here, and their distinct vision.

Image 9

Large painted goblet, 1–200 CE,
Afghanistan; Begram, Room 13. Glass.
National Museum of Afghanistan.



Large painted goblet, 1–200 CE,
Afghanistan; Begram, Room
13. Glass. *National Museum of
Afghanistan.*



What type of object is this?

These large goblets were drinking vessels as well as luxury objects.

What subjects are represented here?

The first goblet is depicted with a battle scene as the primary central motif. Two primary scenes seem to be rendered, one with armed combatants including three on foot and one on horseback. A larger scene shows three warriors on horseback and two on foot. Others appear to have perished on the battlefield. One possibility for the subject depicted here is episodes from the Trojan War, and the battle between Hector and Achilles.

The second goblet, better preserved, is divided into two registers. At the top, hunting scenes are shown, including hunters, a tiger, an antelope, and another animal. Below, fishermen are shown with various kinds of fish. The latter subject was popularly represented in several objects from this site.

What is significant about the material that the object was made from?

These goblets are made from glass. This medium is a direct import from the Greco-Roman world. These objects were probably produced in the Mediterranean for export trade along the Silk Road. Chemical analysis of glassware from Begram suggests a common source in the Roman world. Goblets such as these were probably made from molds. The coloration that has survived so well on these goblets is probably enameled paint, which was fired a second time to create a durable design.

Image 10

Fish-shaped flask, 1–200 CE. Afghanistan;
Begram, Room 10. Glass. *National Museum
of Afghanistan*.



What is represented here?

A naturalistic, lifelike fish is represented in glass. This object is a type of flask. The tail of the vessel was probably plugged with a cork or other similar material.

What material is this made from, and how was it made?

The object is made from glass, representing techniques and workmanship from the Roman world. This particular item was made from yellow and blue glass. Many glass objects were discovered at Begram, representing a variety of techniques of glassworking. Colored glass was produced through the addition of metal oxides to molten glass material. This type of flask was probably made in a mold, with separate smaller pieces (such as the upper fin) made separately and attached through heat. Fine lines on the surface, indicating the texture of the fish's body, were probably engraved.

What would have been the function of this object?

Several fish-shaped flasks were discovered at Begram. Like this piece, they tend to be approximately life-sized and seem to have functioned as a receptacle or containing vessel. Their exact function, however, is unclear. As is illustrated by other objects in this selection, fish and aquatic themes were often represented among objects at Begram. These subjects were popular in the Mediterranean world, and may have also enjoyed a special popularity at this site.

Image 11

Circular basin decorated with fish, 1–200 CE; Afghanistan; Begram, Room 10. Bronze. *National Museum of Afghanistan*.



What is represented here?

This fanciful and unusual object has been described as an “aquarium” because it represents a scene of fish that appear to be swimming around a central motif. Rendered in bronze, the circular basin has a human looking face at the center, identified as a Medusa head, which has characteristic snake-like locks. Around this motif, plentiful and abundant fish circulate. These creatures have detached movable fins and tails. Originally this piece was accompanied by another circular bronze plaque that it attached to, and overlaid with an elevated piece of clear glass that protected it. Underneath the bronze basin are metal wires with small weights, which serve to make the fins and tails of the fish move. The basin was apparently placed for display in water, where the moving weights made the fish appear to swim.

Why is this object important? What does this tell us about this site?

This object is special in terms of its subject matter, design and engineering, movable parts, and possible function. It seems to be a kind of fanciful, amusing luxury object, which would have been an entertaining curiosity in the home of its owner.

Like the plaster medallions at Begram, this object could have served as an example of the skill and craftsmanship of artists, and a demonstration of their technical ingenuity. This object may have

served to demonstrate the inventiveness, engineering skill, and technical accomplishment of bronze-working artisans. This object, along with others from the site, suggests that Begram was a center of craftsmanship and skilled artisan workshops.

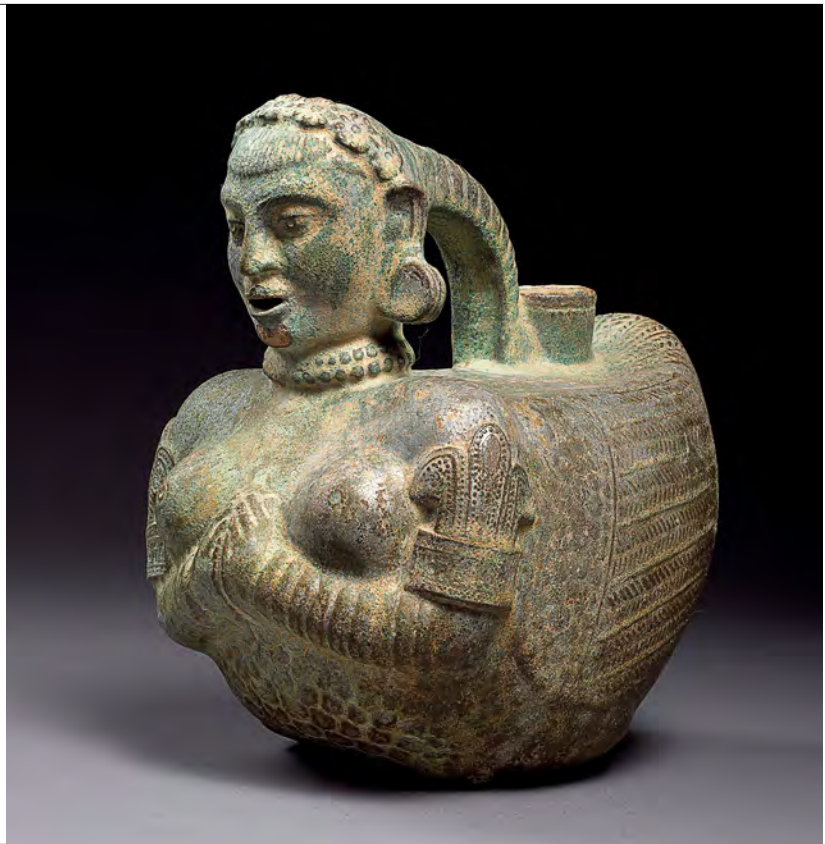
Numerous objects from the site, including glass, ceramic, and bronze, reflect fish motifs. These subjects were popular in the Mediterranean world. In the landlocked, dry environment of Central Asia, fish and aquatic life may also have served as a curiosity, a symbol of the exotic and cosmopolitan, and an emblem of luxury.

How was this object made?

This object was made from a single metal sheet, rather than being cast. The fish designs on the surface of this bronze basin were created by embossing, in which relief decoration is achieved by hammering and punching especially from behind, to create projecting forms. The moving fin and detail parts were created separately, cut from metal sheet.

Image 12

“Kinnari” jug, 1–200 CE. Afghanistan;
Begram, Room 13. Ceramic. *National
Museum of Afghanistan.*



What is represented here?

This subject, the kinnari, is an Indian mythological creature, which generally has a woman's head and the body of a bird or another animal. Its representation at Begram is another example of the importance of Indian themes and iconography at the site. In this case, the vessel of the body is decorated with feathers suggesting wings, and an underbelly suggesting the gills of a fish. The figure's hands are clasped in front of her chest in a typical Indian gesture of reverence.

In India, kinnaris are semi-divine beings, which often appear as decorative motifs at temple sites. In this case the artist seems to have taken a familiar subject and used its formal qualities inventively to create a functional object. The kinnari's mouth serves as a spout in this pouring vessel, while her hair extending in an arch behind her head creates a handle. The body of the vessel, appropriate to the form of a nesting bird, likewise serves as an ample container.

What was the function of this object?

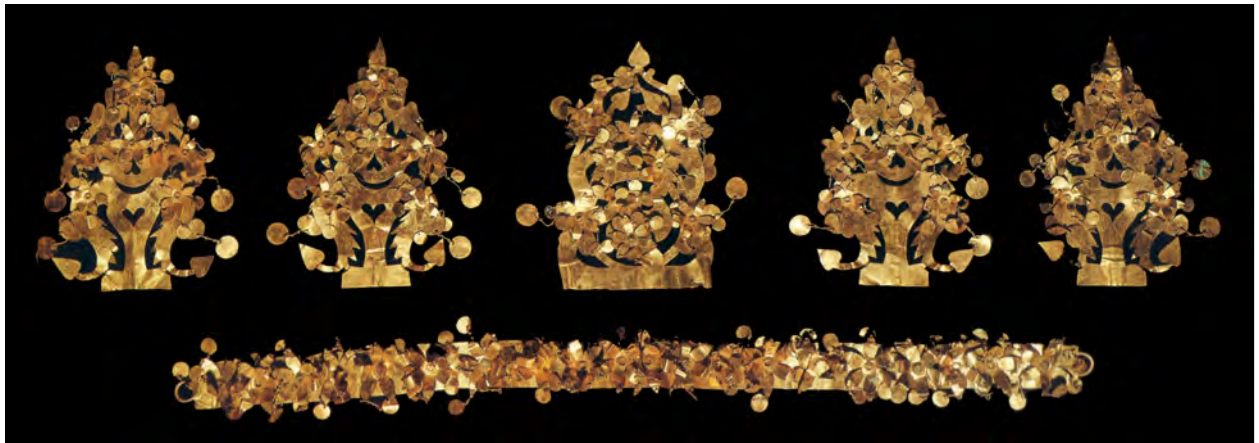
This jug was clearly functional, with a spout for pouring and a central opening for adding liquid. Its quality and workmanship suggest that it was a valued luxury object.

What material is this object made from? What is special about it?

This jug is ceramic, but it has the appearance of a bronze object. Bronze is an expensive luxury material, and many bronze pieces were discovered at Begram. This object's blue-green glaze suggests the color of bronze patina. It may have been a popular color, or perhaps was meant to deceive the eye. In this way, the owner could have a beautiful object that appeared to be made of a much more valuable material.

Image 13

Crown, 100 BCE–100 CE. Afghanistan;
Tillya Tepe, Tomb 6. Gold and imitation
turquoise. *National Museum of Afghanistan.*



The crown from Tomb 6 is collapsible, with five removable tree decorations, which could be attached to a golden band; indicating its function as a nomadic headpiece. Photo: Fredrik Hiebert.

What is this object?

This object is a crown made of various gold elements attached together. The central band that wrapped around the head is decorated with twenty-four floral-shaped elements or rosettes, each of which has a gem at its center. The central band also has five vertical tubes that hold the assemblage of five projecting elements.

The projecting elements recall the forms of trees, with leaf-shaped and branching forms. In four of the five pieces, a pair of birds appears near the top of each tree, shown in profile, with wings extended and their heads and beaks pointing upward toward the top of the tree.

The tree elements and band are all decorated with six-petaled rosettes, as well as circular gold pendants. When worn, this object would have made a lively impression with its moving, reflective parts and accompanying sounds.

What was the function of this object?

This object was discovered at Tomb 6 at Tillya Tepe (Image 14). This elaborate crown was the headpiece for an illustrious young woman, perhaps a nomadic princess. This crown was part of an extremely elaborate burial costume consisting of precious materials. In this tomb, the female figure's head bearing the crown was placed on a silver plate. Her head and upper body were decorated with a vast array of other ornaments. She wore pendants in her hair, and pendants on either side of her face. A golden band served to hold her jaw closed. She wore several necklaces, bracelets, and anklets made of gold and decorated with various gems. A silver coin had been placed in her mouth, and a coin was also found in her left hand. In her right hand was a gold scepter. At the center of her chest was the "Aphrodite of Bactria" ornament (Image 19). Other adornments included mirrors, clothing decorated with appliqués, and leather or felt slippers.

How does this object reflect nomadic culture?

An essential aspect of this object is that its parts are easily detachable and transportable. Assembled as a whole, the crown consisted of a tall and elaborate three-dimensional structure. It could also be collapsed and detached into one long band, and five separate tree-shaped pieces. At the back of the central band are five vertical tubes, into which a long pin on each of the five attachments is inserted to join the pieces. This design and construction demonstrate an essential quality of nomadic life: the ability to travel easily and transport valuable items.

The style and motifs of this crown do not relate to Greek, West Asian, or Northern Indian models. They do, however, relate to other nomadic Central Asian examples. Similar crowns have been found in Korea that date to the Three Kingdoms Period (57 BCE–668 CE). The tree and bird motifs are also found in Kazakhstan, for example, and are generally interpreted as representing the Tree of Life.

Image 14

The skeletal remains of the princess from Tillya Tepe, Tomb 6 as discovered by archaeologists. Photo copyright Viktor Sarianidi. Reprinted with permission.



Illustration of princess wearing crown from Tillya Tepe, Tomb 6.



What is shown here?

This photo shows the crowned female figure as she was discovered in Tomb 6 at Tillya Tepe. Her crown (Image 13) and numerous other ornaments, including necklaces, a gold band under the chin, appliqué ornaments (Image 19), and bracelets are visible.

Who was buried at the site?

Six individuals were buried at the site of Tillya Tepe, one male and at least five females. (Two more tombs at the site were looted and destroyed, their contents lost to the elements and exposure as well as to deliberate destruction and the ravages of war.) An important male leader, perhaps a royal chieftain, was buried here, surrounded by female family members and attendants who may have been sacrificed in conjunction with his death. The females buried at the site range in age from teenage to approximately 40 years old.

This crown, in combination with the other extremely elaborate and valuable jewelry found in this tomb, suggest that this woman may have been the most important female buried at the site, perhaps the principal wife of the male interred here.

The people buried here were probably nomadic invaders and conquerors who came from the east to raid Greco-Bactrian cities. Professor Viktor Sarianidi suggests that these interred nomads may possibly represent the same conquerors who eventually founded the Kushan dynasty in northern India and ruled a vast section of Central Asia.

Image 15

Sheath for three knives, 100 BCE–100 CE.
Afghanistan; Tillya Tepe, Tomb 4. Bronze,
gold, turquoise (within the sheath is the
iron blade of a dagger with a worked ivory
handle). *National Museum of Afghanistan.*



Illustration of prince wearing sheaths from
Tillya Tepe, Tomb 4.



What is this object?

This lavishly embellished object is a sheath that can hold three different blades. The rounded central section (illustrated here) contains an iron dagger with an ivory handle. On the backside of the sheath was another tube where two smaller daggers could be inserted. This construction reflects a Central Asian design, also seen in Siberia and Mongolia.

What was the function of this object?

This knife sheath was part of the burial adornment for the male figure buried in Tomb 4. He was also buried with a long sword on his left side, a dagger on his right, as well as bows, quivers, and arrows. The various weapons and weaponry accoutrements interred with this figure suggest he was an important and strong military leader. Along with weapons and large jewelry items, this princely figure was also adorned with thousands of appliques sewn onto his clothing. Other emblems of his power and authority from the tomb site include a folding stool that might have served as a throne, and a horse sacrifice, associated with Central Asian burials.

What styles and motifs are represented on this object? Why is this important?

This object is remarkable for the variety and sources of stylistic motifs and details. The central raised portion of the sheath shows two fantastical animals engaged in combat, the lower a devouring dragon, and the upper also a dragon-like creature with antlers. The latter may refer to the deer, a common nomadic theme, while the dragon is a Chinese reference. These dragon-like creatures are embellished with pieces of turquoise inlay; the comma-shaped pieces in particular accentuating the shoulders of the lower figure relate directly to ancient Persian models. The high relief modeling of the figures, on the other hand, recalls the naturalism of Greek and Hellenistic influence. On the projecting lobes in the lower portion of the piece, two rams' heads appear, each face framed by curving horns. This motif is common in the jewelry from this site and also seems to represent a local or nomadic motif. Strikingly, the sheath is also decorated by a pattern of repeated inlay swastikas, filled with colored glass paste originally bright blue in color. The swastika is a well-known ancient Indian symbol, associated both with the sun and its life-giving properties, and with auspiciousness. The sheath is further embellished with repeated turquoise inlay designs, predominately small heart shapes that were probably understood as leaf or petal forms. This motif is likewise very popular in the jewelry from this site and reflects nomadic taste and techniques. This object, then, is an amazing synthesis of diverse sources: Chinese, Indian, Greek, West Asian, Central Asian, and nomadic, a vivid example of the multiculturalism of this environment.

Image 16

Ring with an image of Athena, 100 BCE–100 CE. Afghanistan, Tillya Tepe, Tomb 2. Gold. *National Museum of Afghanistan*.



Who is represented here?

The Greek goddess Athena, goddess of learning and wisdom, is depicted on this ring. Her name is inscribed in Greek letters. She wears a helmet and carries a characteristic sword and shield. The sway of her body actually indicates a seated position, although no throne is depicted. The goddess Athena was popular among many Central Asian nomads, probably as a result of her association with warfare and heroism.

What was the function of this object?

The name of Athena is inscribed in reverse, indicating that this ring served as a seal. When pressed into clay or wax the impression can be easily read. It was probably an emblem of authority and prestige. Several other rings from this site are also inscribed with classical subjects and rendered in a similar style.

How was this object made?

Unlike much of the jewelry in this exhibition, which was formed from sheets of gold, the main body of this ring is probably solid cast gold. It is inset with a smaller panel of a lighter colored gold. The image of Athena was created through embossing (working from beneath), and the name was engraved or carved into the front surface of the gold. The relatively soft quality of the gold material allows for greater artistic detail, although the medium is less durable than other materials such as hard stone.

Image 17

One of a pair of pendants showing the “Dragon Master,” 100 BCE–100 CE. Afghanistan; Tillya Tepe, Tomb 3. Gold, turquoise, garnet, lapis lazuli, carnelian, pearls. *National Museum of Afghanistan*.



What is represented here?

In each of this pair of pendants, a male figure is illustrated who wears a crown and garments whose stylistic sources are widespread. The crown may relate to West Asian or Persian models, while his garb appears to be nomadic, a thick robe associated with other Central Asian examples. An Indian-style circle or dot appears on his forehead. He is framed by two opposing dragon-like mythical creatures, with antlers resembling those of an ibex, wings, scales, and gaping open mouths. The central figure may represent a shaman or priestly figure.

What materials were used to create this work of art?

These pendants are relatively small, but extremely elaborate in their design and embellishment. The bodies of the central figure and dragon/antelope figures were created from gold sheet that was embossed and engraved. The three main pieces were then soldered together. The ibex horns are made from granulated gold shot soldered together. Various kinds of semiprecious stones are used to vividly embellish this piece, with comma-shaped turquoise serving to create scales and hooves or claws for the animal creatures, and garnets for their eyes. Other turquoise forms are inlaid in repeated decorative motifs in the lower part of the piece, and carnelian, lapis lazuli, and pearls are also used.

From heavy chains hang decorative elements and gold discs that may symbolize coins, prosperity, and wealth. The overall effect of the pendant was not only visually impressive and complex, but musical as well, as the various pieces moving together created tinkling sounds.

Image 18

Roman coin of Tiberius (obverse), 14–37
CE. Afghanistan; Tillya Tepe, Tomb 3.
Gold. *National Museum of Afghanistan.*



Roman coin of Tiberius (reverse), 14–37
CE. Afghanistan; Tillya Tepe, Tomb 3.
Gold. *National Museum of Afghanistan.*



What is this object and who is represented here?

The obverse (front side) of the coin is illustrated with the head of the Roman emperor Tiberius, crowned with a laurel wreath. Tiberius reigned from 14 CE to 37 CE. Roman inscriptions read TI CAESAR DIVI and AUG F AUGUSTUS (references to his rule and that of his predecessor). On the reverse, a seated female figure holds a staff and a laurel. She is framed by the inscription PONTIF[EX] MAXIM[US] (meaning supreme priest or ruler). This figure is believed to be Livia, the mother of Tiberius and wife of Augustus. She is presented here as a goddess of peace. It is believed that this coin was created in Gaul, part of the Roman Empire in present-day France, during the reign of Tiberius.

How did coins help to date material at this site, and the site itself?

Because we can precisely date such coins, they serve an essential role in establishing the earliest date for the site. The condition of a coin is also an important clue as to whether it was newly minted at the time of its interment, or had already been in circulation for some time, providing more information as to the approximate date of the burial.

This coin is the oldest Roman coin so far discovered in Afghanistan. It is believed that the coin made its way to this locality not across the Silk Road, but rather by a sea route, through southern India. Many Roman coins have been discovered in south and central India.

Why were coins included in a burial site?

Coins were part of the literal wealth of the interred. They reflected status and were essential to accompanying the deceased to the afterlife.

Image 19

Appliqué: the “Aphrodite of Bactria,” 100 BCE–100 CE. Afghanistan; Tillya Tepe, Tomb 6. Gold, turquoise. *National Museum of Afghanistan*.



What is represented here?

The female figure here is generally identified as Aphrodite, the Greek goddess of love also associated with erotic passion and fertility. In classical representations, she is often portrayed as a voluptuous, attractive female figure, sometimes with wings.

What was the function of this ornament?

This small but beautiful object was an appliqué, which served to ornament the princess or female figure in this tomb. This appliqué was the central ornament found in the middle of her chest, indicating that it was a favored object. The power and auspiciousness associated with this goddess may have held special favor for its original owner, for whom this object may have held particular totemic significance. It may have served as a fertility emblem.

How was this object made?

Like much of the jewelry in this exhibition, this figure was created from a sheet of gold that has been modeled and also engraved. This object may have been made from a die, and thus pressed in a stamping process; however the fact that it is unique may suggest that it is instead a one-of-a-kind

piece made through other means. Gold coins, which were produced in multiples rather than as singular objects, were created in metal dies where their forms were stamped out. The dies could be reused many times. Sculptural art works such as this one in gold appear to have been produced using multiple metalworking techniques involving significant time and individual workmanship.

Why is the style of this object important?

This object is another vivid example of the combination of styles and sources expressed in the artworks at this site. The goddess herself is clearly Hellenistic, and her wings, hairstyle, and draping garment reflect classical sources. At the same time many aspects reflect Indian models: her posture with one hand posed on a jutting hip, bracelets on the lower and upper arms, as well as a very notable circle engraved at the center of her forehead, and the three rings at her neck indicating beauty.

Image 20

The Bodhisattva Maitreya, 100–300 CE.
Pakistan; former kingdom of Gandhara.
Schist. *The Avery Brundage Collection*,
B60S597.



Who is depicted here?

This statue from the permanent collection of the Asian Art Museum depicts the bodhisattva or Buddha Maitreya, a figure from the Buddhist pantheon. Maitreya is considered the Buddha of the future, who will be born to teach enlightenment in the next age.

How does this sculpture relate to material in the exhibition?

The source of this stone sculpture is what is known today as Pakistan, in an ancient kingdom that spanned both Pakistan and Afghanistan and which is particularly associated with Buddhist monuments and sculpture. This sculpture, which belongs to the Asian Art Museum, shares important characteristics with objects explored in this special exhibition from the National Museum of Afghanistan. Most notably, the style of this figural sculpture relates directly to classical and Hellenistic models that, as we have seen through extensive evidence explored here, were prevalent throughout this part of the ancient world. In this particular sculpture, classical influence is found in the posture of the figure, the modeling of the arms and chest, the interest in representing drapery and its expression of the figural forms beneath, the idealized facial features, and the wavy naturalistic hair.

This figure is also clothed in relatively thick garments, which differ from the translucent, thin clothing depicted in other parts of the Buddhist world where the climate is hotter or more temperate. We have seen such Hellenistic figure types clad in heavy garments at Ai Khanum and Begram.

A striking aspect of this sculpture is the profusion of jewelry worn by the bodhisattva, including necklaces of many lengths and styles, bracelets, armbands, and hair ornaments. These symbols of wealth and prestige suggest Maitreya's princely status, and also relate directly to the range and complexity of jewelry we have seen in this exhibition. The bodhisattva wears many different kinds of overlapping necklaces, which are rendered in stone but reflect various kinds of metalworking and jewelry techniques, and like the ornaments particularly from Tillya Tepe, must have been in their original presentation lavish, visually complex, and even mobile and sonorous, appropriate to nomadic culture in this harsh but beautiful environment.



**Suggested
Classroom Lesson
Plans and Activities**

Lesson One

GEOGRAPHY—MAPPING OF AFGHANISTAN

Subject:

History and Geography

Lesson Overview:

Students will use map resources to label a map of Afghanistan with its current bordering countries, current key cities, and ancient sites/cities.

Grade Levels:

Upper Elementary School and Middle School

Learning Objectives:

Students will learn the geographical placement of Afghanistan in Asia and its neighboring countries. This knowledge will bring a heightened awareness of the influence and exchange among nearby countries with Afghanistan—culturally, politically, and militarily. They will also become familiar with the names of ancient sites and their location in present-day Afghanistan.

Materials and Preparation:

1. *Afghanistan Map: Teacher Version* (with cities, ancient sites, and bordering countries labeled—as a teacher resource/answer sheet)
2. *Afghanistan Map: Student Worksheet*—teachers should make copies for the class
3. Have available map resources for the students (e.g. student atlas books)
4. Colored pencils for students to label maps
5. *Silk Road Map*
6. *Silk Road Trade List worksheet*

Procedure:

Part A: Afghanistan Map

1. Distribute to the students:
 - a. student *Afghanistan Map* worksheets
 - b. student atlas reference books
2. Using atlas references, students label with colored pencils the following in this order:
 - a. current neighboring countries: Label and color according to the list on the worksheet.
 - b. mountain and river features: Label those listed on worksheet.
 - c. key cities of today: Label those listed on the worksheet.
 - d. ancient sites/cities: Underline or highlight.

Extension:

Maps can become a resource for other activities.

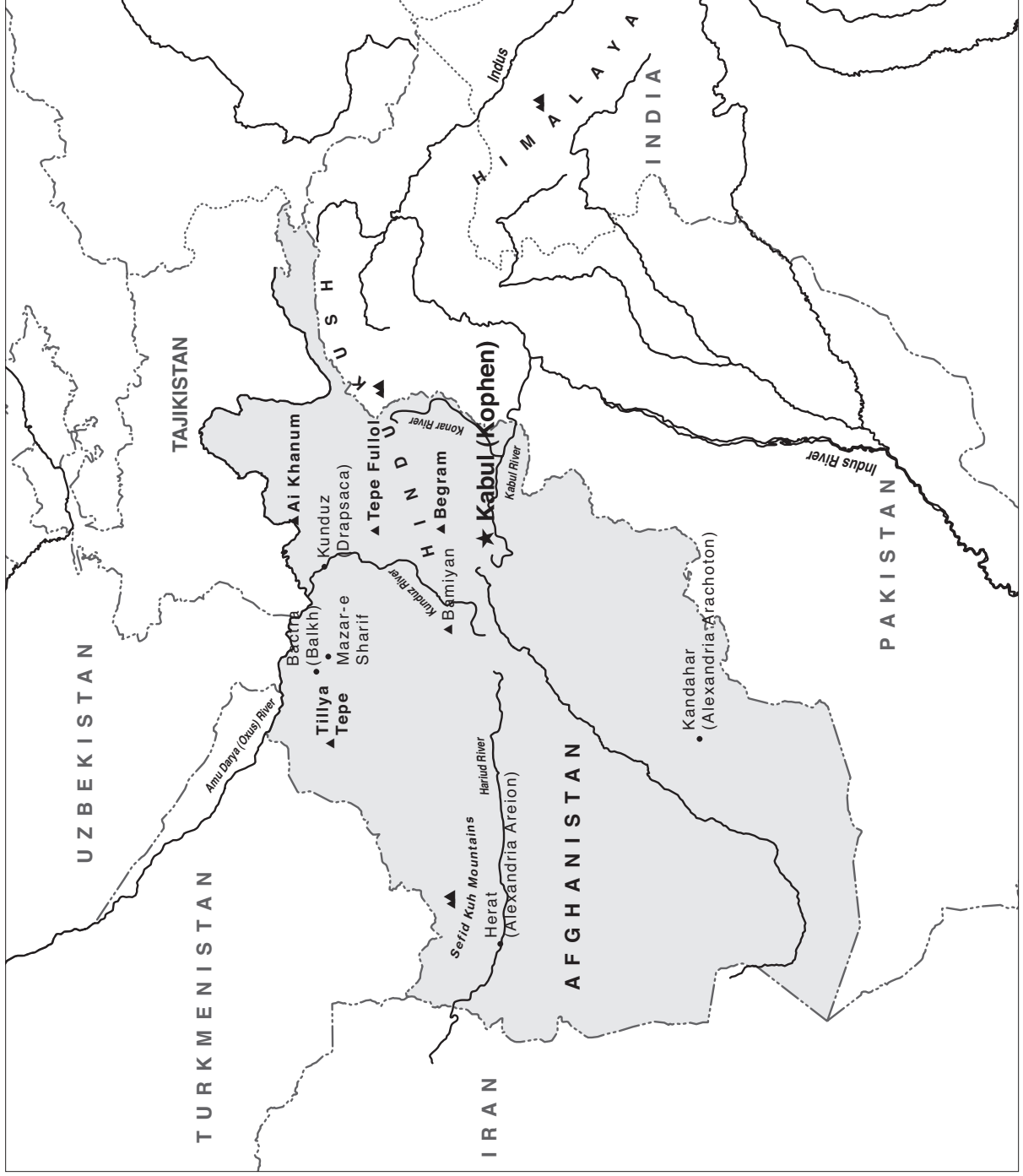
For example, students could:

- map the route of Alexander the Great, including key cities during his stay in Afghanistan and the location of various battles
- make drawings representing natural resources found in Afghanistan
- use it to log events currently occurring in Afghanistan, politically and militarily

Part B: Silk Road Map

1. Distribute to the students:
 - a. student *Silk Road Map* worksheets
 - b. student atlas reference books
2. Create an icon for each of the trade items located on the back of the Silk Road Map. Draw and label the icons for the traded items placing them on the map in the country from which they were traded.

Afghanistan Map (Teacher Version)



COUNTRIES

- Afghanistan
- India
- Iran
- Pakistan
- Tajikistan
- Turkmenistan
- Uzbekistan

CITIES

- ★ Kabul (Kophen)
- Mazar-e Sharif
- Herat (Alexandria Areion)
- Kunduz (Drapsaca)
- Kandahar (Alexandria Arachoton)
- Bactra (Balkh)

ARCHAEOLOGICAL SITES

- ▲ Tepe Fullol
- ▲ Tillya Tepe
- ▲ Ai Khanum
- ▲ Bamiyan
- ▲ Begram

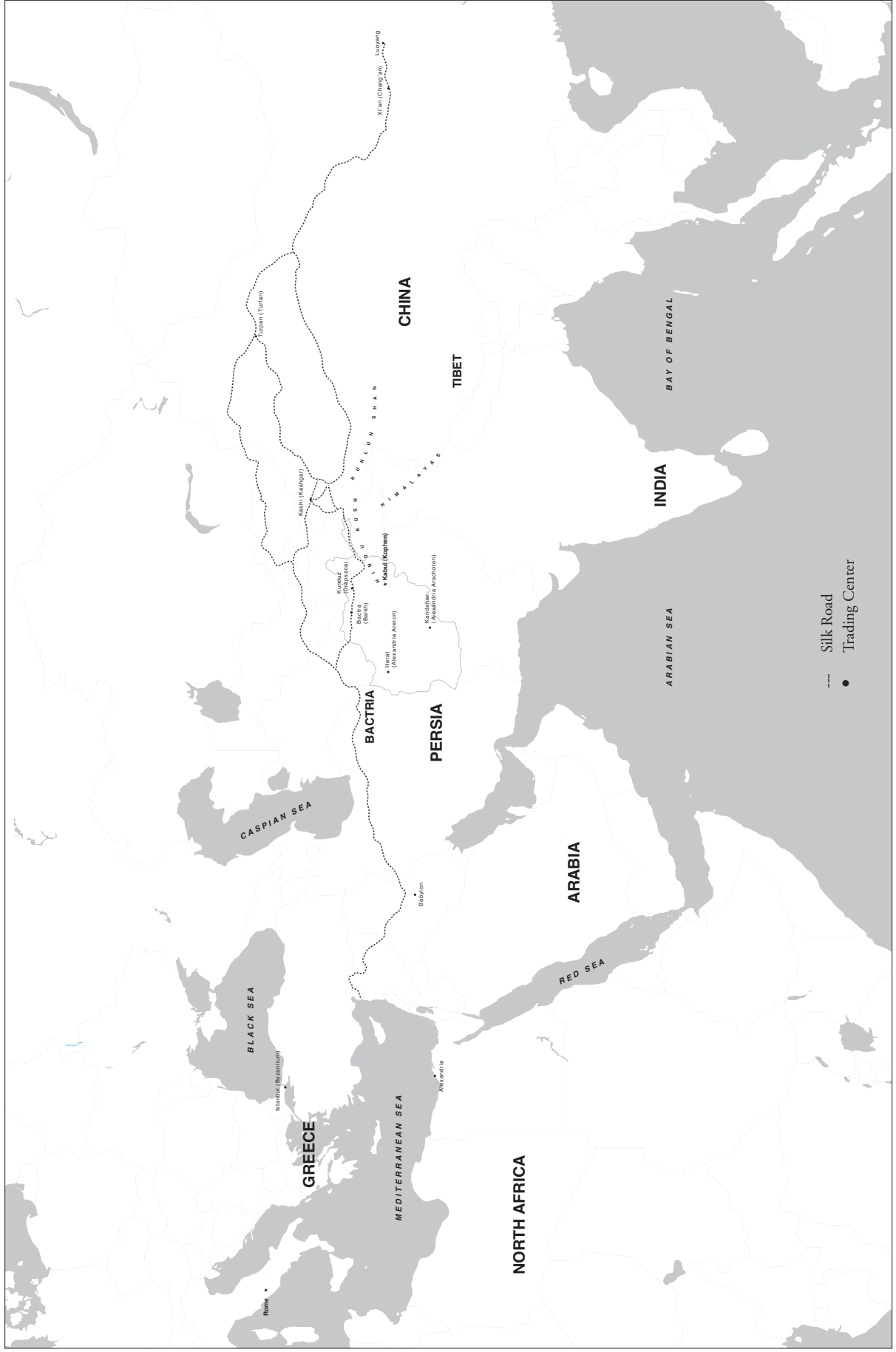
RIVERS

- Amu Darya River (Oxus River)
- Kabul River
- Konar River
- Kunduz River
- Hariud River
- Helmand River
- Indus River

MOUNTAIN RANGES

- ▲▲ Himalayas
- ▲▲ Hindu Kush
- ▲▲ Sefid Mountains

Silk Road Map 300 BCE–100 CE



For the student activity, enlarge and photocopy this map to fit 11 x 17 inch paper.

SILK ROAD TRADE LIST

Afghanistan

- garments
- garnets
- gold
- horses
- lapis lazuli
- rubies

India

- cloth and garments
- coinage
- gold
- incense
- ivory
- precious stones
- spices
- tortoiseshell

China

- bronze mirrors
- cloth and garments
- lacquerware
- silk
- spices

Roman World (including Greece and Rome)

- bronze statuettes
- coinage
- glassware
- gold
- plaster medallions
- wine

This list includes trade items documented in *Periplus of the Erythraean Sea*, a Greek trading manual of the 1st century CE.

Lesson Two

THE KEY HOLDER (TAHILWIDAR) TRADITION AND BACTRIAN TREASURE INVENTORY

Subject:

Drama and History

Lesson Overview:

For centuries a process was followed to ensure that precious art objects would be secure in Afghanistan. A particular person, the “key holder” (*tahilwidar*), and appointed witnesses were responsible for the task of protecting national treasures. In the first part of the activity students will participate in acting out the roles of the key holder, and will discuss the efficacy of this system.

In 1979 a Soviet-Afghan archaeological expedition conducted excavations at Tillya Tepe, an ancient grave site in northern Afghanistan. From six tombs, they discovered objects of gold, silver, and ivory—21,618 objects of exceptional quality, dating from 100 BCE–100 CE. The objects were photographed and recorded and then presented to the Kabul Museum in the capital city.



The Minister of Information and Culture turns to Viktor Sarianidi (left, front) as the inventory team opens the first safe of Bactrian gold in the presidential bank vault, Kabul, 2004. Photo © Kenneth Garrett, National Geographic Society.

To protect the artifacts during the Soviet occupation in 1989, the objects were moved surreptitiously to the vaults of the Central Bank of Afghanistan in the Presidential Palace. Only a few museum staff members knew of the hiding place. At the end of 1992, rumors circulated that the objects had been stolen and sold on the black market and the gold objects melted down.

Finally in 2003, the Afghan government confirmed that the objects were intact and safe in sealed crates stored within the vault of the Presidential Palace. In 2004, representatives from the Afghan government, the National Geographic Society, and the original Soviet archaeological team led by Viktor Sarianidi began a careful inventory. In the second part of the activity students are introduced to the meticulous process that was followed in order to preserve the Afghan *tahilwidar* tradition while taking inventory of the treasure.

Reference: Galvin, Rachael. "The Golden Hoard: An Ancient Afghan Treasure is Recovered" *Humanities*, November/December 25, no. 6 (2004).

Learning Objectives:

In learning about the "key holder" (*tahilwidar*) tradition, students gain an appreciation of how artifacts were and still are protected based on a system of honor, without the assistance of modern technology. Secondly, students will learn the amazing story of how the Bactrian treasure was protected and how modern archaeological technology was introduced to conduct a detailed inventory.

Grade Levels:

Upper Elementary School, Middle School, & High School

Class Time:

30–40 min.

Materials and Preparation:

- *Key Holder Tradition Role Cards* – before the class starts, the teacher will cut out the role paragraph descriptions
- *Bactrian Treasure Inventory Role Cards* – before the class starts, the teacher will cut out the role paragraph descriptions
- *Teacher Script*

Procedure:

1. Teacher asks for 4 student volunteers. Each will read a role card and mime the task in this order: 1) Key Holder (*Tabilwidar*), 2) Witness One, 3) Witness Two, and 4) Witness Three.
2. Teacher reads aloud the *Teacher Script*, pausing to have student volunteers read their role cards when the time is appropriate.
3. Teacher asks discussion questions.
4. Teacher asks for another 6 student volunteers. Each will read a role card and mime the task in this order: 1) Judge, 2) Archaeologist, 3) Translator, 4) Photograph, 5) Clerk, and 6) New Key Holder (*Tabilwidar*).

TEACHER SCRIPT

(Read aloud to students.)

In ancient times, caretakers in the palaces and museums of Afghanistan established a tradition for keeping their treasures safe and protected. The four student volunteers will describe this tradition by reading their role cards aloud.

(Teacher passes out four role cards and asks each student to read the role, starting with the Key Holder – *Tabilwidar*.)

After students read the role cards aloud, teacher asks discussion questions:

- Why do you think they follow the key holder (*tabilwidar*) custom in Afghanistan?
- What might museums in America do to ensure the safety of precious artifacts?

(Teacher continues reading script.)

In 1979, archeologists excavated an amazing treasure trove of jewelry and other objects made of gold and semiprecious stones from a collection of graves at a site called Tillya Tepe in Northern Afghanistan. It was referred to as the Bactrian Hoard. Soon after, the Soviets invaded the country and battles ensued for ten years. After this, the country was in turmoil, with warlords struggling for control and then occupation by the Taliban. For many years, almost no one knew what had happened to the treasure. Some people thought that the precious objects had been stolen from the Kabul Museum and sold on the black market, or that the gold had been melted down. But in fact, in 1989 when the troubles began, a few members of the staff at the Kabul Museum had secretly placed this treasure of more than 20,000 objects in sealed crates in a vault in the Presidential Palace.

Finally in 2003, the government announced that they believed that the objects were intact and secure in the Presidential Palace. On the day they finally opened the vault in 2004, the Minister of Culture, diplomats, officials, and Viktor Sarianidi, the Russian archaeologist who had discovered the Bactrian Hoard more than twenty years earlier, stood anxiously by. With trembling hands, Sarianidi picked up a small plastic bag with an old label, opened it, and with a broad smile announced that this was, in fact, the long lost treasure!

In 2004 archaeologists were invited to formally view the objects and make an inventory.

May I have six volunteers from the class? (Teacher passes out a role card to each volunteer.)

These six students represent six members of Bactrian Treasure Inventory Team. Please come forward and line yourself according to the numbers 1–6. Starting with number 1, please read your title and a description of your job.

(Students one-by-one read their role card, and may mime the action if possible.)
(After the six students read their cards, Teacher continues.)

This process continued for each of the items, a project that took three months to complete. The team ended up listing 22,607 objects, of which 20,587 were from the Tillya Tepe site. The remainder came from archaeological digs in other parts of Afghanistan. The new inventory system uses international standards of museum description while following the Afghan traditional museum system of having a key holder or *tahilwidar*. The exhibit at the Asian Art Museum includes items from this precious treasure.

Discussion Question:

- What are the important features of this type of inventory?

ROLE CARDS FOR THE KEY HOLDER TRADITION

THE KEY HOLDER TRADITION

1. Key Holder (*Tabilwidar*)

At all museums or places with precious objects someone like me is in charge of protecting the treasures. I am called the tahlilwidar, which means “key holder.” I am responsible for guarding the treasure and will pass this charge onto my son someday. I am bonded, which means I have pledged the house and land of my family, so if anything happens to the treasure, I will have to pay for its loss. Only I hold the keys to the locks of the vaults.

THE KEY HOLDER TRADITION

2. Witness One

I am one of three witnesses. We make sure the key holder does his job properly. Every morning we go with the key holder to a vault or room containing precious objects. We observe as he opens the padlock, and then we sign a paper attached to the lock with our names, the date, and the time of day.

THE KEY HOLDER TRADITION

3. Witness Two

After the first vault, we walk in procession following the key holder to a different vault. Once it is opened, we sign the witness paper and proceed to the next vault. At the end of the day, we reverse the process. We inspect that all is in order within each vault, and then after the key holder secures the lock, we record on the witness papers the time of closure next to our signatures.

THE KEY HOLDER TRADITION

4. Witness Three

This is an ancient tradition that has continued to modern times. There were key holders guarding treasures during the time of the kings, during the Soviet period, and during the Taliban times. Even now we follow this formal ritual twice a day at the National Museum of Afghanistan, Kabul, at its opening and closing. I consider it an honor to be an official witness.

BACTRIAN TREASURE INVENTORY ROLE CARDS

BACTRIAN TREASURE INVENTORY

1. Judge

In 2004 archaeologists were invited to view the objects that had been taken from sealed vaults in the Presidential Palace. However, the key holder (*tahilwidar*), who was originally appointed to oversee the safety of this collection had disappeared years ago. No one knew what had become of him or any member of his family. After much debate, the President of Afghanistan decreed that a judge from the Ministry of Justice would be allowed to serve as a substitute key holder. I am the judge who was given the honor to remove an object from the treasure chest and hand it to the head archaeologist.

(Student mimes taking an object from a treasure chest and handing it to the archaeologist.)

BACTRIAN TREASURE INVENTORY

2. Archaeologist

I am Frederik Hiebert of the National Geographic Society. To preserve the Afghan key holder tradition while introducing modern archeological inventory methods, I first receive each object from the judge. Then, using digital calipers and a digital scale, I measure and weigh the object and then assign it a new number.

(Student mimes receiving the object, measuring and weighing it.)

BACTRIAN TREASURE INVENTORY

3. Translator

Over the previous 25 years of shifting the objects from place to place, most of the original labels were either missing or unclear. So, using a laptop computer and a printer, I write a detailed description of the object in English and in Dari, the official language of Afghanistan.

(Student mimes typing on a laptop.)

BACTRIAN TREASURE INVENTORY

4. Photographer

As the photographer I make digital photographs and my team prints them out on the spot. We attach the photographs to the English/Dari description sheet of the object.

(Student mimes taking photos.)

BACTRIAN TREASURE INVENTORY

5. Clerk

It is my job to make sure that all the papers are in order. I make copies of the inventories using the latest scanning equipment and then give copies to the museum, the Ministry of Justice, and other institutions.

(Student mimes organization of papers.)

BACTRIAN TREASURE INVENTORY

6. New Key Holder (*Tabilwidar*)

I have been appointed as the new official key holder (*tabilwidar*) of this treasure trove. From this day on I am responsible for its security. After watching a team carefully pack each object in conservation materials, I sign my name to the English-Dari information sheet with photographs and place the papers alongside the object in a new safe.

(Student mimes signing of the paper and placing each object in a new, safe place.)

Lesson Three

ARCHAEOLOGY INVENTORY PROJECT

Subjects:

History, Language Arts, and Visual Arts

Grade Levels:

Middle School & High School

Lesson Overview:

Before the teacher shows slides of the objects to the class, students are given a picture of an object from the exhibit. The student is instructed to look with the “eyes of an archaeologist.” The student will first carefully take notes on the size, shape, material, and date of the object; then secondly, make a detailed drawing, describe the artifact in words, form a hypothesis of its meaning and function, and generate questions. The purpose of the lesson is to heighten student observation skills and encourage participation during the teacher slide show.

Learning Objectives:

To expose students to terminology used by archaeologists and to heighten awareness of the rich discoveries in Afghanistan. Students make visual observations, write clear, succinct descriptions, form hypothesis on the function of the artwork, and investigate the influences of different cultures on art found along the Silk Road in Afghanistan.

Materials and Preparation:

- featured artworks: eight artifact images from the exhibit (also included in CD of images)
- student worksheet – *National Museum of Afghanistan, Archaeological Inventory Project* – teachers should make a copy for each student
- *Artifact Image Sheets A-H* – students may work in pairs or groups of four to observe and analyze one object
- CD of images from the Asian Art Museum’s teacher packet *Afghanistan: Hidden Treasures from the National Museum, Kabul*

Class time:

45 min.

Procedure:

1. Distribute to each student a copy of the *National Museum of Afghanistan Archaeological Inventory Project* worksheet.
2. Pass an image of one artifact (this can be any of the following *Artifact Image Sheets A-H*) to each student. Students with the same artifact may group together to make observations, but each student should complete his/her own worksheet to ensure full student involvement.
3. Using the *Artifact Image Sheets A-H* as a reference, students record information: Object ID #, Object Name, Location, Date, Material, Size, and Condition.
4. Students make a drawing of the image. This helps focus the student on details of the object.
5. Students complete the information about the image:
 - Observation (detailed description, using reverse side of paper if necessary)
 - Function (student's supposition)
 - Ownership (the student imagines who might have owned it)
 - Culture (students may look in other books or go online to research characteristics of art pieces from the cultures listed)
6. Finally, students write a story based on the artifact. It can be creative (an exploration of who might have owned this object, how the artifact was used, who was affected by it, what might have been happening in the society at the time of its use, battles of the times, famous characters of the times, etc.) Stories can be written individually, or students can collaborate to write a single story about the artifact.

Extension:

On the same day or soon after the activity, the teacher will show the CD of images that accompany the teacher packet. Before reading the description accompanying the slide, the teacher can ask the students who completed an inventory sheet on that object to use their worksheets as a reference and to share with the class their observations and hypotheses about the function, ownership, culture, etc.

Artifact Image Sheet A

Object ID: 04.42.7



Object ID: 04.42.7

Object Name: Ceremonial plate with a representation of Cybele

Location: Ai Khanum, temple with niches

Date: approx. 200 BCE

Material: Gilded silver

Size: 25 cm

Artifact Image Sheet B

Object ID: 04.1.117



Object ID: 04.1.117

Object Name: Circular medallion with Eros and Psyche

Location: Begram, Room 13

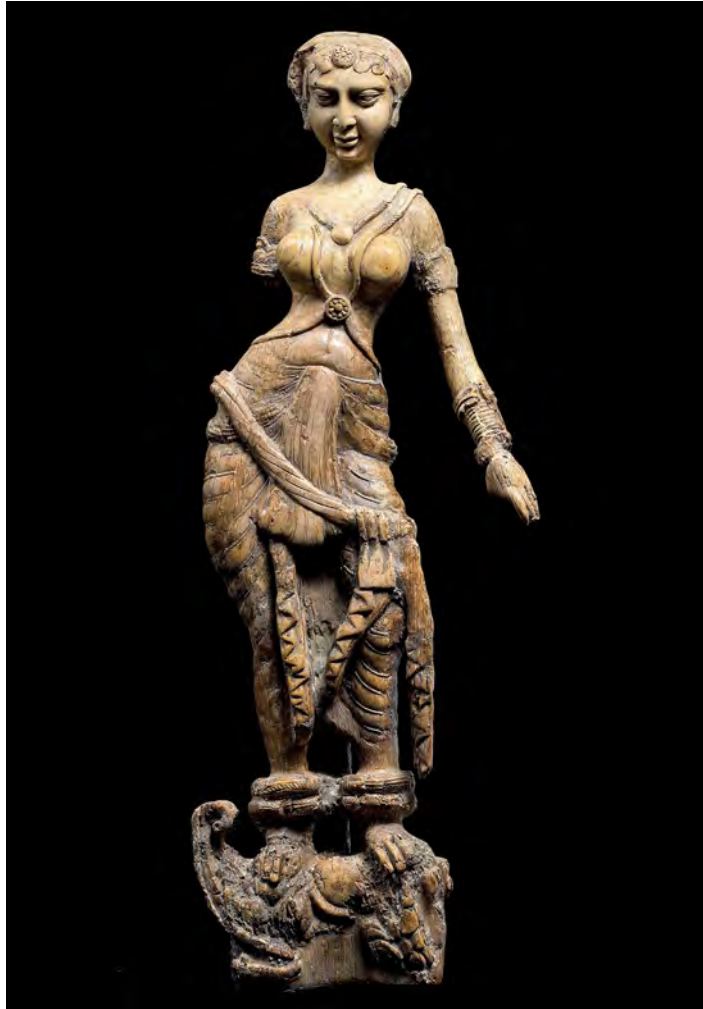
Date: 1–200 CE

Material: Plaster

Size: 16.5 cm

Artifact Image Sheet C

Object ID: 04.1.15



Object ID: 04.1.15

Object Name: Woman standing on a makara

Location: Begram, Room 10

Date: 1–200 CE

Material: ivory

Size: 45.6 cm

Artifact Image Sheet D

Object ID: 04.40.426



Object ID: 4.40.426

Object Name: Roman coin of Tiberius

Location: Tillya Tepe, Tomb 3

Date: 14–37 CE

Material: Gold

Size: diameter 1.9 cm

Artifact Image Sheet E

Object ID: 04.40.50



Object ID: 04.40.50

Object Name: Crown

Location: Tillya Tepe, Tomb 6

Date: 100 BCE–100 CE

Material: Gold, imitation turquoise

Size: 45 x 13 cm

Artifact Image Sheet F

Object ID: 04.40.109



Object ID: 04.40.109

Object Name: One of a pair of pendants showing the “Dragon Master”

Location: Tillya Tepe, Tomb 2

Date: 100 BCE–100 CE

Material: Gold, turquoise, garnet, lapis lazuli, carnelian, pearls

Size: 12.5 x 6.5 cm

Artifact Image Sheet G

Object ID: 04.1.84



Object ID: 04.1.84

Object Name: Kinnari jug

Location: Begram, Room 13

Date: 1–200 CE

Material: Ceramic

Size: 20.2 x 13 x 21.8 cm

Artifact Image Sheet H

Object ID: B60S597



Object ID: B60S597

Object Name: The Bodhisattva Maitreya

Location: Pakistan, ancient region of Gandhara

Date: 1–100 CE

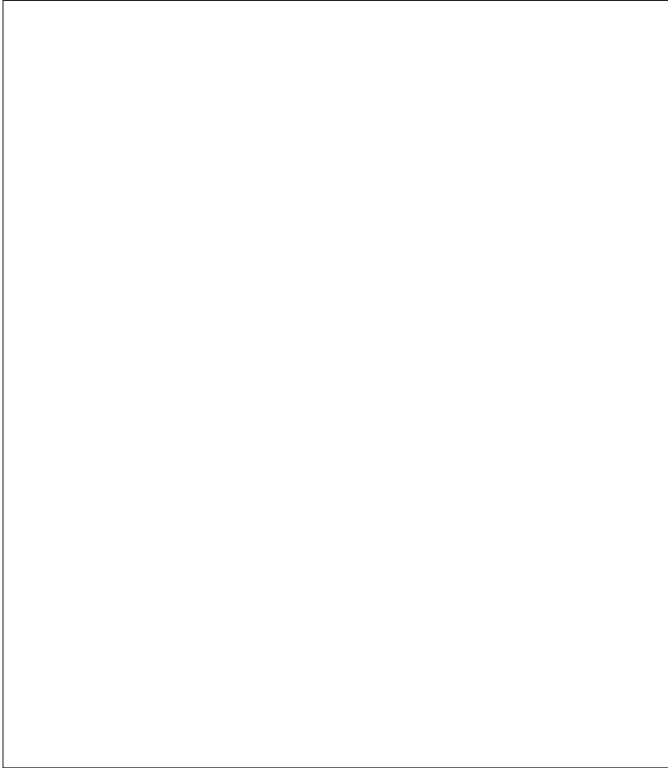
Material: Schist (metamorphic rock)

Size: 104 x 22 x 23 cm

National Museum of Afghanistan, Archaeological Inventory Project

Name of Archaeologist: _____ Date: _____

Make a drawing of your object.



Object ID #

Object Name:

Location:

Date:

Material:

Size:

Condition:

1. Observation: Describe in detail what you see—figures (body positions), animals, plants, geometric designs, etc.
2. Function: What do you think the object was used for?
3. Ownership: Who might have owned this object?
4. Culture: Can you guess which culture(s) influenced the style and design of this object? (Greek, Roman, Chinese, Indian, Mesopotamian, Persian, Afghan)
5. On the back of this sheet, create a story to accompany your object.

Lesson Four

TIMELINE OF AFGHANISTAN

Subject:

History and Visual Arts

Grade Levels:

Middle School

Lesson Overview:

Students will construct a timeline showing key events in the history of Afghanistan, with emphasis on ancient civilization.

Learning Objectives:

By constructing a graph that visually reflects a time span, students will gain a basic understanding of BCE and CE and specifically when key events happened in Afghanistan.

Materials and Preparation:

- student worksheet: *Make a Timeline: Key Events in the History of Afghanistan*— teacher should make copies for students
- rolls of blank paper or 4 sheets of blank paper for each student
- rolls of cellophane tape for students to share
- yardstick or long straightedge, centimeter rulers, pencils, colored pencils

Class time:

two 45 min. sessions

Procedure:

1. Using cellophane tape, students tape 4 sheets of paper on the 8.5 inch side of 8.5 x 11 inch paper to make one long piece that is about 44 inches (112 cm), measured horizontally, and 8.5 inches measured vertically. Using a yardstick, students draw a horizontal line the length of the 4 taped sheets of paper.
2. Using a scale of 1 cm = 100 years, students mark off units from left to right along the horizontal line, labeling the first mark as 8000 BCE. The next mark to the right will be 7900 BCE. At every 5 marks students should label the year, beginning with the mark representing 7500 BCE. Therefore,

students will mark ticks at every centimeter (century), and will label every 500 years. Make sure students label the numbers in descending order as they label from left to right in the BCE range (getting closer to the year zero), and then in ascending order as they go to the right of year zero in the CE range. Teacher may model by taping a long paper to the front board and demonstrating the labeling, using a bold marking pen visible to students.

3. Students continue labeling until they get to the current year.
4. Using the timeline date sheet *Make a Timeline: Key Events in the History of Afghanistan*, students will label key events at the appropriate date on the timeline.
5. Students draw and color a small illustration to represent each key event.
6. After all the key dates from Afghanistan history are labeled, students can insert their own birth dates, 1492 (Columbus “discovery of America”), 1776 (founding of the US), etc.

Extension:

Using the timeline *Key Events in the History of Afghanistan*, students can record key events of other civilizations that are studied in the school year. For example, when setting up the initial timeline, have students divide the long paper into 4 rows, one under the other, and label each row with the name of a civilization. The simplest way is for students to first fold the 4 papers at the tape seam, then fold the packet into fourths, each row about 2 inches deep. For example, if studying Afghanistan, China, India, and Mesopotamia, the top of the paper would have the dates (centuries) labeled for Afghanistan, and below this row would be the events that happened in China, and below this the row with events of India, and below that a row with the key events of Mesopotamia. Students would then get a clear comparison of what was happening in different parts of the Asian and Eastern Mediterranean world at the same time.

MAKE A TIMELINE: KEY EVENTS IN HISTORY OF AFGHANISTAN

1. Beginning with the year 8000 BCE, mark the centuries on your paper, using the scale: 1 cm = 100 years. Put a mark at each century, and write the year on every 5 centuries.
2. Show the span from 8000 BCE to 2009 CE.
3. Fill in the following information on the appropriate spaces on your timeline:

Key Events in History of Afghanistan

7000 BCE	Farmers and herders settle in plains around Hindu Kush mountains; mud-brick houses; clay pottery
Approx. 4500 BCE	Agricultural settlements (the earliest forms of towns) appear in these plains and foothills
Approx. 4000 BCE	Lapis lazuli, gold, and tin begin to be exported to India, Mesopotamia (ancient Iraq), and the Mediterranean world
Approx. 2200 BCE	The Bronze Age begins in northern Afghanistan
Approx. 2000 BCE	Tepe Fullol (N. Afghanistan): Walled, symmetrically planned cities, elaborate burials, similarities to the Indus civilization; economic prosperity, administrative organization, artistically designed gold bowls similar to Mesopotamian wares
Approx. 522 BCE	Zoroastrianism spreads throughout the Persian Achaemenid Empire
519 BCE	Cyrus the Great conquers Afghanistan, which becomes part of the Persian Empire. An inscription recording Cyrus' conquests is the first known use of the name Bactria.
334–323 BCE	Alexander the Great conquers the Persian Empire. He reaches and takes control of Afghanistan around 328 BCE.
Approx. 300 BCE	Greco-Bactrian city of Ai Khanum founded by followers of Alexander: palace treasury, temple sanctuary, administrative quarters, gymnasium, theater, cemetery, Greek language
Approx. 145 BCE	Nomads from the northern steppes overrun Ai Khanum, bringing with them portable art often decorated with real and imaginary animals.

Between 100 BCE and 100 CE	Nomadic chieftain and five women buried with gold ornaments at Tillya Tepe
50	Begram: Important transit and trading city on Silk Road; artisan workshops producing luxury goods. Trading city for Roman and Egyptian glass and alabaster, bronze, Indian-style decorative and sculptural items in ivory and bone, Chinese lacquer bowls, ivory decorated furniture
375	Monumental Buddhist sculptures begin to be carved at Bamiyan
850	Arrival of Islam
1220	Genghis Khan destroys the Bactrian city of Balkh
1271–1295	Marco Polo travels throughout Asia
Approx. 1370	At the former city of Balkh, Tamerlane (Timur-i-Leng) proclaims himself emperor of the region.
1504	Babur assumes power in Kabul
1839	First Afghan War with Britain
1879	Second Afghan War with Britain
1919	Coalition of Warlords form country of Afghanistan The modern nation of Afghanistan achieves independence from Britain
1936–1939	French-led excavation of Begram
1965–1975	French-led excavation of Ai Khanum
1978	Burials at Tillya Tepe begin to be excavated by a Soviet–Afghan team of archeologists
1979	Soviet invasion; end of scientific excavations in Afghanistan
1988	Masterpieces from the Kabul Museum (later the National Museum of Afghanistan, Kabul) hidden in the Central Bank at the presidential palace in Kabul

1992–95	National Museum looted and destroyed during years of civil war
1998	Taliban take control of Afghanistan
2001	Bamiyan sculptures destroyed by the Taliban who are overthrown months later
2001	American military forces intervene
2004	Crates in the Central Bank vaults opened, revealing the works of art from the National Museum that had survived decades of turmoil
2008	Afghan Treasures exhibited in USA

Lesson Five

PRESERVING THE TREASURES OF AFGHANISTAN

Subject:

History

Grade Levels:

Middle School

Lesson Overview:

From the reading of the exhibition introduction, students will learn how steps were taken from 1978 to the present to preserve art treasures in Afghanistan. They also identify what treasures from their own family, community, and nation they would consider worthy of preserving.

Learning Objectives:

Students will gain an appreciation of the great lengths the people of Afghanistan took to prevent theft and destruction of their national treasures while the country was under siege by the Soviets and by the Taliban.

Materials and Preparation:

- Exhibition introduction
- *Student worksheet – Preservation Assignment*– make a copy for each student.

Class Time:

40–45 min. The lesson can take 15 min. for the teacher to summarize and read the exhibition introduction and to give the worksheet for a homework assignment; or 40–45 min. of classroom discussion and group work.

Procedure:

1. Read aloud the exhibition introduction.
2. Distribute to students copies of the *Preservation Assignment*.
3. Students write responses to Question 1.
4. Students share their responses with members of a group of 3–5 students.
5. Each group makes a summary of their members' responses and reports to the class.

Extension:

As a homework assignment, students interview a parent or guardian.

Lesson Six

Title:

Tillya Tepe Gold Ornaments and Accessories

Grade Levels:

Elementary School, Middle School & High School

Lesson Overview:

Afghanistan was a nucleus of cultural, artistic, and economic activity. The exchange of goods and ideas along the Silk Road is revealed in archaeological artifacts found in this Central Asian country. The artifacts from the archaeological site of Tillya Tepe belonging to nomads included an array of body ornaments, accessories, and items for ritual use.

These objects show a combination of subject matter, styles, and design elements inspired by diverse cultural and regional influences. This is exemplified in a bronze knife sheath from Tillya Tepe, Tomb 4, that draws upon Chinese, Indian, Greek, West Asian, and Central Asian sources. This display of multicultural embellishments is a dazzling example of the extraordinary artistic and cultural heritage of Afghanistan.

Learning Objectives:

Students examine how artifacts found at Tillya Tepe reflect artistic and cultural exchange along the Silk Road. Students will learn how a nomadic group in Central Asia incorporated motifs from the eastern Mediterranean to China with their own to create items with composite styles and function. They will learn how many of the objects were made with gold, engraved with patterns, modeled into geometric shapes and mythical creatures—composite animals and fish forms, and embellished with semi-precious stones. Students will combine the cultural and artistic symbols of ancient Afghanistan to create their own ornament or accessory.

Materials and Preparation:

Sheath Pattern, Pendant Pattern, Motifs and Patterns of Tillya Tepe, Materials Supply List, CD of images from the Asian Art Museum's teacher packet *Afghanistan: Hidden Treasures from the National Museum, Kabul*

Class time:

two 45 min. sessions

Procedure:

1. Show and discuss images of the Tillya Tepe artifacts featured in the Asian Art Museum's teacher packet *Afghanistan: Hidden Treasures from the National Museum, Kabul*
2. Ask students to consider:
 - Who would wear this object? (A princess or male warrior?)
 - What kind of life did the wearer have? Does it tell you if the person was sedentary or nomadic?
 - How might the object be worn or used? (To sheath a knife, buckle a boot, wear as a pendant, or ornament the body and/or clothing?)

ACTIVITY 1: ENGRAVE A SHEATH



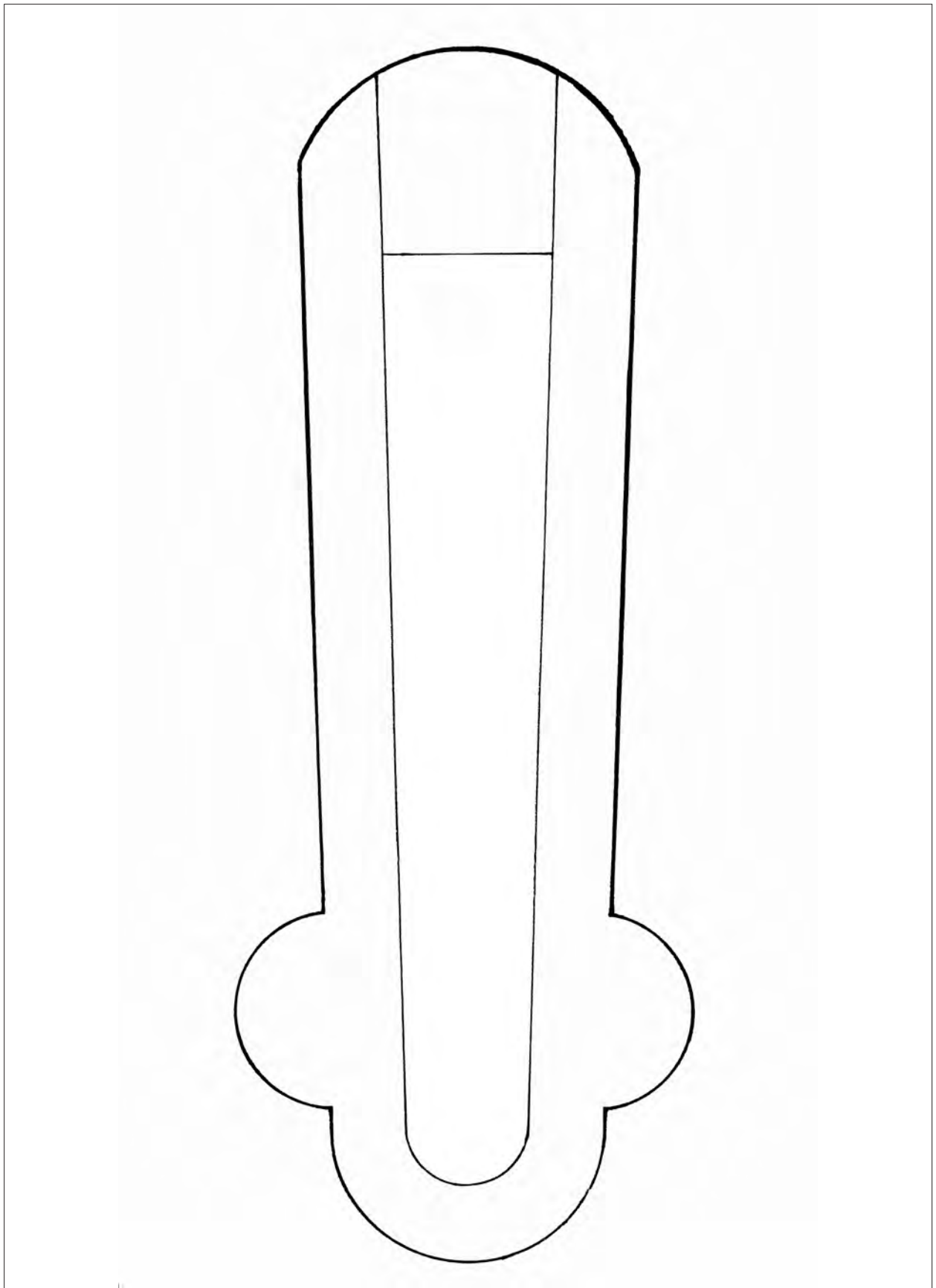
Part I: Making the Sheath

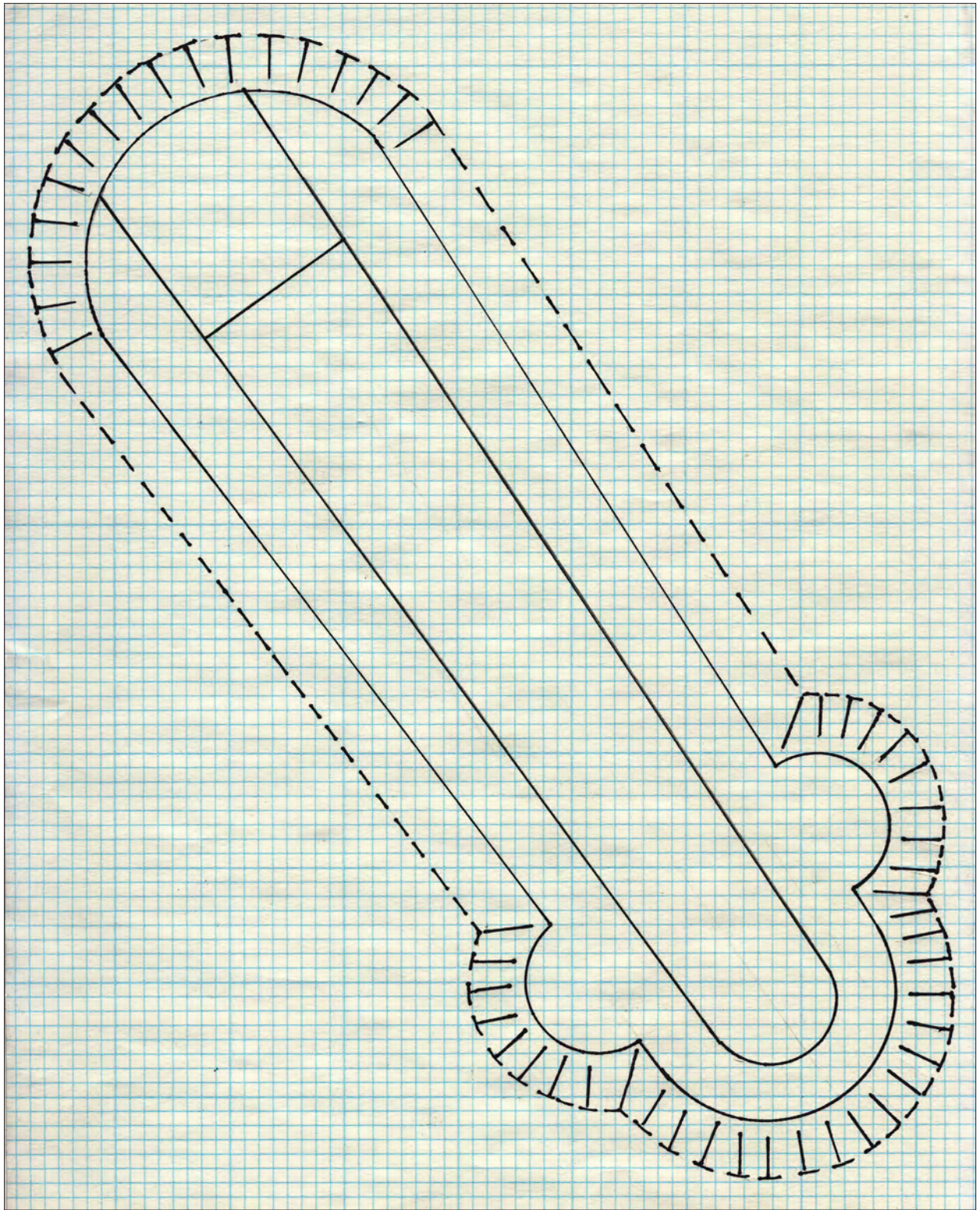
1. Place carbon paper on cardboard. On top of this, place the pattern of the sheath or pendant and secure in place with tape.
2. Trace the shape (not the dashed margin lines) with a pencil, pressing firmly to transfer the design to the cardboard.
3. Remove the pattern and carbon paper from the cardboard.
4. Cut out cardboard shape with scissors.
5. Position pattern onto metal foil and secure with tape.
6. Trace the shape and dashed margin lines onto the metal foil with a pencil; press firmly.
7. Remove the pattern and cut the shape out from the metal foil with scissors along the margin line.
8. Cut dart lines around the curves from the metal foil edge to the solid outline of the shape.
9. Position the cardboard shape centered on the metal foil shape.
10. Fold the metal foil over the edges of the cardboard shape and press edges and flaps firmly to the cardboard.

Part II: Engraving Designs

11. Trace the cardboard shape onto blank white paper for design embellishments.
12. Design your embellishments on the white paper outline creating your own composite mystical creatures and patterns using the motifs found on objects from Tillya Tepe.
13. Position paper onto metal foil and secure with tape. Using a wood stylus, engrave your design into the metal foil, and then remove the paper.
14. To add patina, paint the surface of the metal foil with acrylic paint and wipe excess off with a soft rag or paper towel, leaving paint in the recesses.
15. To complete, embellish with stones by pasting them to the metal foil.

Caution when handling cut metal. Edges and points will be sharp.



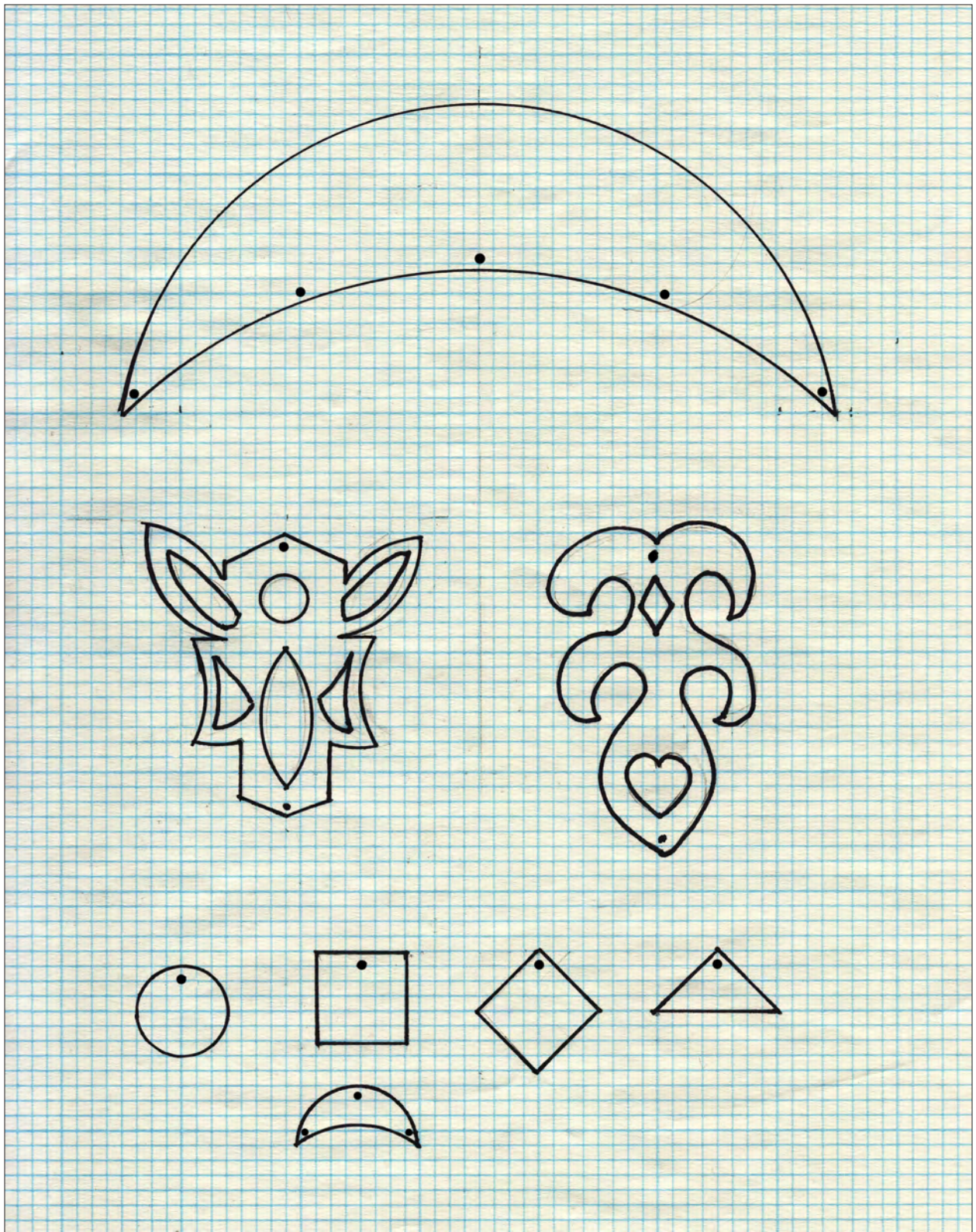


ACTIVITY 2: CONSTRUCT A PENDANT



1. Position shape patterns onto metal foil and secure with tape. (*Trace the cardboard shape onto blank white paper for design embellishments.*)
2. Trace the shapes onto the metal foil with a pencil; press firmly.
3. Remove the patterns and cut the shapes out with scissors.
4. Punch and cut out other small dangling geometric shapes from the excess metal foil to add to the composition of the pendant.
5. Position the shapes into a pleasing arrangement that will be connected with wire links.
6. Punch 1/8" holes in the metal pieces where they will connect to each other.
7. Using 2–3" lengths of gold wire, thread one end of the wire through each of the holes in the metal foil shapes and wrap the wire around itself, making a secure loop. Fold over the other end of the wire and wrap around itself to make another loop.
8. To connect the shaped pieces, thread a third segment of wire through one loop and wrap. Then, thread the other end of the wire through the loop of the other shape and wrap.
9. Connect all the shapes with wire links.
10. Glue stones to embellish the metal pieces.

Caution when handling cut metal. Edges and points will be sharp.



ACTIVITY 3: COMBINING ENGRAVED AND ASSEMBLED METALWORK

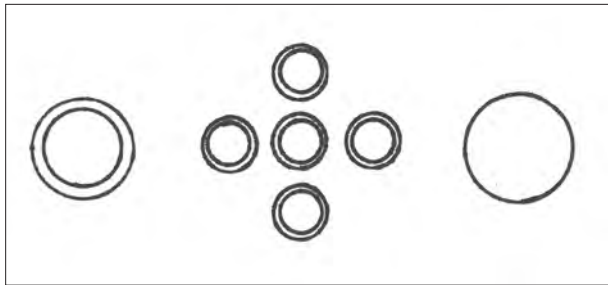


1. Design a shape of out of cardboard.
2. Trace the cardboard shape onto a sheet of metal foil.
3. Draw a 1/2" margin around the metal foil shape.
4. Cut out shape along the margin line with scissors.
5. Snip darts ("V" shaped cuts) into the metal foil around all curved edges.
6. Position the cardboard shape centered on the metal foil shape.
7. Fold the metal foil over the edges of the cardboard shape and press edges and flap firmly to the cardboard.
8. Engrave your design onto the metal foil shape and punch hold where you want to add dangling metal foil shapes.
9. Cut out metal shapes, punch out holes, and connect with wire links.
10. Attach the dangling pieces to the engraved cardboard shape.
11. Paint with acrylic paint and wipe off excess with a paper towel to add patina.
12. To complete, glue gemstones in place.

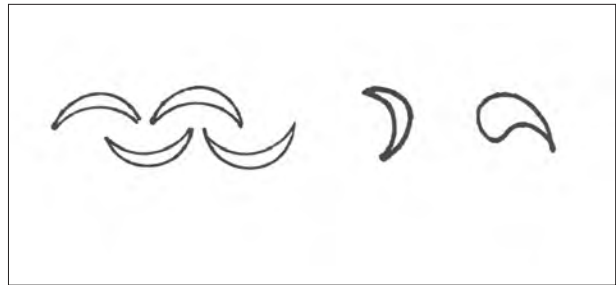
Caution when handling cut metal. Edges and points will be sharp.

AFGHANISTAN ART ACTIVITIES
MOTIFS AND PATTERNS OF TILLYA TEPE

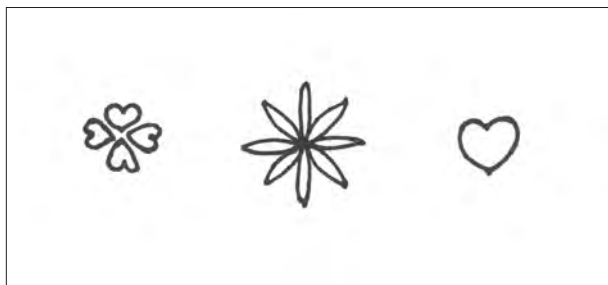
Circles



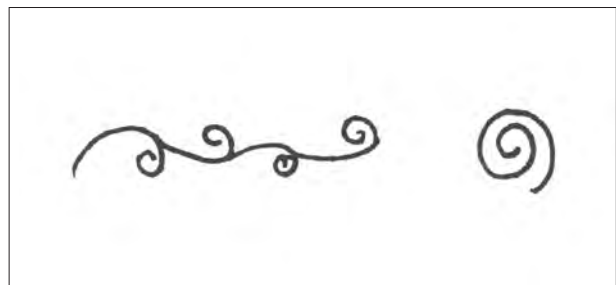
Crescents



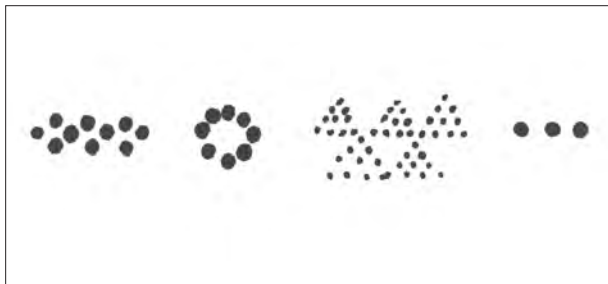
Hearts/Flowers



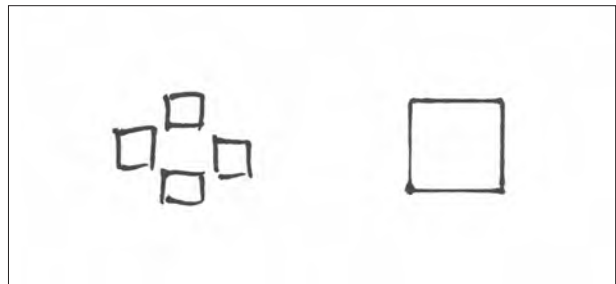
Spirals



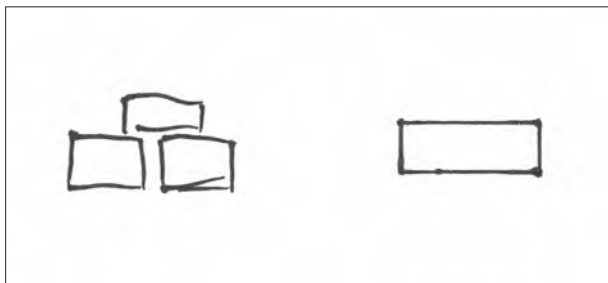
Dots



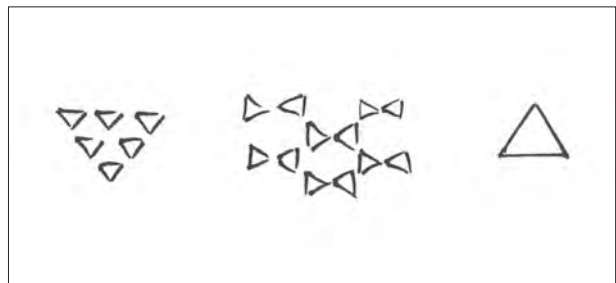
Squares



Rectangles

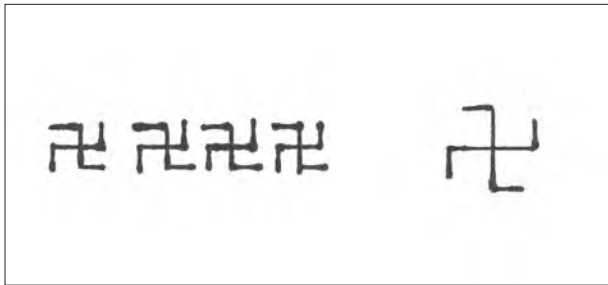


Triangles

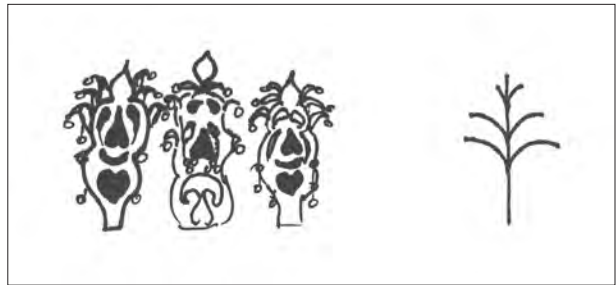


Swastikas

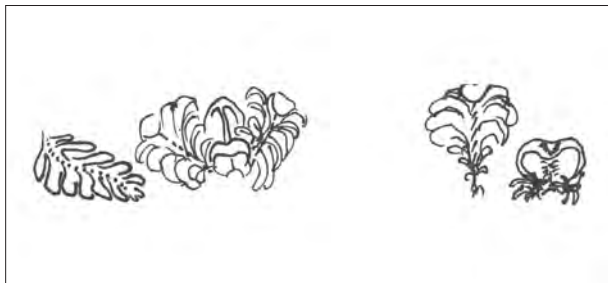
(an ancient Indian symbol associated with the sun and auspicious life-giving properties)



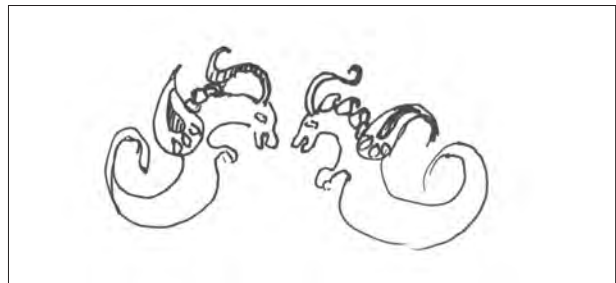
Trees



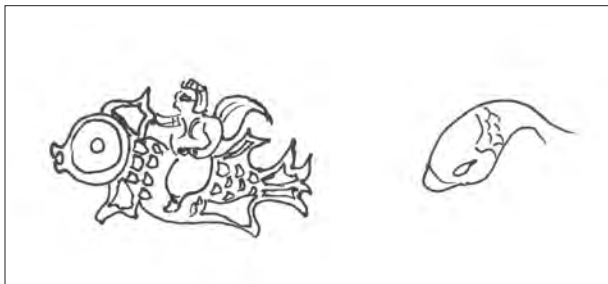
Acanthus leaves



Mystical creatures: composite animals, serpents



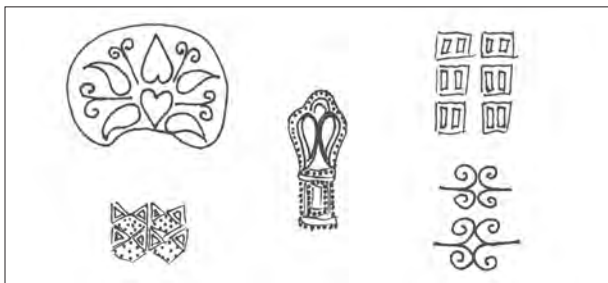
Cupid and aquatic animals: dolphins, fish



Masks



Miscellaneous



Afghanistan: Hidden Treasures from the National Museum, Kabul

October 24, 2008–January 25, 2009

ART ACTIVITIES TILLYA TEPE GOLD ORNAMENTS AND ACCESSORIES

Supply List

(Italicized = Alternate supply)

Sources: Nasco Catalog No. 813 and Michaels Crafts

Material	Source	Quantity	Price	Ref. #
Stylus sticks <i>Bamboo skewers, toothpicks</i>	Nasco, p. 134	100 ct	\$1.95	0900846
Decorator Foil, goldtone	Nasco, p. 410	10' roll	\$8.80	2400395
Decorator Foil, goldtone <i>Art Emboss Brass (Light wt)</i>	Nasco, p. 410 <i>Michaels Crafts</i>	25' roll <i>9.25" x 12"</i>	\$14.60 <i>\$7.99</i>	2400396
Bead wire, gold (34 gauge) <i>Floral wire, gold</i>	Nasco, p. 375 <i>Michaels Crafts</i>	24 yard roll	\$.90	0601183
Glass Nuggets, 3/8"	Nasco, p. 455	1# bag	\$4.30	5400208
Glass Nuggets, 1/2" <i>Mosaic Cabochons</i>	Nasco, p. 455 <i>Michaels Crafts</i>	1# bag	\$4.30 <i>\$5.99</i>	5400209
Weldbond Glue	Michaels Crafts		\$2.99	
Chroma A>2 Art Student Acrylic <i>Acrylic Paint: Raw Umber</i>	Nasco, p. 38 Burnt Umber (H) <i>Michaels Crafts</i>		\$3.60 <i>\$1.19</i>	9720491

Carbon paper
Cardboard or tag board
1/8" hole punch
Geometric shapes template
Circle templates
Small paintbrushes or foam brushes
Cheesecloth, rags or soft paper towels (To be used for rubbing off acrylic paint from textured metal surfaces.)

Scissors
Graph paper (To be used for designing object and patterns.)
Plain white paper (To be used for designing object and patterns.)
Scotch tape
Pencils



Content Standards

We hope that this educator packet provides a foundation for teaching the rich history, arts, and culture of Afghanistan. The accompanying lesson plans have been designed to address certain California Content Standards for History-Social Science, Visual and Performing Arts, and English Language Arts. Teachers may choose to adapt these lessons to best fit their students' needs: grade levels, learning styles and abilities, and personal interests. For a full list of the California Content Standards see: <http://www.cde.ca.gov/be/st/ss/>

California State Content Standards	Lesson One Mapping of Afghanistan	Lesson Two The Keyholder (Tahilwidar) Tradition and Bactrian Treasure Inventory	Lesson Three Archaeology Inventory Project	Lesson Four Timeline of Afghanistan	Lesson Five Preserving the Treasures of Afghanistan	Lesson Six Tillya Tepe Gold Ornaments and Accessories
HISTORY-SOCIAL SCIENCES						
Grade Six						
History and Social Sciences Analysis Skills	Chronological and Spatial Thinking 3	Chronological and Spatial Thinking 1; Historical Interpretation 1, 2,5	Chronological and Spatial Thinking 3; Research, Evidence, and Point of View 1; Historical Interpretation 3, 5	Chronological and Spatial Thinking 1		Historical Interpretation 3
Content Standards	6.1; 6.1.2; 6.4; 6.4.1; 6.4.4; 6.4.7; 6.6; 6.6.7	6.4.7;6.6.7	6.1; 6.1.2; 6.4; 6.4.1; 6.4.8; 6.5; 6.6.5; 6.6; 6.6.7; 6.7; 6.7.8	6.4; 6.4.7		6.1; 6.1.2; 6.6; 6.6.7
Grade Ten						
History and Social Sciences Analysis Skills		Chronological and Spatial Thinking 1,2,4; Historical Interpretation 1,2				
Content Standards		10.10; 10.11				
VISUAL ARTS						
Grade Five						
Visual and Performing Arts Strands	5.0 Connections, Relationships, Applications	3.0 Historical and Cultural Context; 5.0 Connections, Relationships, Applications				2.0 Creative Expression; 3.0 Historical and Cultural Context; 4.0 Aesthetic Valuing
Content Standards	5.3	3.1; 5.4				2.5; 3.2; 4.2
Grade Six						
Visual and Performing Arts Strands			1.0 Artistic Perception; 2.0 Creative Expression; 3.0 Historical and Cultural Context; 4.0 Aesthetic Valuing			5.0 Connections, Relationships, Applications
Content Standards			1.2; 2.1; 3.1; 4.1; 4.2; 4.3			5.3
Grade Seven						
Visual and Performing Arts Strands			1.0 Artistic Perception; 3.0 Historical and Cultural Context; 4.0 Aesthetic Valuing; 5. Connections, Relationships; Applications	5.0 Connections, Relationships, Applications		2.0 Creative Expression; 3.0 Historical and Cultural Context
Content Standards			1.2; 3.1; 3.2; 4.3; 4.4; 5.4;	5.2		2.3; 3.1

California State Content Standards	Lesson One Mapping of Afghanistan	Lesson Two The Keyholder (Tahilwida) Tradition and Bactrian Treasure Inventory	Lesson Three Archaeology Inventory Project	Lesson Four Timeline of Afghanistan	Lesson Five Preserving the Treasures of Afghanistan	Lesson Six Tiliya Tepe Gold Ornaments and Accessories
Grade Eight						
Visual and Performing Arts Strands			1.0 Artistic Perception; 3.0 Historical and Cultural Context; 4.0 Aesthetic Valuing			2.0 Creative Expression; 3.0 Historical and Cultural Context
Content Standards			1.1; 3.2; 4.1; 4.3; 4.4; 4.5			2.6; 3.2
Grade Nine-Twelve						
Proficient						
Visual and Performing Arts Strands			3.0 Historical and Cultural Context; 5.0 Connections, Relationships; Applications			3.0 Historical and Cultural Context
Content Standards			3.1; 3.3; 5.4			3.3
Advanced						
Visual and Performing Arts Strands			3.0 Historical and Cultural Context			3.0 Historical and Cultural Context
Content Standards			3.4			3.1
THEATRE						
Grade Six						
Visual and Performing Arts Strands		2.0 Creative Expression				
Content Standards		2.1				
Grade Seven						
Visual and Performing Arts Strands		5.0 Connections, Relationships, Applications				
Content Standards		5.1				
ENGLISH LANGUAGE ARTS						
Grade Six through Eight						
Extension: Teachers can customize student writing assignments, based on this lesson and accompanying worksheet, for specific grade levels.						
Writing Applications (Genres and Their Characteristics)			6.2.0; 7.2.0; 8.2.0		6.2.0; 7.2.0; 8.2.0	



Glossary

GLOSSARY

acrolith: a type of Greek figural sculpture in which extremities were made of stone or marble, while the main body was made of wood (often painted or gilded) or softer stone.

acropolis: The citadel (major fort) of a Greek city, generally placed at the point of highest elevation, and also the site where major temples and civic buildings were constructed.

Afghanistan: A landlocked Western Asian (sometimes also described as Central Asian) country whose immediate neighbors are Pakistan, Iran, Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan, and Tajikistan. The contemporary nation of Afghanistan achieved full independence from Great Britain in 1919.

Alexander the Great (356–323 BCE): the Greek king of Macedon (r. 336–323 BCE) who conquered a vast empire consisting of virtually the entire world known to the Greeks. The easternmost extent of his empire was India, where he won a decisive battle in 326 BCE. His empire also included contemporary Afghanistan, Pakistan, Persia, West Asia, other parts of Central Asia, and the Mediterranean.

Aphrodite: the Greek goddess of love and beauty.

appliqué: a technique in which one fabric or material is applied on top of another, usually atop fabric, resulting in contrasting color, texture, or other visual effect.

archaeology: the scientific study of material remains of past human (or animal and plant) life and activities; the scientific study of antiquities and cultural artifacts.

artifact: a historical object associated with a particular culture, time, and place, often handmade and having a decorative, ritual, or utilitarian function.

Bactria: a region consisting of much of contemporary northern Afghanistan, as well as other parts of Central Asia including portions of Tajikistan, Uzbekistan, and Turkmenistan, and also considered part of the greater ancient Persian (Iranian) world. Bronze Age culture existed here from approximately 2200 BCE to 1700 BCE. Control of Bactria fluctuated among indigenous rulers and conquerors over the course of many centuries. Persian conquest in the sixth century BCE was followed by the campaigns of Alexander the Great in the fourth century BCE, leading to the establishment of a Greco-Bactrian kingdom that endured for several centuries. The kingdom declined with the establishment of the Kushan dynasty in South Asia in the first century CE. The capital of Bactria was Balkh.

Balkh: An ancient city in northern Afghanistan that was the capital of the kingdom of Bactria; also the name of the modern district in Afghanistan that roughly corresponds to ancient Bactria. The ancient city of Balkh was largely destroyed in the 13th century; the contemporary town associated with the site is Mazar-e Sharif.

Buddhism: A religion and philosophy consisting of several major schools and a variety of beliefs and practices, founded by the historical teacher Shakyamuni (given name: Siddhartha Gautama) who lived and taught primarily in northern India some 2,400 years ago.

bracteate: a type of small ornament, usually relatively flat and often made of metal, that is sewn or attached to clothing, or otherwise used for personal adornment; often floral or petal-like in shape.

capital: the uppermost element of a column or pilaster surmounting the shaft.

Central Asia: a largely landlocked area of Asia whose eastern boundary is the Caspian Sea, and whose territory (although defined in different ways) generally includes Afghanistan, parts of southern Russia and Mongolia, parts of western China including Inner Mongolia and Tibet, and the former Soviet republics of Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, and Tajikistan.

Corinthian: one of the three major orders of classical architecture (the other two being in Doric and Ionic); characteristic of the Corinthian order is the Corinthian capital, which is embellished with acanthus leaves and is the most organic looking and decorative of the classical capitals. The Corinthian order was developed in Athens in the fifth century BCE and was popular in West and Central Asia, as well as in the Roman world.

Cybele: a nature goddess revered in Greece and West Asia.

emboss: a metalworking technique in which a relatively soft metal such as silver or gold is hammered out to form a design in relief. Embossing is done on the back of the piece. The term is often used interchangeably with repousse, although embossing refers specifically to hammering a soft metal, whereas repousse refers to hammering and punching various kinds of metal from behind.

engrave: to work the front of a usually soft metal surface by pressing deeply with a fine instrument; working the front of a metal surface by denting or hammering is referred to as chasing.

Eros: the Greek god of love (Roman: Cupid).

gymnasium: a type of civic building in classical Greece and the Hellenistic and Roman worlds that served as a public space for athletic exercises, public spectacle and entertainment, intellectual learning, and other civic activities that promoted virtue and masculine ideals.

Helios: the Greek god of the sun.

Hellenism: Devotion to ancient Greek language, customs, artistic styles, and other cultural practices, especially after the period of Alexander the Great (d. 323 BCE), and often existing in imperial and colonial areas not necessarily populated by persons of Greek ancestry.

Herakles (Greek; Roman: Hercules): A mythical Greek hero especially renowned for his feats of strength; a patron of the Greek gymnasium.

Islam: “Submission” to God. The religion of the Muslims founded by the Prophet Muhammad (c. 510–632 CE). The sacred text is the Koran, the word of God as communicated to Muhammad through the Archangel Gabriel. The basic principals of faith are the Pillars of Islam: profession of faith, prayer, charity, fasting, and pilgrimage. Islam spread through Afghanistan, from Arabia, in the 7th century CE.

intaglio: a design cut into a hard stone or metal die that can be used to create a positive impression when pressed or stamped; sometimes used in gemstones and seal rings.

kinnari: in Indian iconography, semi-divine beings who usually have human faces and bird bodies and tails. In India, they are considered celestial musicians and often appear as decorative motifs on temples.

Kushans: Central Asian nomadic people who conquered much of South, Central, and Western Asia in the first century CE and ruled a kingdom based in northern India from the first century through third centuries CE.

lapis lazuli: a semiprecious blue stone used in jewelry, also used to create a blue pigment prized in Asian and European painting; its exclusive source is Badakhshan province in northeastern Afghanistan.

lost wax method: the most common method for making cast metal sculpture, used since antiquity throughout much of the ancient world, and still widely used today. A wax model of the sculpture is made and encased in a clay mold, which is then heated, causing the wax to melt away. Molten bronze is then poured into the mold. As casting techniques evolved, larger, lighter, more complex, and hollow pieces were created.

makara: in Indian iconography, a mythological creature that is part crocodile and sometimes part fish or elephant; an auspicious animal associated with the sacred river Ganga (Ganges) as well as Buddhist monuments and imagery related to water.

Nike: the Greek goddess of victory.

nomads: people without fixed, permanent settlements who often migrate seasonally, sometimes with the grazing patterns of livestock.

Oxus River: classical name for the river crossing central and western Asia, which flows from the Pamir plateau into the Aral Sea (contemporary name is the Amu Darya River).

Psyche: in Greek mythology, a beautiful mortal woman loved by the god Eros, who falls in love with her against the wishes of his mother, the goddess Aphrodite. After various challenges the couple is finally married and unified. The union of Psyche and Eros is also understood as a metaphor for the union between the soul and the beloved.

Silk Road: the collection of trade routes and resting point for caravans linking Asia and the West, from China to the Middle East; the trade routes that were significantly expanded in the fourth century BCE with Alexander the Great's conquests, enduring through the 14th century CE; a metaphor for the exchange of goods and ideas between East and West that occurred over the course of many centuries, serving to facilitate the spread of Buddhism, trade, and international relations.

steppes: vast arid areas of open land which are often treeless, usually refers to areas of Central Asia and southeastern Europe.

swastika: an ancient Indian solar symbol considered auspicious, protective, and luck bringing.

Tree of Life: an ancient motif appearing in many different cultures including West Asia, many other parts of Asia, Europe, the Judaic world, and Mesoamerica, with diverse meanings including symbolism for the cosmos, the pillar connecting heavens and other worlds, fertility, the orderly structure of the universe, the interconnectedness of life, divine knowledge, mystical esoteric practices, the veneration of ancestors, and the continuity and renewal of life.



Further Reading

Educators

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