

given in each case, but each manuscript folio no doubt includes many of these brief items. Furthermore, consulting the British Library and Bodleian catalogues indicates that both formularies contain substantial materials beyond those printed here. Hence, it is not possible to reconstruct satisfactorily their original order. This is, however, a minor cavil, and perhaps one specific to scholars interested in the medieval theory and practice of letter writing itself, rather than the wider readership which this volume will surely reach. Overall, I strongly recommend it to anyone interested in medieval letters, commerce, social relations, and the lives of people beyond the more familiar royal and ecclesiastical courts. There is something here for everyone.

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### **A Story Waiting to Pierce You: Mongolia, Tibet and the Destiny of the Western World**

Peter Kingsley

Golden Sufi Centre Publications, Point Reyes: 2010, second printing 2011. (Hardcover) ISBN 13:978-1-890350-20-8; (Paperback) ISBN: 13: 978-1-890350-21-5.

Books on the exchange of religious and mythic ideas between the cultural spheres of the Classical world and the steppe regions of Inner Asia remain a rarity, even now, long after the return to comparative studies in the Classics through the agency of Burkert and West and Morris. Bolton's *Aristeas of Proconnesus*, Littleton and Malcor's *From Scythia to Camelot* and Mayor's various publications on the gryphon myth's connections with dinosaur skeletons in Mongolia, are perhaps among the most well known works on such topics, but often go undiscussed by wider audiences. It is for this reason, as someone with a profound interest in both of these fields, that Kingsley's most recent book, *A Story Waiting to Pierce You*, is a very welcome find indeed and invites much rereading, in spite of its considerable weaknesses.

At the centre of *A Story Waiting to Pierce You* is the simple thesis that the mysterious wandering Hyperborean-Scythian sage Abaris, most familiar in the short dismissive passage given by Herodotus (IV.36), travelled around the world on an arrow, met with Pythagoras, and thereby gave rise to the roots of Western Philosophy through mutual recognition of one another as the reincarnation of Apollo through the gifting of Abaris' arrow. In order to substantiate these claims we must turn to Kingsley's extensive endnotes, far longer than the compelling yet slim narrative, wherein the author attempts to elevate this meeting from its obscurity in the Pythagorean corpus to what he takes to be a key juncture in the development of mutual recognition between Western and Eastern philosophies.

In order to substantiate the idea that the Abaris-Pythagoras meeting was genuine, Kingsley is obliged to argue that it is much older than the conventional fourth century BCE dating of Pythagoreanism's enthusiastic appropriation of just about every *goes* (wonder-worker) figure in Greek tradition, and indeed the author has done this very well. There is no doubt that reassessment of the layers of these texts in order to pinpoint the age of the traditions involved is definitely needed, and Kingsley has begun and defended strongly in many cases his position on the importance of the arrow in this meeting (pp. 35-48; notes: §5, 8, 12, 19, 21). Whether, however, Kingsley's (pp. 40-3; notes: §11, 14, 15, 17, 20) theory that the arrow can be taken to represent the Tibetan *phurba* and the *tulku's* identification of property from a previous life would seem a little far fetched and requires a greater study of what can be known of Tibetan culture during antiquity and its relation to Inner Asian beliefs, for which there is next to no evidence to work with.

My main difficulty with this book, however, is the matter of a rather irksome assumption made by the author, which to my knowledge, no reviewer has of yet dealt with. This is the bald statement made early in the piece (p. 6-7), that due to similarity of names, the figure Abaris was in fact an ancient Avar, an Inner Asian people recorded by the Byzantines from the sixth century CE, and possibly the Chinese from the fourth under the name Juan-Juan or Var as dwelling in Mongolia. In his very first endnote (§1), Kingsley expends a great deal of energy on insisting that Abaris was not a Scythian, but a "Mongolian" - though the more obvious decision would have been to have linked Abaris more strongly to the heterogenous network of "Scythic" cultures emerging into the Greek cultural sphere from the sixth century BCE. Even more dubious are Kingsley's sources for the Abaris-Avar link: a nineteenth century geographical dictionary which inexplicably puts the Avars and Türkic peoples in Tobol during antiquity,<sup>1</sup> and a corrupt *Suda* entry (s. v. Ἀβαρίς) which has conflated Abaris with the "*hapax*" Abaris (Avar) - strangely the same in nominative and accusative plural. This appears to have been taken from Porphyrogenitus' tenth century CE *de Legationibus* (p. 74), where it supposedly represents a fragment of Priscus' (fr. 30) work from the fifth century CE. As well as being prior to any Avar migration, according to Mänchen-Helfen<sup>2</sup> the fragment in question has been judiciously rewritten where this term occurs *in situ*, and moreover - the term used is not the lexically awkward *Abaris* for Avars here, but the fairly regular *Abaroi*. The problem remains with the *Suda*. Why such a thin idea has been leant upon so heavily by the author is a mystery, though the Avar-Abaris link has been noted

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1 Latham, R.G. *A Dictionary of Greek and Roman Geography* (London: Walton and Maberly Publishers, 1856), 349-350

2 Mänchen-Helfen, O. *In the World of the Huns: Studies in their History and Culture* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1973), 436.

before by other scholars such as Szádeczky-Kardoss<sup>3</sup> and Pohl,<sup>4</sup> but little trust has seemingly ever been put into it due to the highly anachronistic act of imagining Inner Asia unchanged between the sixth century BCE and CE. Indeed during the sixth century BCE, when Abaris is suggested by the *Suda* to have lived, there is little evidence of the Scythic or Pazyryk cultures penetrating into Mongolia and little is known of the *kereksuur* and slab-grave cultures that existed there at that time either side of the Khangai Mountains, beyond some archaeological remains and evidence of South West Asian cultural influence in Western Mongolia.<sup>5</sup>

In recent years, it has been common for Von Stuckrad<sup>6</sup> and Bremmer<sup>7</sup> to insist that we know very little of Scythian religious practice in reference to its similarity with the beliefs of the living shamanic traditions of Mongolia, Tibet and Siberia - mostly as a reaction to the perceived ahistorical liberties taken by previous thinkers such as Meuli, Dodds and others, including Burkert, who unsurprisingly is found endorsing this book on its cover. Kingsley builds on these prior thinkers and their notions of Ancient Greek “shamans” influenced by Inner Asian culture. Some of his excesses mirror theirs: a disregard for history such as in his assumption that the Avars possessed a myth of lupine origin (p. 83) like later Türkic-Mongolian peoples, and an almost free association with any “primordial” people from Tibet to the Iroquois, when even the slimmest of parallels seems to appear reasonable enough to throw into the stew to restore the story of Abaris to the prime position in human history that Kingsley seems to find it worthy of representing. Even though Kingsley has largely pitched *A Story* towards a New-Age readership living in hope for a global oneness, and in spite of several good reviews on the book’s cover in praise of the “message” this work has been seen to convey, it is hard to find anything truly solid even for one of a spiritual bent in what Kingsley conjures up. We have the meeting with Pythagoras, much discussion on the influence of the Mongols and Tibet upon western thinking from Abaris to the present, but even in the final chapter, aside from a preconceived numinousness towards globalisation, after several reads the whole “future” that the text is in search of remains thoroughly opaque. This is a book to be judiciously sorted through, and aside from my own work I am yet to even find it cited by anyone, either positively or negatively. I find this rather disappointing, for on matters such as the symbolism of arrows, the dating of the Pythagorean traditions and returning the Classical-Inner Asian cultural intersection to

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3 Pohl, W. 1998 “Conceptions of Ethnicity: in Early Mediaeval Studies,” in Little, L. K. and Rosenwein, B. H. (eds) *Debating the Middle Ages: Issues and Readings*. Cambridge: Blackwell Publishers, 18.

4 Szádeczky-Kardoss, S. “The Avars,” in Sinor, D. (ed.) *The Cambridge History of Early Inner Asia* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), 206.

5 Jacobson, E. *The Deer Goddess of Ancient Siberia: A Study in the Ecology of Belief* (Boston: E.J. Brill Academic Publishers, 1993); Skrynnikova, T. D. “Shamanism in Inner Asia: Two Archetypes,” *Sibirica* 2.1 (2002) 69-87.

6 Von Stuckrad, K. *Schamanismus und Esoterik* (Leuven: L. Peeters Verlag, 2003), 106-16.

7 Bremmer, J. N. *The Early Greek Concept of the Soul* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1987), 34-50, *The Rise and Fall of the Afterlife* (London and New York: Routledge Publishing, 2002), 33-9.

the table, this book remains an invaluable first step towards some very fertile future ideas.

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**Music, Piety, and Propaganda: The Soundscapes of Counter-Reformation Bavaria**

Jane F. Fulcher (ed.)

Oxford University Press, Oxford: 2014. Hardcover, 384 pages, 23 black and white line drawings, and 8 black and white halftone images. RRP US\$55, ISBN: 9780199764648

In style and ambit, *Music, Piety, & Propaganda: The Soundscapes of Counter-Reformation Bavaria* is a surprising and modern historical book that takes the notoriously difficult path of interdisciplinarity but actually delivers what it sets out to do. Undergirded by a level of research that should satisfy musicologists, historians and scholars of Christian religion alike, Alexander J. Fisher describes the soundscape of Counter-Reformation Bavaria, homing in upon those sonic outputs – particularly music, bells, guns, and silence – that can be understood to be direct responses to the challenge of Protestantism in a realm that is defiantly Catholic. Beginning with the public spaces of religious worship in Counter-Reformation Bavaria, Fisher moves to the more private spaces of devotion, then to the civic spaces in which religious spectacles, processions and pilgrimages are manipulated to reinforce the determination of sixteenth- and seventeenth-century Bavarian rulers to impose Catholic doctrine and morality upon all elements of life, whether every-day or festive. While the propagandist angle is explored, Fisher does not deny the genuine piety of participants at all levels of society, accepting that pilgrims were motivated by a genuine desire to view the relics of saints, that the transubstantiated Eucharist, or Host, was perceived as a genuinely mysterious and awesome evocation of the triune God's love, and that the rulers of Bavaria were not only motivated by a desire to assert their earthly power, but also by a genuine faith in the Catholic teachings.

Always coming back to sound, Fisher writes about canons that are fired by Bavarian troops accompanying a Corpus Christi procession in Protestant-sympathising, officially Catholic, Weiden, the reverberations breaking windows in an inadvertently symbolic gesture of violence against heresy. The singing for alms of itinerant beggars and children is eventually prohibited to avoid immoderate sounds and to protect the incomes of duly accredited (and duly inculcated) student church choristers. The chattering noise of everyday life is silenced by the requirement to kneel and pray when the Turk bell, mimicking the Call to Prayer of the religion it is designed to warn against,