Talking tattoos

The South Siberian Pazyryk people of the 1st millennium BCE are regarded as a preliterate culture. However, the imagery they left behind is a kind of language telling much about their life in close touch with nature.

The good news is: Retailers are not taking advantage of you. But why is this? A new study reveals how consumers at the mercy of the industry? The scientific project "Transparency of Food Pricing" (TRANSFOP) aims to find out just that. "We aim to investigate the determinants of food prices across the EU member states and the role that competition plays in food pricing," declared Professor Jens-Peter Loy, head of the Chair of Agricultural Market Analysis at Kiel University. The department of Agricultural Economics is one of 13 partners in the project, which was funded by the European Union and has just ended. "Our task was to find out why prices for food are falling or rising," explained Loy. "This is of particular interest for all societies." People are constantly reading about protests by farmers against the fact that all six Pazyryk mummies have been the initial dilemma for the researchers of the Pazyryk culture without letters, "Imagine you were a member of an Iron Age culture without letters, nevertheless wanting to express your religious beliefs or your affiliation to a social group or class - this might have been the initial dilemma for the nomadic horse-riding people of the thousands of square kilometers of steppe," Karina Iwe says. She is writing her PhD thesis in the Graduate School "Human Development in Landscapes" about the Scythian horse-riders' Animal Style.

One very impressive example of the widespread use of such images is the fact that all six Pazyryk mummies found in the steppe tombs of the Siberian Alps, or of their graves reflected differences, they probably belonged to different social classes. So it is likely that all members of the Pazyryk culture were tattooed, and that tattoos were not exclusively reserved for certain groups such as warriors or rulers", Karina Iwe emphasizes. In their details, however, they probably provided information about their bearer: "Slight differences in the tattoos, like their location on the body and their extent, can be associated with the status and social rank of the mummys." For example, it is noticeable that males had tattoos on their back, legs and feet, while females were partly well-preserved thanks to favorable climatic and environmental conditions. The tombs inside the kurgans were surrounded by ice lenses that never melt due to the permafrost conditions of the soil.

The mummies mentioned above were found in several grave mounds, so-called kurgans, in the Glaugan River valley and on the more southermly located Ulan Plateau in the Siberian Alps mountains near the Russian borders with China, Kazakhstan and Mongolia. The Pazyryk culture derives its name from a village on the banks of the Glaugan River. The mummys and their tattoos, as well as other burial objects such as leather, fur and felt, were partly well-preserved thanks to favorable climatic and environmental conditions. The tombs inside the kurgans were surrounded by ice lenses that never melt due to the permafrost conditions of the soil.

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