

# Afghanistan: Hidden Treasures from the National Museum, Kabul

exhibition review by Diane Fitzgerald

At the Museum of Fine Arts, Houston, February 22–May 17 2009 and the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, June 23–Sept 20 2009

Some of the bead jewellery included in the exhibit *Afghanistan: Hidden Treasures from the National Museum, Kabul* include three spectacular gold ornaments from the 'Bactrian Hoard' found in 1978 in Tillya Tepe, the site of six nomad graves, and revealing a synthesis of Greek, Roman, Persian, Indian, Chinese, and Siberian styles. These are part of a group of some 100 gold objects dating from the 1st century BC to the 1st century AD which were discovered in 1978 by a Soviet-Afghan team led by Viktor Sarianidi at Tillya Tepe in northern Afghanistan.

The site contained jewellery and gold ornaments from the graves of six nomads who overran Bactria in about 145 BC and brought an end to the Graeco-Bactrian kingdoms that had flourished there. The graves contained thousands of gold objects sewn onto the burial shrouds and clothing of the deceased. Also on view during the exhibit are an exquisite crown, as well as necklaces, belts, rings, and headdresses—most made of solid gold with insets of semiprecious stones such as turquoise and garnets. Many of the Bactrian objects reflect local artisans' distinctive blend of motifs known from Greek, Roman, Indian, and Chinese art. Three of the most spectacular pieces are shown here.

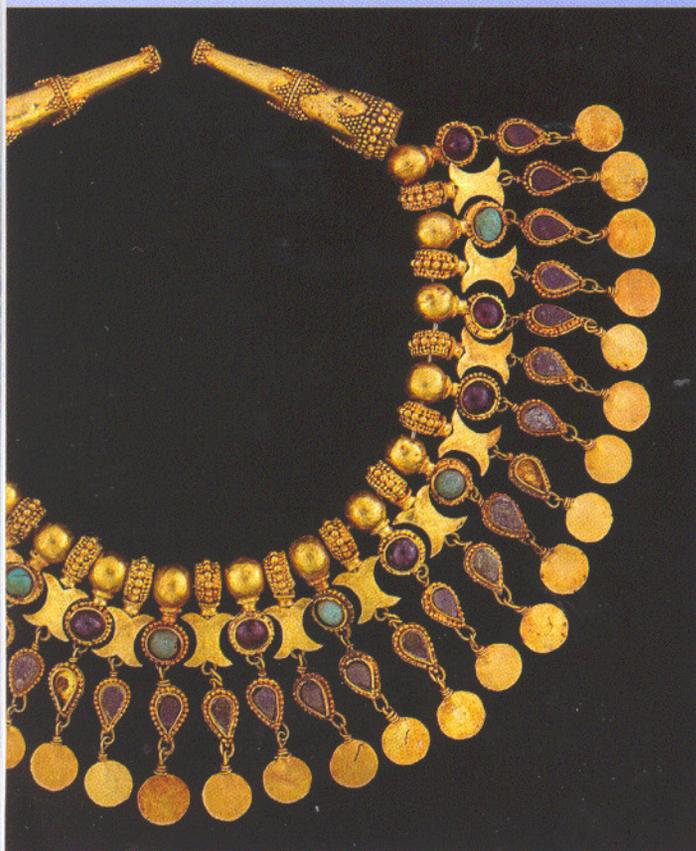
For more information about the exhibit and the discovery of the Bactrian Hoard please visit these websites:

[www.nga.gov/exhibitions/afghanistaninfo.shtm](http://www.nga.gov/exhibitions/afghanistaninfo.shtm)

[www.nga.gov/press/exh/273/images.shtm](http://www.nga.gov/press/exh/273/images.shtm)

[www.culturalprofiles.org.uk/afghanistan/Directories/Afghanistan\\_Cultural\\_Profile/-675.html](http://www.culturalprofiles.org.uk/afghanistan/Directories/Afghanistan_Cultural_Profile/-675.html)

[www.guardian.co.uk/world/2003/jun/19/highereducation.arts](http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2003/jun/19/highereducation.arts)



▲▲ Above top:  
Gold necklace (Tillya Tepe, Tomb III), 1st century BC–1st century AD

▲ Above:  
Gold and turquoise necklace (Tillya Tepe, Tomb VI), 1st century BC–1st century AD

◀ Left:  
Gold, turquoise, garnet, and pyrite ornament for the neck of a robe (Tillya Tepe, Tomb V), 1st century BC–1st century AD



## Tillya Tepe Necklace by Diane Fitzgerald

Ancient Afghani jewelry, lost for centuries and recently rediscovered, inspired the components for this necklace. It includes beaded cornerless cubes made with peyote stitch, a bead netting covered bead and a Chandelier bead, also made with peyote stitch, assembles into a necklace.

At right: Necklace from Tillya Tepe Tomb III

The necklace consists of eight round beads with repetitive engraved decoration, five smooth rounded beads and two elongated beads forming the fastening. The tomb contained the body of a woman.

