

Archeometry and the Silk Road

Role of composition analyses in studying cross-cultural interactions

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*Supported by the ÚNKP-19-4 New National Excellence Program of the Ministry for
Innovation and Technology*

Although studying early trade networks can be considered a relatively popular field of research, the intensity and patterns of such complex system still leave a lot of questions, particularly in case of Rome and China. There is still a trend to visualize a kind of globalized commercial trade between the two *imperii*, however the facts provide us a more comprehensive picture.

A variety of objects discovered in the East have been connected to the Roman Empire and thus been interpreted as indicators of its long-distance trade. At the same time, common problem is to differentiate Roman products from objects with classical motifs. Several artefacts with stylistic/iconographic or cultural relations to the Roman Empire could be regarded as Roman-related, but their provenance might point towards various other production places, such as Bactria. Thus, confirming identifications of previously Roman-interpreted objects is an essential part of any academic approach. In this manner, besides chrono-typological methods, chemical composition analyses also have a crucial role in defining provenance of these artefacts.

Consequently, my paper not only aims to draw attention to the significance of archeometry in cross-cultural research, but it also intends to reveal the potential limits and problems of such study.