

COLLÈGE  
DE FRANCE  
— 1530 —

Frantz GRENET  
CHAIRE HISTOIRE ET CULTURES  
DE L'ASIE CENTRALE PRÉISLAMIQUE



# Sogdiana

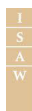
*State of the art and research in progress*

École Normale  
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2-3 July  
2025



La Fondation Hugot  
du Collège de France  
— 1979 —



INSTITUTE FOR THE  
STUDY OF THE  
ANCIENT WORLD  
NEW YORK UNIVERSITY



P.Y. and Kinmay W.  
**Tang Center for  
Silk Road Studies**  
University of California, Berkeley.

# Sogdiana

## *State of the art and research in progress*

Le colloque se tiendra les mercredi 2 et jeudi 3 juillet 2025 à L'ENS, amphithéâtre Jean Jaurès (entrée par le 28 rue Lhomond, 75005 Paris).

En collaboration avec : Collège de France, Fondation Hugo, Institute for the Study of the Ancient Worlds New-York University, P.Y. and Kinmay W. Tang Center for Silk Road Studies.

This conference is intended as a second part of the conference «Reconstructing Sogdiana. Discoveries and historical narratives» which was held on 11-12 Aril 2025 at the Tang Center for Silk Road Studies (UC Berkeley), in partnership with the Collège de France and the Institute for the Study of the Ancient World (New York University). The aim is to produce an up-to-date and chronologically balanced survey of the numerous new documents, archaeological operations and correlated problematics, which shed light on the history of Sogdiana (the ancient country of Samarkand and Bukhara, the node of the Silk Roads), between the Late Bronze Age (beginning c. 1500 BCE) and the pre-Mongol Islamic period (prior to 1220 CE).

Ce colloque est prévu comme la seconde partie du colloque «Reconstruire la Sogdiane. Découvertes et narrations historiques» qui s'est tenu les 11-12 avril 2025 au Tang Center for Silk Road Studies (UC Berkeley), en partenariat avec le Collège de France et l'Institut pour l'Étude du Monde Ancien (Université de New York). Il vise à produire un bilan à jour et chronologiquement équilibré des nombreux nouveaux documents, opérations archéologiques et problématiques corrélées, qui mettent en lumière l'histoire de la région de Sogdiane (l'ancien pays de Samarkand et Boukhara, nœud des Routes de la Soie), entre l'Âge du Bronze final (commençant vers 1500 av. n.è.) et l'Islam pré-mongol (avant 1200).

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Image : tête de figurine en terre cuite,  
Bukhara, 3<sup>ème</sup> siècle de n-è  
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Wednesday, July 2

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## Final Bronze – Earliest Iron Age

9H00-9H30:

*Connecting the Dots: the site of Kimirek-kum 1  
and the complicated Bronze-Iron Age transition in Central Asia*

Lynne Rouse, German Archaeological Institute

The second half of the 2nd millennium BCE represents a period of significant transformation in Central Asia, which encompassed the unwinding of the regional cultural traditions of the Bronze Age and the punctuated emergence of new social and material forms heralding the Iron Age. The patchwork of socio-political, economic, and technological changes, moreover, unfolded against a backdrop environmental instability that makes the entire Bronze-Iron Age transition difficult to summarize at a region-wide scale. Investigations at the site of Kimirek-kum 1 (KK1; southern Kyzylkum desert) offer an opportunity to connect local- and regional-scale practices during this complicated, nearly 700-year period of archaeological transition. Excavations and surveys at and around KK1 conducted from 2022–2024 demonstrate that the site's inhabitants participated in versatile exchange networks during the last quarter of the 2<sup>nd</sup> millennium, while simultaneously investing in local traditions in material culture and craft production (ceramics, metalworking, semi-precious stones). The inhabitants of KK1 also managed the water resources and plant and animal communities around the site, maintaining productive local ecologies that were far richer and more diverse than regional narratives of mobile agro-pastoralism and widespread aridification might lead us to believe. Through examining KK1's unique features in the context of regional archaeological cultures, we explore the complex interplay between local communities and regional processes during Central Asia's Late Bronze – Early Iron Age transition.

9H30-10H00 :

*Current Research in the Pashkurt Valley, southern Uzbekistan: new sites  
and pathways of connectivity during the Final Bronze Age – Early Iron Age*

Johanna Lhuillier, CNRS UMR 5133 Archéorient

Recent research undertaken by various international teams has resulted in the identification of a settlement zone in the Pashkurt valley, located in the foothills of the Kugitang Tau mountains in southern Uzbekistan. The valley, which appears to have been abandoned during the Bronze Age around the 18<sup>th</sup> century BC, became densely populated again around the 14<sup>th</sup> century during the Final Bronze Age – Early Iron Age transition. The settlement sites explored all display a material culture characteristic of the Handmade Painted Ware Cultural Community, but show a unique variety of occupation types and architectural constructions.

These low- to medium-altitude sites functioned as part of a broader landscape of contrasting environmental conditions, ranging from the Sherabad-Darya valley to higher-altitude

areas (where rock shelters have been identified), which was also frequented by mobile pastoralists who left petroglyphs. The Pashkurt valley, far from being as isolated as it appears today, was also part of a network materialized by a culture shared with more distant regions such as those of northern Sogdiana. This presentation will provide an overview of these recent discoveries, and discuss how they fit into the wider regional context.

10H-10H30 : Questions & Answers

## Antiquity (750 BCE – 200 CE)

11H-11H30 :

### *Archaeological and Archaeometric Research on Turquoise from the Inner Kyzylkum*

Mariana Castro, Institute for the Study of the Ancient World – New York University

This paper presents the major findings of my doctoral project, which investigates the extraction, distribution, and cultural significance of turquoise in premodern Central Eurasia. Turquoise, a semi-precious stone integral to ancient ornamentation from northern China to the Black Sea, has often been studied through fragmented artifact biographies, impairing a rare opportunity to improve our understanding of long-term regional and supra-regional socio-economic patterns. The research identifies previously overlooked mechanisms of turquoise procurement and distribution that center pastoralist communities in so-called “peripheral” places. In particular, the study emphasizes the central role the Kyzylkum desert and its inhabitants, re-framing the contributions of these communities to broader interregional dynamics and highlighting their significance in the interconnected networks that spanned the vast expanse of Central Asia and beyond. The findings are based on extensive fieldwork conducted between 2021-2023, complemented by archaeometric analyses that have successfully established a turquoise reference database linking turquoise sources in Iran, Egypt, and Central Asia to objects in museum collections.

11H30-12H00 :

### *New Archaeological Data on Bukhara and its Oasis Hinterland during Antiquity (ca. 750 BCE- A.D. 100)*

Sören W. Stark, Institute for the Study of the Ancient World – New York University;  
Djamal K. Mirzaakhmedov and Sirodj Dj. Mirzaakhmedov, Institute of Archaeology – Cultural Heritage Agency of the Republic of Uzbekistan; Zachary W. Silvia, Joukowsky Institute for Archaeology and the Ancient World – Brown University

Until very recently, our archaeological knowledge of Bukharan Sogdiana during the one and a half millennia between the end of the Bronze Age and the end of Antiquity (ca. 1400 BCE – A.D. 100) was, compared to Samarkand and Nakhshab, extremely limited. This gap in knowledge is now being partially closed by the work of the Uzbek-American Archaeological Expedition in Bukhara (UzAmEB).

In our presentation we will focus on the time span from the pre-Achaemenid Iron Age down to the end of the post-Hellenistic period, introducing new data from both the city center of Bukhara as well as from a number of rural archaeological sites at the old arms of the Ramitan-rud (Bashtepa, Tali-Surkh, and others). With these new data at hand, we are now beginning to understand the settlement dynamics at this section of the former western fringes of the oasis for the time-span under consideration: There is evidence for a sharp eastward contraction of the zone of settlement at around ca. 1000 BCE, likely as a result of a desertification of at least this part of the delta. Subsequently (though perhaps not earlier than the middle of the 8<sup>th</sup> century) we perceive a material culture (as of now only attested in form of ceramic assemblages), which largely corresponds with the contemporary archaeological complex observable in the rest of Sogdiana (notably the middle Zerafshan and the lower Kashka-Darya). This cultural affiliation with the rest of Sogdiana is a novelty for the region, as earlier archaeological cultures in the Zerafshan delta, down to the end of the second millennium BCE, usually showed a somewhat stronger affiliation with areas to the north. At the same time, since the 8<sup>th</sup> century BCE, we see the beginning interaction with nomads in the Lake Aral area participating in the early Scytho-Siberian cultural complex. A further eastward contraction of the zone of settlement seems to have occurred during the late Achaemenid and/or early Hellenistic period. From now on the rural countryside was clearly dominated by irrigated agriculture as well as mobile and non-mobile animal husbandry, areas of specialized craft production, and a built environment in form of fortresses, manor houses on artificial platforms, small farmsteads, and enclosures of various sizes (though elements of this picture might well have existed already earlier in the area). During the early Hellenistic period (first half of the 3<sup>rd</sup> century BCE), the center of the oasis was apparently controlled by a strongly fortified Seleucid garrison located in the northern part of the later shahristān of the city of Bukhara. While this garrison probably existed only for a short time (though the fortress itself seems to have remained in use down to the 1<sup>st</sup> century BCE), life inside and at the fringes of the oasis continued fairly uninterrupted for the following three to four centuries. The region maintained ties with Greek-ruled Bactria during the first half of the 2<sup>nd</sup> century BCE and continued to follow the overall cultural trends observable in other parts of Sogdiana. Only towards the end of the 1<sup>st</sup> or the beginning of the 2<sup>nd</sup> century A.D. we see signs of crisis all across the oasis, such as a sharp reduction of settlement activity in the area of the later city of Bukhara and another substantial eastward contraction of the oasis territory.

12H00-12H30 : Questions & Answers

12H30-14H00 : Lunch Break

## Antiquity (750 BCE – 200 CE)

14H-14H30 :

### *Finds of Greek, Cilician, Phoenician, and Hellenistic Coins in the Bukharan Oasis*

Anvar Kh. Atakhodjaev, Institute of Archaeology – Cultural Heritage Agency of the Republic of Uzbekistan; Aleksandr I. Naymark, Hofstra University

The last two decades saw the dramatic increase in the number of recorded finds of coins preceding Alexander's anabasis, pertaining to his reign, and belonging to following Hellenistic period of Central Asian history. In the Bukharan oasis we are currently aware of over thirty stray finds and two hoards, one of which was deposited at the end of the 4<sup>th</sup> century BCE to a riverbed near Bash-tepe, while another one was brought from Bactria and hidden at a settlement Tokhmach-tepe during the second quarter of the 2<sup>nd</sup> century BCE. Extremely interesting as they are, these finds are of course not significant enough to draw a veritable picture of early monetary circulation in the Bukharan oasis. Yet their cross examination together with other types of numismatic evidence, as well as the juxtaposition with the available archaeological data and with the bits of information scattered in written sources, allow us to address some important questions of local history.

14H30-15H :

### *Military Installations in the Bactro-Sogdian Borderlands in the 3<sup>rd</sup>-2<sup>nd</sup> Centuries BC: state of research*

Ladislav Stančo, Charles University

The Greek presence in Sogdiana and Bactria in the Seleucid and Greco-Bactrian period has been studied in various aspects for several decades. The specific military presence and form of military installations on the border of these two historical areas has only recently been of interest, and new data are appearing in the archaeological record every year. This paper aims to explore some of the issues and phenomena that research to date has arrived at. These include linear fortifications and their significance, but also, for example, temporary structures that can be understood as military camps or signal sites. The sites of Darband Wall, Kapchigay, Iskandar Tepa and Zindon Tepa recently investigated by the Czech-Uzbekistani archaeological expedition will be presented as case studies. At the same time, it appears that analogous military installations were also established outside the borderlands, even near the centre in Maracanda, and a more complex explanation must be sought to explain the function of such outposts.

15H-15H30 :

### *Sogdian Culture of the 1<sup>st</sup> Century CE According to Numismatic Data*

Aleksandr Naymark, Hofstra University

A long span of Sogdian history between the collapse of Greek power around 230-224 BCE and the arrival of the Sasanians in second quarter of the 3<sup>rd</sup> century CE largely remains a blank spot in our knowledge. The reason is the severe lack of written sources and still insufficient volume of firmly dated archaeological materials. Trying to deal with this lacuna we continue

relying on the coins as the principal source of information. The good news is that the large volume of recent finds provides us with much better understanding of early Sogdian coinage.

We are currently aware of nine (9) Sogdian coinages running parallelly during the 1<sup>st</sup> century CE. Five of them could be attributed to particular polities with a high degree of certainty. The localizations of four more had been narrowed to the parts of the country (three in Samarkand Soghd, one in South Soghd), and working hypothesis were formulated about the actual authorities and/or centers responsible for their production. The languages, scripts, titles, names, and epithets used in the legends, the iconography of the portraits and divine images, as well as the system of denominations and metals employed by these coinages provide us with a much better image of Soghd in the 1<sup>st</sup> century CE than we could previously have.

The country was divided into small principalities ruled by nomadic chieftains. The latter maintained their traditional tribal appearances (clothing, jewelry, hairstyles), but judging from their names they converted to Zoroastrianism. At the same time these rulers retained healthy reverence towards the Hellenistic past of the country. Judging from the system of denominations, their coins were meant to satisfy the needs of a quite developed retail trade. Based on these observations we can offer a new model explaining the development and the structure of Sogdian society of the 1<sup>st</sup> century CE.

15H30-16H15 : Questions & Answers



## Pre-Islamic Late Antiquity (200 – 750 CE)

16H45-17H15 :

### *Problems of the Formation of the Culture of Bukharan Sogd during the 3<sup>rd</sup>-5<sup>th</sup> Centuries A.D.*

Asan Torgoev, State Hermitage Museum

This report is devoted to the formation of the culture of the Bukhara oasis from the 3<sup>rd</sup> to the 5<sup>th</sup> centuries AD.

At the present time, it is quite difficult to identify layers and complexes of the 2<sup>nd</sup> century AD in the settlements of the Bukhara oasis due to the lack of reliable chronological indicators. Layers and complexes in multi-layered settlements and entire monuments of the 3<sup>rd</sup> century AD are well known. The completely excavated settlement of Kyzyl-Kyr I dates back to the 3<sup>rd</sup> to the first half of the 4<sup>th</sup> centuries. It was in the second half of the 3<sup>rd</sup> century AD that the recognizable appearance of the material culture of the oasis was formed. But the ceramic complex in the city itself and in the settlements of the oasis differs significantly, since the ceramics produced on site did not go far beyond the place of manufacture. For example, bowls with a grip, characteristic of the Kyzyl-Kyr complexes, are not found in Bukhara itself and in Paykend.

The opinion that the settlers from the Middle Syr Darya played a significant role in the formation of the culture of the Bukhara oasis is a misconception. There are no materials that would indicate the migration of significant masses of the population, but there are only separate, similar types of molded ceramics and only a small number of similar metal products. For example, stands with a ram's head (shashlychnitsy) are known, while fire place stands of the Kaunchi type are unknown in the complexes in the Bukhara oasis, as are, for example, mugs with a zoomorphic handle. We can only talk about some small infiltration into the environment of the oasis population of semi-nomads from the regions of the Middle Syr Darya and the nomads of Kyzyl-Kum. The substrate agricultural population of the oasis always formed the basis for the formation of a complex of material culture.

In the 4<sup>th</sup> century AD, the number of settlements in the oasis increased, apparently at the same time the construction of the oasis wall Devori-Kampirak began. By the 5<sup>th</sup> century the need arises to create cities that would act as centers of administrative, economic and religious life for the population of the oasis. The economic and administrative growth of settlements is accompanied by the minting of the first copper coin in Bukhara Sogd. In the 5<sup>th</sup> century, work on the construction of Devori-Kampirak is completed. In the first half of the 5<sup>th</sup> century AD, the initial shahristan appears in Bukhara, which later grows significantly. The city acquires a three-part structure: a citadel, a shahristan, and a rabad. Later, at the end of the 5<sup>th</sup> and beginning of the 6<sup>th</sup> centuries, the first shahristan appears in Paykend. The emergence of cities with a three-part structure concludes the process of forming an urban culture, which, until Islamization in the 8<sup>th</sup> century, developed gradually, without any qualitative leaps

17H15-17H45 :

### *Studies of the Bukhara Archaeological Expedition at the Fire Temple of Paikend: new data*

Andrey Omel'chenko, State Hermitage Museum

The Bukharan Expedition of the State Hermitage Museum and the Institute of Archaeology of Samarkand has been excavating the Paikend city-site on the lower reaches of the Zeravshan River since 1981. The main object of their research in the citadel is a large architectural complex dating from the 3<sup>rd</sup> century BCE to the 8<sup>th</sup> century CE. Grigory L. Semenov, the founder of the expedition, discovered in the upper levels two adjacent sanctuaries with the bypass corridors and an adjacent courtyard with an iwan. The layout of the cella is unusual for synchronous early medieval temples in Central Asia, but has parallels in Iranian religious architecture.

Further excavations of the structure confirmed its designation as a fire temple. They showed that the temple had occupied the entire eastern part of the Paikend citadel since at least 3<sup>rd</sup> – 4<sup>th</sup> c., if not since the time of its foundation. The western sector of the citadel was used for auxiliary purposes, including the accommodation of the temple servants. The complex was surrounded by a perimeter corridor adjacent to the fortress walls. To the south of the inner courtyard of the temple there was a large outer courtyard, i.e. the Paikend building had a layout similar to other fire temples, for example at Takht-i Sangin. Later changes to the Paikend complex are associated with the appearance of additional galleries and the division of the courtyard into parts. Details include the presence of a room for temple offerings, and in the courtyards - iwans and sufes along the walls, as well as a 'cistern' and a well. Another fragment of mural painting was found in the entrance corridor, apparently depicting a procession of the adorants.

The temple at Paikend is similar to those at Oxus (Takht-i Sangin), as well as Nakhshab (Erkurgan) and apparently Kanka (Chach region) temples in the ritual of making offerings, including a large number of weapons and ammunition. Later, as the temple treasuries overflowed, these offerings were placed in special pits (bothroi) and mud-brick boxes (favissae) around the periphery of the Paikend temple. In some respects, it is parallel to the rituals of the Eurasian nomads of the 2<sup>nd</sup> century BCE – 2<sup>nd</sup> century CE. Among the weapons, as in the Oxus temple, the most numerous were iron daggers (akinakes), knives, armour plates, arrowheads and bone overlays on bows. The warriors' equipment was made of iron and bronze, and some items were made of gold and silver; a number of plates and buckles were covered with gold foil with ornaments. One of the groups of finds also contained items related to temple utensils.

17H45-18H15 : [Questions & Answers](#)

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### Pre-Islamic Late Antiquity (200 – 750 CE)

9H-9H30 :

#### *Preliminary Results of the Study of the Kyzlartepa*

Muminkhan Saidov, Institute of Archaeology – Cultural Heritage Agency of the Republic of Uzbekistan

Kizlartepa is located on the western side of the Chupanata Hills, 2 km north of Afrasiab. Currently preserved part of the monument has a form of square oriented to the cardinal points, with dimensions of 75×85 m and a height of 18 m. In the center of this large lower part another square elevation rises 5 meters up. At the top it has dimensions 16 x 16 meters.

The initial description of the monument belongs to I.A. Sukharev, who studied this monument during the surveys conducted in 1935–1936 in Samarqand and its environs. During these works, a large khum (pythos) was found at the height of 3 meters in a cut that grazed the northern side of the monument. There were two bullae in this vessel. Partially preserved image on one of them is the depiction of a crown of Sasanian type, close to those of Varakhran V and Peroz. The site also produced an ostrakon with Sogdian inscription “belongs to clan of mighty...” In his diaries I.A. Sukharev notes, that Kizlartepa had an external fortification wall 200 x 200 meters embracing a territory to the east and south of the central building.

First excavations were conducted on Kyzlartepa in 1987, under the direction of T.I. Lebedeva. These works touched different areas of the monument: central (tranches 1-2) and north-eastern parts of the monument (tranches 3a and 3b). With rather limited volume of excavations, the main results of these works were the general conclusions about the stages in the development of this monument. The analysis of the received materials allowed T.I. Lebedeva to formulate a hypothesis that Kuzlartepa was built in the second half of the 4<sup>th</sup> or in the 5<sup>th</sup> century on the site of an earlier rural settlement. Besides this, T.I. Lebedeva suggested that Kyzlartepa served as a rural residence for the rulers of Samarqand. In doing so she took into consideration the location of the monument on the western edge of Chupanata, which some Mediaeval sources called Afshin, as well as the character of the finds: bullae, one of which had an image of a crown typical for Hephtalite rulers, and Sogdian inscriptions.

Beginning with 2023 new large scale excavations started on the monument under the auspices of the Samarqand Institute of Archaeology and of the Korean Foundation of Cultural Heritage. These works uncovered the remains of over 15 rooms and thus allowed us to receive first plan of the architectural layout of the structure. A domed building in the centre of the monument served as the main unifying element of the plan. Adobe brick vaults covered most of the rooms. A rectangular room with sufa was discovered in the Southern part of the monument.

No architectural elements characteristic of the royal residences have been found on the site up to date. The currently received data suggests that Kyzlartepa could serve as a keshk of a nobleman, or used as a custom point.

9H30-10H00 [in Russian, with translation]:

#### *Kuldor-tepa and Kurgon-tepa: two newly discovered temples of the Early Medieval period in Central Sogdiana*

Alisher Sandibaev, Institute of Archaeology – Cultural Heritage Agency of the Republic of Uzbekistan

In Arabic sources from the 9<sup>th</sup> to 12<sup>th</sup> centuries, including the works of al-Istakhri, Ibn Hawqal, and al-Muqaddasi, the names of rural districts (*rustaqs*) belonging to Sogdian Samarqand—such as Bundjiket, Waraghsar, Shawdar, Maymurgh, Sanjarfaghan, Abghar, Yarkath, Burnamadh, Buzmajan, Kabudhanjakath, Widhar, Marzban - as well as cities like Ishtikhan, Kushaniyya, Dabusiyya and Rabinjan, are mentioned.

The Maymurgh *rustaq*, referenced in these sources, has been localized to the Quldortepe archaeological site in the Urgut district. Similarly, Sanjarfaghan has been linked to the Kurgantepa site. Archaeological excavations at this site, which began in 2022, have uncovered places of worship dating back to the early medieval period.

Quldortepe, located in the Bahrin village of the Urgut district in Samarqand region, was initially studied in 1955-1956 by B. Stavisky and M. Urmanova. Within the Quldortepe *shahristan* there is a separate elevated area between the outer wall and the *rabat*, known locally as Kindiktepe or Ghishtmasjid. This mound is circular, with a diameter of 27 meters and a preserved height of 9.5 meters. Since 2023, the Uzbekistan-Japan joint international expedition has been conducting archaeological excavations at this site.

The excavations have fully exposed the site, revealing four construction phases. The second phase, dated to the 7<sup>th</sup>–8<sup>th</sup> centuries, includes a temple (room 1: 3.4 x 4.15 m), an adjoining *ayvan* (room 2: 9.3 x 9.5 m), smaller chambers in the northeast (rooms 3–5), and a surrounding corridor on the western side. Artifacts discovered include a wooden column, a bronze mirror, coins, and fragments of wall paintings. The layout of the temple bears similarities to the Penjikent temple.

Not far from Ghishtmasjid lies the Kurgantepa archaeological site, which covers an area of 9 hectares. The citadel (*ark*) is situated in the center of the city and has a rectangular layout (56 x 64 m) with a height of 14 meters. The entrance is located on the southern side via a ramp-like pathway. The *shahristan* surrounds the citadel and is separated from it by a moat. The *rabat* area is in the western and southwestern parts of the city, which are now entirely used as a cemetery.

Excavations conducted in 2022 focused on the *shahristan* (excavations 1–3), uncovering structures dating to the 7<sup>th</sup>–8<sup>th</sup> and 11<sup>th</sup>–12<sup>th</sup> centuries. In 2024, archaeological work in excavation IV of the citadel revealed the remains of a temple with interior walls adorned with murals.

The first-phase structure within the excavation area was rectangular (8.4 x 5 m) and featured five doorways—three on the southern side, one on the eastern side, and one on the western side. Four pillar bases were found in the center of the room, and an altar was identified near the northern wall. The altar, measuring 2.6 meters in length, was oriented from east to west and covered with gypsum. The walls and doorways of the room were decorated with murals.

In the eastern corner of the northern wall, a mural depicted a deity with an oval-shaped face, ears, and hands adorned with elaborate jewelry. The deity wore a crown with wings and a crescent-shaped top, a common motif in early medieval Sogdian art. Additionally, niches were recorded on the western, northern, and eastern walls, with a clay sculpture found in the eastern niche.

The room's layout and altar placement resemble the Dilberjin and Takhti-Sangin temples. Kurgantepa was one of the major temples of central Sogdiana in the early medieval period. Although it was completely burned down, it was revived in the 10<sup>th</sup>–12<sup>th</sup> centuries and became the center of the Sanjarfaghna rustaq, as recorded in historical sources.

10H-10H30 :

*New Material on Late Sogdian History, Art, and Religion  
from the Excavations at Sanjar-Shah*

Michael Shenkar, Hebrew University of Jerusalem

Our recent excavations at the Sogdian site of Sanjar-Shah near Panjikent (northern Tajikistan) have brought to light evidence of the construction of a monumental palace during the 740s CE. The palace was decorated with figurative wall-paintings and architectural elements made of carved wood. It was destroyed in the third quarter of the 8<sup>th</sup> century, possibly during the al-Muqanna' uprising.

The paper discusses the architecture, the wall paintings and the carved wood from the palace in the context of the transformation of Sogdian culture in the 8<sup>th</sup> century. Overall, there are twenty fragments of carved beams and panels with geometric, floral and zoomorphic designs. Most decorative patterns attested on the wooden fragments from the Sanjar-Shah palace find exact parallels in the materials from Panjikent and other Sogdian sites dated to the first quarter of the 8<sup>th</sup> century. Six fragments of panels were part of a freeze depicting juxtaposed, crouching wild rams. The Sanjar-Shah paintings are of the highest artistic quality and are new, outstanding monuments of Sogdian art. They include a complex floral freeze, a decorative ornament of crenelated antefixes, and a figurative composition of two priests worshipping a sacred fire.

10H30-11H : Questions & Answers

11H30-12H00 :

*A Border Crossing Point in Late Antique Sogdiana – Early Medieval Soghd*

Vikentyi Parshuto, Institute for the Study of the Ancient World – New York University

In July–August 2024, the Panjikent expedition, in collaboration with the National Museum of Tajikistan, began researching a new Sogdian–Early Islamic site called Kuhna-Chinor (Kurgontepa) to the south of Panjikent in the valley of the Chinor brook.

The site consists of a central building standing on the top of a hill, overseeing the arable lands and irrigation systems around it. A road from the south (Magian Darya valley) perhaps crossed right by the site, and barely visible traces of temporary yurt-like constructions occupy the slopes of the hill.

The excavations in the central building possibly revealed remnants of a gate construction, storage room, and a staircase (connecting three floors of the building) with scarce material dating to the 10<sup>th</sup> century and earlier; the stratigraphy is still to be updated. At present, at least four significant periods can be distinguished: the Islamic cemetery around the site, the late occupation of the excavated storage room, the initial occupation of it, and possibly an earlier stage of the building when its layout had been different.

An intensive survey around the site, incorporating elements of controlled metal detecting, provided some insights into the functions of the environment. A Sogdian naos-based cemetery (with at least 4 naoses) was discovered, with a Tang mirror fragment found in one of the naoses. The outlines of the site were defined, the relief divided into zones tentatively representing remains of ancient structures, and the material from these areas was collected and analysed.

Hypothesising on the basis of this brief research, it is possible that Kuhna-Chinor was a border-crossing point and a beacon tower in the southern outskirts of Panjikent. In the talk, I will present the material evidence for this hypothesis, describe our approach, and outline future research strategies. Hopefully, these could be refined during the conference.

12H-12H30 :

*A Preliminary Study on the Archaeological Contexts of the Sogdian Writings  
from the Burials in Eastern Central Asia*

Shujing Wang, Peking University

Sogdian writings have been discovered at many ancient sites across Central Asia, including cemeteries in the Turfan region, located in the present-day Xinjiang Uighur Autonomous Region of China. The arid climate of this area has facilitated the preservation of several highly perishable paper documents and wooden tablets bearing Sogdian scripts, most of which are dated to the 5<sup>th</sup> to 8<sup>th</sup> centuries CE. Previous studies on Sogdian writings from the Turfan cemeteries have primarily focused on paleographical and historical perspectives, with limited attention given to their mortuary contexts. In contrast, this paper examines these writings through an archaeological lens, analyzing the transformation of these writings' functions from carriers of information to integral elements of funerary practices. Additionally, some Sogdian writings were unearthed from so-called Chinese-style burials, highlighting the cultural entanglement among multiple ethnic groups in the region.

12H30-13H15 : Questions & Answers

13H15- 14H45 : Lunch Break

## Pre-Mongol Middle Ages (750 – 1200 CE)

14H45 – 15H15 :

### *Changing Landscapes of Glass Production during the Early Islamic Period*

Nadine Schibille, CNRS Centre Ernest-Babelon

Archaeological evidence shows that most glass production in the ancient world was divided into two phases: the production of raw glass in few primary workshops in the eastern Mediterranean and Mesopotamia and the processing of this raw glass in secondary workshops that were widespread. Both finished objects and semi-finished raw glass were subject to trade and exchange over short, medium and long distances. The chemical composition of archaeological glass can be used to trace these economic and cultural exchange networks. Towards the end of the first millennium CE, the system of production, the raw materials, the scale of production and the number of manufacturing sites changed. These changes had a fundamental impact on the distribution patterns of vitreous materials. Here, I will reconstruct and trace the transformations of the glass industry in the Islamic world in the 9<sup>th</sup> century using analytical data of glass assemblages from a number of sites, including Nishapur, Merv, Bukhara and Samarkand. Our data suggest that raw glass no longer travelled in large quantities over long distances. Instead, the distinctive character of glass assemblages indicate that primary production sites multiplied in urban centres along the medieval trade routes known as the Silk Roads. I will try to map the distribution patterns of particular glass types to determine the extent of movement and thus reconstruct trade networks and possible technological trajectories.

15H15 – 15H45 :

### *Shaping the Islamic Space in Medieval Bukhara and Samarkand : a fresh look at architectural inscriptions*

Viola Allegranzi, Institute of Iranian Studies – Austrian Academy of Sciences

The paper focuses on inscriptions in Arabic and Persian produced in the Bukhara and Samarkand area between the 10<sup>th</sup> and 13<sup>th</sup> centuries, drawing on a recently initiated research project on architectural epigraphy in Central Asia. Few epigraphic texts have been preserved for this epoch, often in a damaged or fragmentary state. However, new data is expected from an analysis that reconsiders them anew and adopts a broad comparative and contextual perspective.

Unlike most previous studies, the project aims to address both inscriptions with ‘historical’ content (*i.e.*, containing names and/or dates) and religious or formulaic texts, considering the interaction between inscriptions of different natures, and emphasising their spatial, technical and stylistic dimensions. Such an approach is intended to better understand how political and religious authorities appropriated space, while craftsmen formulated increasingly elaborate visual languages. Indeed, if in the Samanid epoch inscriptions remain rare and seems appended to ‘frame’ architectural elements, evidence from the Qarakhanid and Khwarezmshah periods shows that epigraphic registers have become an integral part of the monument design. Therefore, by piecing together the inscriptions recorded through surveys and archival

research with their contemporary textual and material sources we can gain insights into the political and cultural history, the artistic and craft traditions of two major centres of innovative ideas and practices in the medieval Islamicate world.

15H45 – 16H15 :

### *In Search of the Fortress of al-Muqanna' : surveys in the Hissar mountains*

Yury Karev, CNRS UMR 8546 AOROC

Branching south-westwards, the natural extremity of the Hissar mountain range separates the Surkhan-darya and Qashqa-darya valleys, and forms a large (up to 100 km wide) highland area that played a barrier role between two distinctive cultural zones (marked respectively by Sogdian and Bactrian heritage). The most emblematic « passage control » site situated inside this zone is the famous Iron Gate, mentioned already in the Orkhon runic inscriptions as an ultimate geographical limit of the second Turkic Qaghanate. However, there was another place in South-Western Hissar rivaling in the medieval written sources the fame of the Iron Gate: the castle of al-Muqanna'. Unlike the former, identified and excavated by the archaeologists (the last excavations led in 1995-1996 by Claude Rapin and Shahimardan Rahmanov, by MAFOUZ), the residence of one of the most dangerous ideological and political rivals of the 'Abbasid caliphate, the very capital of his new state that served as a base for the new religious conquest from Southern Sughd toward South (Chaghanian, Tirmidh), the North (Samarqand) and, indirectly, the North-West (Bukhara oasis). That place, besieged for more than a year by the caliphal generals, was never found and identified with certainty by the archaeologists, although some identifications were put forward. Work on the manuscripts of al-Bal'amī and history of al-Muqanna' (published in 2015 as a chapter of a book on the Abbasid Sogdiana) since 2010, stimulated the idea of the first short surveys in the Qashqa-darya watershed zone of Hissar, between Katta Ura-darya and Aq-darya. Although being in the beginning rather an occasional by-side project to the main archaeological activities of the French-Uzbek Mission in Sogdiana (MAFOUZ), the study of the Hissar region tends now to be the main survey project of the Mission — obviously not limited to the search of the famous fortress (although still important), but aiming to understand the types of mountain settlements characteristic for that region in different periods, the geography of the local sacred places, the communication network, and the economy. It is excellent material for a comparative analysis in relation to other mountain regions that in some cases are better known — be they the close neighbours (like the Zarafshan valley), or more distant ones (Pamir, Hindukush etc.). The paper aims to present the main observations based on the surveys made up to 2024.

16H15 – 17H00 : Questions & Answers

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WORKSHOP

# Sogdiana

*State of the art and research in progress*

Le colloque se tiendra les mercredi 2 et jeudi 3 juillet 2025 à L'ENS,  
amphithéâtre Jean Jaurès (entrée par le 28 rue Lhomond, 75005 Paris).

En collaboration avec : Collège de France, Fondation Hugo,  
Institute for the Study of the Ancient Worlds New-York University,  
P.Y. and Kinmay W. Tang Center for Silk Road Studies.

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