

Offprint from

Urban Cultures of Central Asia from the Bronze Age to the Karakhanids

Learnings and conclusions from new archaeological
investigations and discoveries

Proceedings of the First International Congress on Central Asian
Archaeology held at the University of Bern, 4–6 February 2016

Edited by
Christoph Baumer and Mirko Novák

2019

Harrassowitz Verlag · Wiesbaden

Preliminary Results of Archaeological Investigations at Vardāna

A focus on the Early Medieval period

Silvia Pozzi, Sirojiddin Mirzaachmedov, and Munira Sultanova

Abstract: The archaeological site of Vardanzeh (ancient Vardāna) is located on the northern border of the Bukhara oasis (Uzbekistan), which formed the westernmost territory of ancient Sogdiana. During the Early Medieval period (5th–8th centuries CE), this settlement controlled the surrounding territory constituting a political entity known as the “villages of Obavija”. Descriptions of Vardāna are present in several Islamic sources, suggesting its antiquity, but also its strategic and political role, particularly relevant at the time of the Arab advance in the region. This paper presents the results of the archaeological investigations carried out at the citadel of Vardāna between 2009 and 2016. In particular, it focuses on the Early Medieval building phase and on the rich corpus of pottery and finds that reflect cultural influences and ties with the Sassanid Empire, the Middle Syr Darya region and the Turks.

Keywords: Vardāna, Early Medieval period, Sogdiana, Turks, Sassanids.

Резюме: Археологический памятник Варданза (древняя Вардана) расположен на северной границе Бухарского оазиса (Узбекистан), который входил в состав западной территории древней Согдианы. В период раннего средневековья (5-8 вв. н.э.) это поселение контролировало окружающую территорию, которая представляла собой политическую силу, известную как “села Обавия”. Описания Варданы присутствуют в нескольких исламских источниках, что свидетельствует не только о древности этого места, но и о его стратегической и политической роли, что особенно важно для времени арабского продвижения в регионе. В данной статье представлены результаты археологических исследований на цитадели Вардана между 2009 и 2016 годами. В частности, рассматривается ранняя средневековая стадия строительства и богатые комплексы керамики и других находок, которые отражают культурные влияния и связи с империей Сасанидов, населением области Средней Сырдарьи и тюрками.

Ключевые слова: Вардана, раннее средневековье, Согдиана, тюрки, сасаниды.

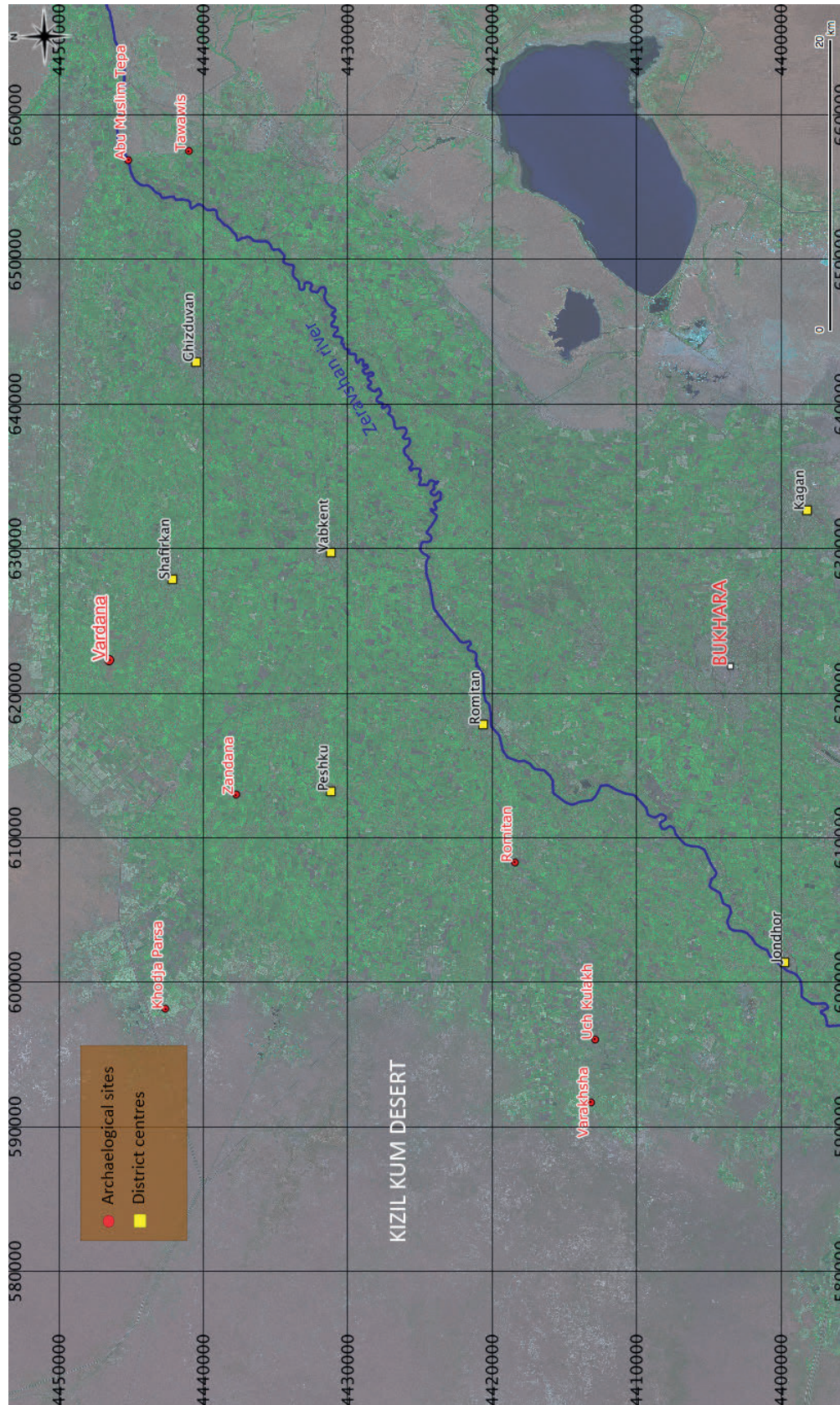


Fig. 1: Map of the Bukhara oasis (Bing satellite image background, QG is elaboration of the author).



Fig. 2: Citadel of Vardāna (from top): southern side; eastern gate; detail of brickwork in the north-west corner (© The Society for the Exploration of EurAsia).

1 Geographical and historical outline

Locally known as Kurgan Vardanzeh (or simply Vardanzeh), this remote site located on the northern fringes of the Bukhara oasis (Uzbekistan) was one of the most politically relevant towns of the region during the pre-Islamic period, when it was known as Vardāna. Since 2009, this site has been subject to an extensive archaeological excavation by a Swiss-Uzbek expedition¹ promoted by The Soci-

¹ As co-director of the archaeological expedition at Vardā-

na, I would like to express my gratitude to Dr Christoph Baumer, The Society for the Exploration of EurAsia, and to all the sponsors that have generously supported the archaeological excavation at Vardāna since 2009. Special thanks go also to Amriddin Berdimuradov, director of the Institute of Archaeology of the Academy of Science of Uzbekistan in Samarkand, to the co-director of the expedition Djamal Mirzaachemodov, and to all the colleagues that during these years participated in the expedition (Alexei Savchenko, Shukrat Adylov, Maxuma Niyazova, Siroj Mirzaachmedov, Munira Sultanova, Dilmurod Kholov, and Anvar Athakodhjaev). Finally, I would like to express my deep gratitude to Prof Bruno Genito (Naples University l'Orientale) for his scientific coordination and for his essential administrative support.

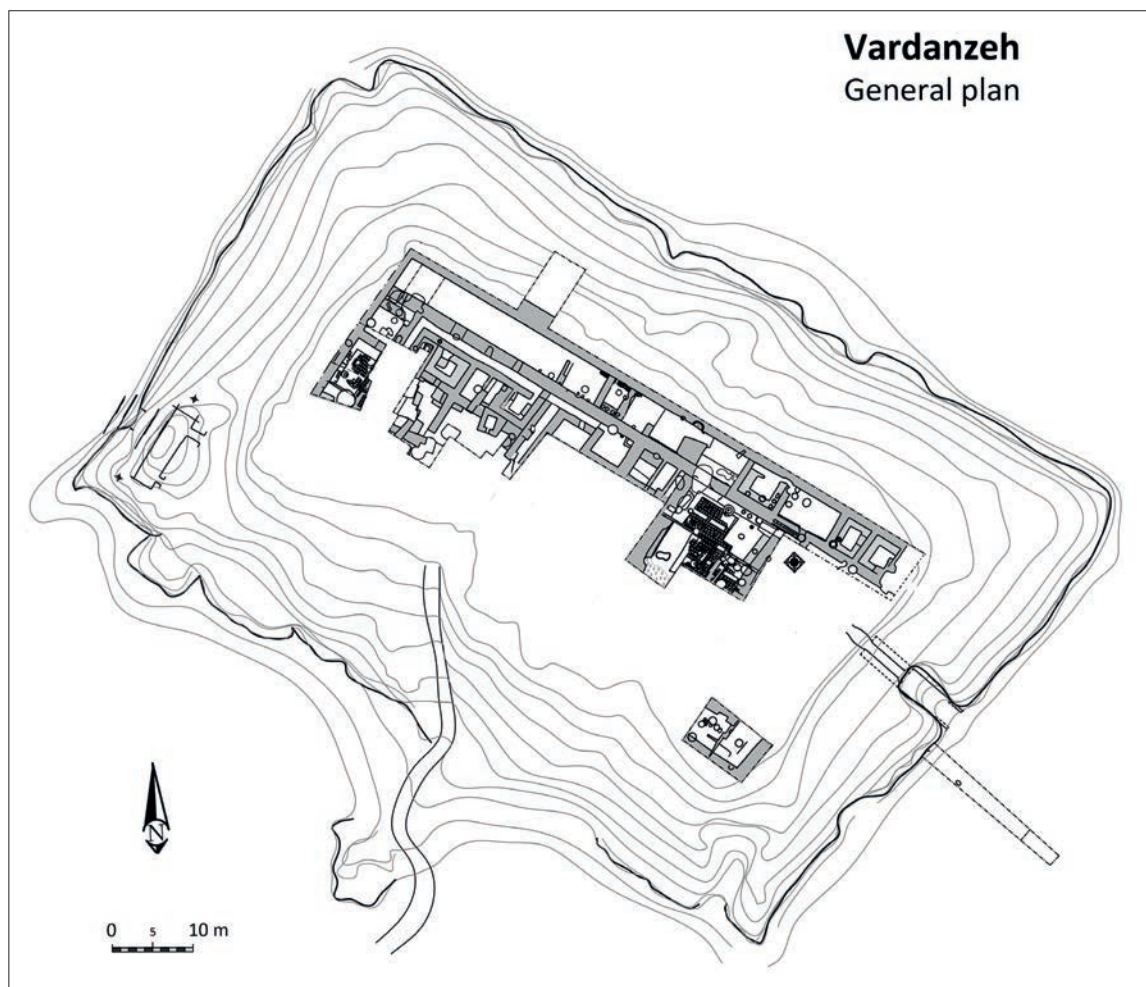


Fig. 3: Vardāna, general plan (from CERASUOLO 2009: fig. IV.34, updated by Mirzaachmedov).

ety for the Exploration of EurAsia in collaboration with the Institute of Archaeology of the Academy of Science of Uzbekistan, Samarkand. Vardanzeh (coordinates: 40°9'50.97"N, 64°26'16.80"E) belongs to the Shafirkan *tuman* (district), one of the eleven districts of the Bukhara region, and it is only 11 km from the present-day uncultivated lands, representing the northern most impressive archaeological monument of this area (Fig. 1).

The site was built at the end of the Shapurkham canal, recorded by the Islamic literary sources² as one of the ancient canals of the Bukhara oasis, still existing but now dried out in its last section. Currently, the proper site (ca. 7 ha) consists of a citadel and a lower settlement and appears isolated from the surrounding cultivated fields, as the Uzbek government, aware of its archaeological potential, has prevented the use of a large portion of the surrounding land (170 ha). The massive citadel, 15 m high, has a rectangular plan (0.8 ha) and its vertical walls,

partially eroded by the forces of nature, still show the original brickwork (Fig. 2).

A ditch, now buried by the sand, once surrounded the whole citadel. A north-east to south-west oriented lower settlement extends from the citadel to the south, its morphology indicating that it has two different parts. The first is a walled *shahristan* of rectangular shape (2 ha), separated from the citadel by two depressions; the second (4.5 ha) spreads irregularly south of the first one and could be interpreted as a second *shahristan* or a *rabad*, the suburbs of the medieval city. The only modern structures are located in the eastern part of the lower settlement, on the border between the two *shahristans*, and consist of a mausoleum and in few annexed timber-frame constructions. The mausoleum, made of baked bricks, is named after Burk-i-Sarmast, a local Muslim sage, and is still visited daily by local people who offer devotional meals (*khudoi*) as thanksgiving to Allah. On top of the citadel stands a marble gravestone, also an object of local devotion.

The modern name of the site and its peculiar geographical location have facilitated its identification with the ancient town of Vardāna mentioned

2 Ibn Hauqal (IBN ḤAWQAL: 466–467), Naršaḥī (NARŠAḤĪ: 31); Iṣṭakhri (AL-IṢṬAḤRĪ: 310).

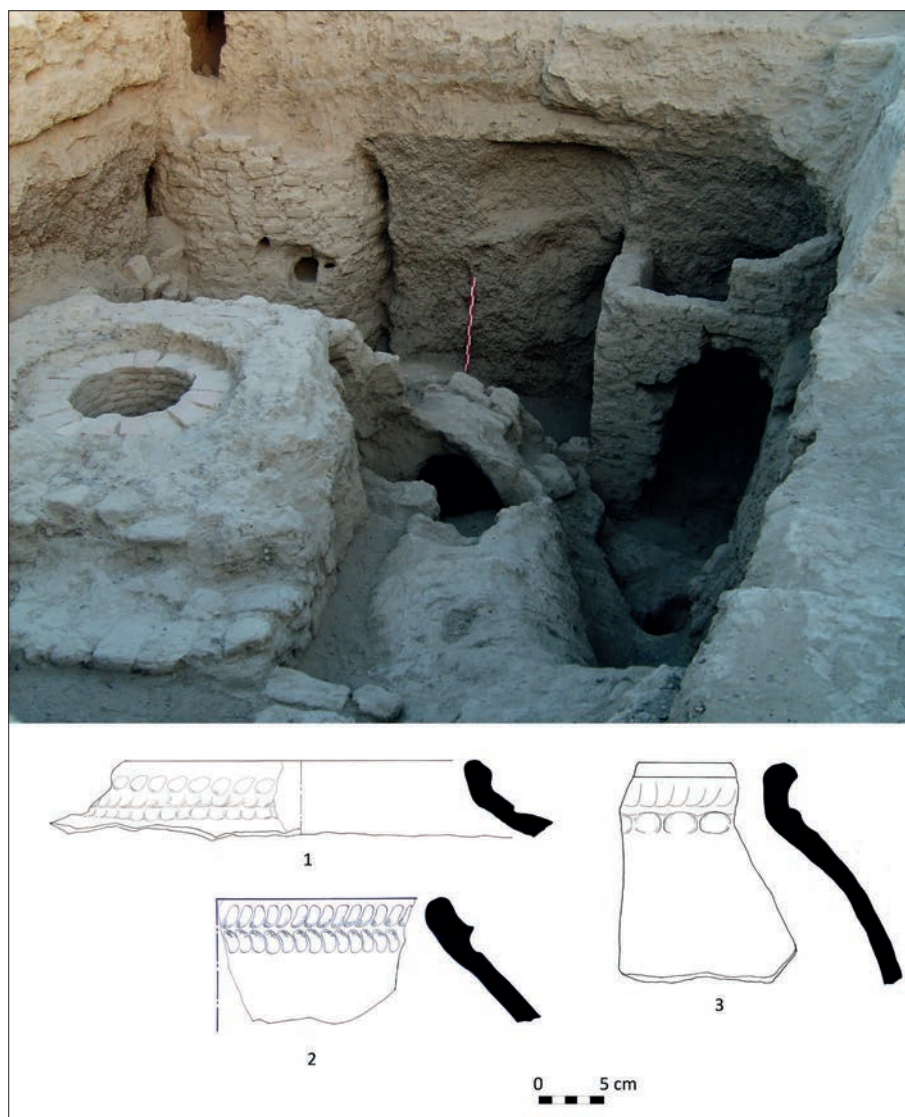


Fig. 4: Architectural structures found beneath fluvial pebbles (top, view from west): (1) Rim of a jar found inside the platform beneath the ancient building phase; (2) Rim of a jar found on the ancient floor; (3) Rim of a jar found on the ancient floor of the Early Medieval phase (drawings by M. Sultanova, copyright The Society for the Exploration of EurAsia).

in the works of Islamic historians and geographers such as al-Iṣṭakhrī (AL-IṢṬAḤRĪ: 310), Ibn Hauqal (IBN ḤAWQAL: 466–467), Hamadani (AL-HAMADĀNĪ: 421) and as-Samani (KAMALIDDINOV 1993: 66). As pointed out by MARQUART (1898: 62), and supported a century later by NAYMARK (2001: 209–212), Vardāna is also quoted in the “Travels” of Xuan Zang under the name of *Fa-ti* (XUANZANG: 35), one of the four political entities active in Bukhara oasis between the 7th and the 8th centuries CE. According to Naršaḥī (NARŠAḤĪ: 16, 31–32), the author of *Tārīḥ-i Buḥārā* (The History of Bukhara), this important trading centre was located on the frontier with Turkistan and in the Early Medieval period³

3 This definition is used mostly in Soviet literature to indi-

and was the capital of the Obavija Feud, governed by the Vardān Khudāh dynasty. The foundation legend narrated by the same author (NARŠAḤĪ: 31–32) reports that the origins of this royal dynasty go back to a Sassanid prince who obtained these lands from the king of Bukhara. It is worth noting that this dynasty represents the only royal family besides Bukhār

cate a period of time usually extending from the 5th and the 8th centuries CE, during which Sogdiana experienced a strong urban, commercial, and artistic development, together with a cultural homogeneity (see BRYKINA 1999: 5). The beginning of this period around the end of the 4th to the beginning of the 5th centuries CE coincides with the resurgence of Sogdiana after a period of economic crisis (on this, see GRENET 1996: 372) and ends in the 8th century with the Arab conquest of the region.

Khudāh mentioned in the *Tārīḥ-i Buḥārā*. Its power increased significantly, especially at the time of the Arab conquest of the oasis, as confirmed by Ṭabarī, who cites Vardān Khudāh as *malik* (king) of Bukhara (ṬABARĪ: 150–151). It is also possible to infer from the records of Naršaḥī that Vardān Khudāh was an opponent of Bukhār Khudāh and usurped his throne between the 7th and the 8th centuries CE. This information accords well with the political landscape of Sogdiana during the Early Medieval period, which was characterised by a fragmentation of power and by local rivalries. Another aspect of Vardāna to be inferred from the literary sources, which correctly reveal the cultural and political scenario of Sogdiana in those centuries, is the Turkic origin of Vardān Khudāh (NARŠAḤĪ: 10). In the middle of the 6th century CE, the first Turk Empire entered the political and economic affairs of Sogdian territories, laying the foundation of a long-lasting relationship with the Sogdian ruling class. The presence of Turks or rulers of Turkic descent governing Sogdian principalities⁴ (DE LA VAISSIÈRE 2005: 200) is evidence of this relationship, as is the Turco-Sogdian military alliance, which was particularly active at the time of the Arab advance in Sogdiana.

2 Stratigraphy

The archaeological research carried out at Vardāna between 2009 and 2016 focused mainly on the citadel, where a stratigraphic sequence of occupation dating from the late 4th/beginning of the 5th to the late 19th/beginning of the 20th centuries, when the citadel was still used for burials and for temporary shelter, was identified. The more consistent and best-documented building period, which is the focus of the present paper, is represented by a structure with rectangular plan (probably a palace) discovered on top of the citadel⁵ (Fig. 3); its excavation is still in progress. Currently, we are inclined to date the construction of this palace to the 5th to the 6th centuries CE (*first building phase*), while its abandonment could be placed around the 8th century CE. An important change of the original layout (*second building phase*) probably occurred between the 7th and the 8th centuries, even though the material unearthed so far is still not enough to formulate a more detailed chronology.

However, the most ancient structures detected so far at Vardāna can probably be dated to the beginning of the 5th century CE, if not earlier, at the end of the 4th century. The remains of this ancient building are still scarcely investigated, and the general lay-

out of the structures is not clear. Nevertheless, the architectural structures, detected in several trenches, were always underneath a thick layer of fluvial pebbles and sand. The widest trench that displayed these ancient constructions is located in the central part of the citadel, where a wall 3 m high, oriented north-south, was identified. Some architectural structures located to the east of this wall, namely two underground tunnels, a well built with baked bricks, and a circular structure, possibly a tower, have also been found (Fig. 4:1). Here, the fluvial pebbles and sand buried the ancient structures up to 3 m deep and apparently no layers of debris were found on the ancient floor, so that the gravels were laid directly on it. The excavation of a test trench on this floor revealed the presence of an underlying deposit of very compact clay that contained sporadic *pakhsa* blocks. This deposit, excavated down to a depth of 4 m, probably constituted the platform on which the ancient structures were built.⁶ The few pottery fragments retrieved from these earlier layers of occupation are similar to the pottery found in the oldest levels of occupation of the Early Medieval palace (Fig. 4:2–3), suggesting that there was not a prolonged period of abandonment between the two building periods. Part of a corridor following the external walls that belonged to the ancient building period was identified in the south-west corner of the citadel, also buried under a thick layer of fluvial pebbles and sand. It was most probably during the Early Medieval period that the external wall that delimited this corridor increased in thickness up to 5 m, as attested in the north-west external corner of the citadel thanks to the partial collapse of the brickwork. The use of such an impressive quantity of gravels and sand is not so frequently attested and it would imply the quick burial of the ancient structures. Interestingly, in the Bukhara oasis, this type of filling is attested in the core of one of the excavated sections of Kampirak, the long oasis wall that protected the territory of Bukhara. According to Stark and MIRZAAHMEDOV (2015: 93), who excavated a section of this wall near Kizil Tepa, the rest can be dated to the end of 4th/beginning of the 5th centuries CE, a temporal framework that fits in well with the dating proposed for the discovered structures at Vardāna.

Early Medieval palace, first building phase

This construction (internally ca. 70 × 34 m), oriented east-west and occupying the whole upper surface of the citadel, was built on a platform formed by burying earlier structures (see description above) under a layer of fluvial pebbles and sand 3 m thick

4 On this, see also STARK 2007.

5 The later phases of occupation will be analysed in detail by DŽ.K. MIRZAAHMEDOV in his contribution to this publication.

6 This deposit was not entirely excavated; it was decided to stop at the depth of -10.85 m for safety reasons.

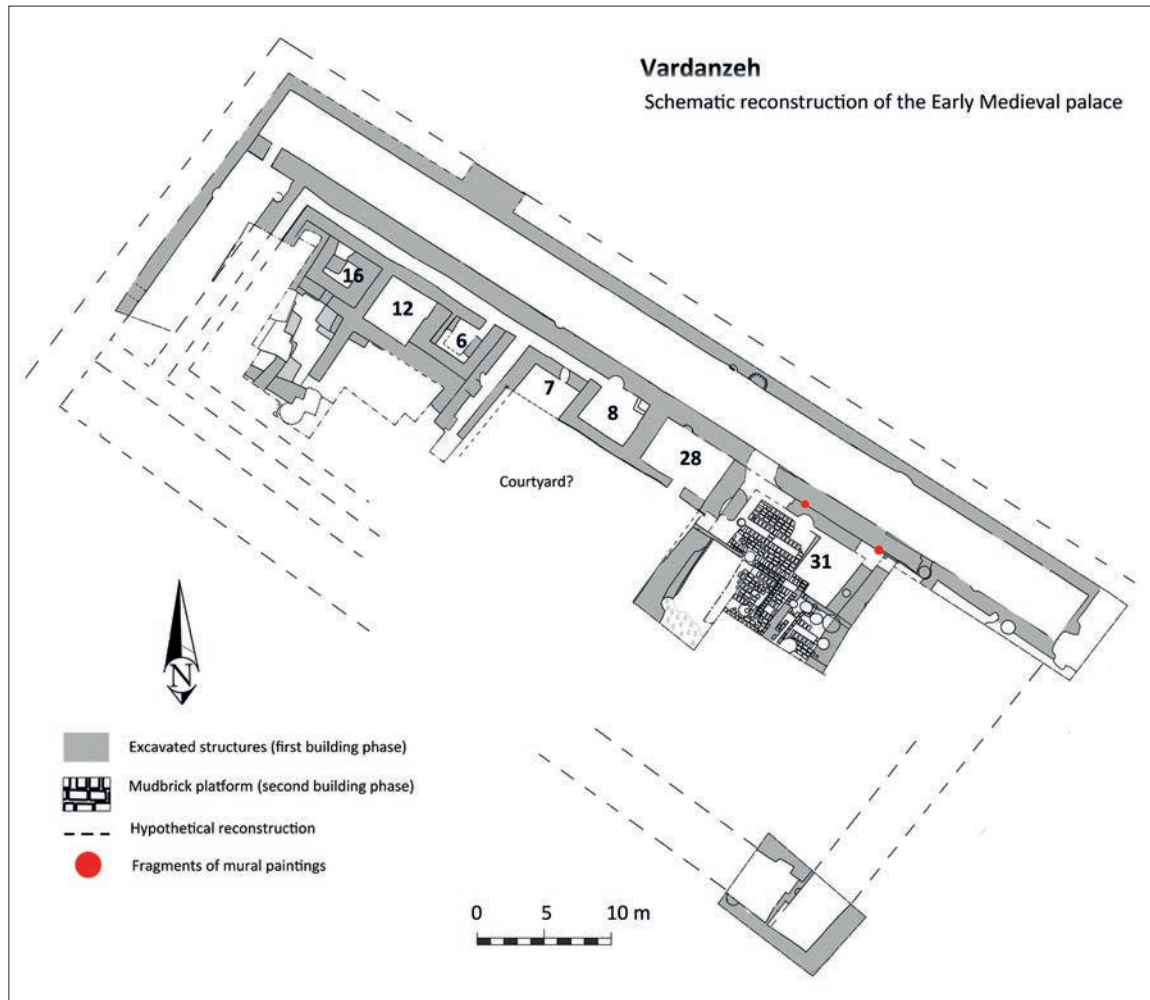


Fig. 5: Schematic reconstruction of the Early Medieval palace (topography S. Mirzaachmedov on O. CERASUOLO 2009 general plan).

(Fig. 4). A middle layer of rammed earth around 0.50 m thick separated the pebbles and sands from the walls of the palace. So far, the team has unearthed the northern, western and south-eastern sides of the palace, revealing the presence of massive walls made of mud bricks and *pakhsa* blocks. The external profile of these walls is very eroded and the original thickness is still debated. On the northern side, the perimeter wall was almost 3 m thick, as attested by a small test trench; by contrast, the eastern side the wall, cut by two large holes, was thicker and probably extended up to the eastern limit of the citadel. The perimeter walls delimited an inner corridor 4 m wide that most likely characterised the whole perimeter of the palace, as can be inferred by its discovery on the western, northern and southern sides of the palace. Initially, the corridor functioned as a surveillance area and its western and northern sections were connected through a passage located in the westernmost part of the northern wing. The walls are preserved on the western side up to 2 m in height and 1 m on the northern side, and are

without loopholes. Interestingly, three heaps of fluvial cobbles, each 8–10 cm long, were found at three points on the floor of the northern corridor. Each heap contained around 10–15 cobbles of reddish colour and can be interpreted as a reserve of projectiles for slings. The corridor encircled an inner dwelling area and no access to this inner part of the palace has yet been found on either section of the excavated corridor.

Currently, it has been ascertained that the proper dwelling area consisted of three *sectors* (hereafter named the *western*, *central* and *eastern sectors*), each of them showing specific features and spatial arrangements. The *western sector* probably represented the private rooms; side-corridors encircled it as well on the western, northern and eastern sides. The eastern side-corridor, oriented north-south, divided the western sector from the central sector. Two square rooms (6 and 12), one of them with *sufa*, opened northward into the northern side-corridor, while another room with *sufa* (16) opened south-



Fig. 6: Mud brick platforms in the eastern sector (top); rooms created inside the northern surveillance corridor (below) (copyright The Society for the Exploration of EurAsia).

ward into a transit area (17) leading to a wide space located to the south of rooms 6 and 12.

The *central sector*, highly damaged by later burials and holes, consisted of a courtyard delimited on the northern side by three rooms (7, 8 and 28). Room 8 was connected to the western wing of the palace through the northern side-corridor, while the remaining rooms opened onto the courtyard, delimited to the west by the eastern side-corridor and to the east by a massive wall 2.8 m thick that divided the *central sector* from the *eastern sector*.

The *eastern sector*, where the last archaeological campaigns concentrated their excavations, originally housed a representative room (31), recognisable by the identification of two fragments of a mural

painting that probably decorated a large portion of Wall 29, the long wall that divided the surveillance corridor from the dwelling area. The layout of the room that housed the mural paintings is still unclear as the area underwent a series of later reconstructions. Two fragments (33 × 29 cm, 72 × 57 cm) were removed from the wall for conservation purposes. They are both very badly preserved and unfortunately no clear decorative motif is recognisable on the white background, apart from few lines of red, black and light blue. The poor state of preservation is essentially due to two events that occurred in this area. At one point in time, the wall that supported the paintings was seriously damaged in its upper part, being preserved to a height of 1.90 m.

Consequently, new masonry was built on top of it, replacing the missing parts. The restored wall was re-plastered, both in the older and in the new parts, and on that occasion the surface of the older wall that still displayed the remains of mural paintings was “scratched” to facilitate the attachment of the new mud plaster, damaging the paintings. The second event that undermined the conservation of the paintings was a fire that occurred in this area at a later time (see below). The new mud plaster that covered the mural paintings was completely scorched, causing the almost total disappearance of the underlying colours. To these events we can also add the destruction of the wall caused by the holes made later, which reduced even more the surface that might have preserved more traces of paintings.

Early medieval palace, second building phase

The *second building phase* attests to a re-building activity well documented both in the surveillance corridor and in the proper inner palace (Fig. 6). As far as the surveillance corridor is concerned, at one point in time the passage connecting the northern and the western wings was blocked, the floor level of the western corridor raised by 1 m, and two partition walls were built, creating two new rooms. The same situation was found in the eastern part of the northern surveillance corridor, where four new rooms were created. Three of these rooms had *sufa* and yielded a large quantity of pottery, in particular storage and table pottery. As in the surveillance corridor, the layout of the dwelling area also underwent important changes. In the *western sector*, part of the northern side-corridor was blocked off and Room 12 partitioned into two smaller rooms. In the *central sector*, Room 8 was sealed and Room 28 partitioned into three spaces. However, the most important changings occurred in the *eastern sector*, where the team unearthed some rooms used for storage and cooking, built on the earlier representative room decorated with mural paintings.

The storage function of this area is implied by the several jars (*khum*) found within the archaeological context, buried a few centimetres underneath the floor, and by the large quantity of pottery, organic burnt material (straw baskets, cotton fabrics and padding), bronze and iron tools, bone spindle whorls and millstones found on the floors. Partition walls divided the earlier space into three rooms (23, 26 and 27), where several burnt wooden beams were found on the floors still in their original location. Possibly they were part of some timber-framed construction used to create small partitions inside the rooms and their preservation is due to a large fire that put an end to the occupation of this area, the same fire that also caused the final destruction of the mural paintings. The excavation revealed that

the storage rooms were built on mud-brick platforms whose brickwork followed a precise scheme. Each platform, only 0.30 m high, was made by an external row of stretchers, while the inner brickwork consisted of three parallel rows of headers. Empty spaces 0.55 m large separated each platform from the other, and all the platforms were levelled on top with rammed clay and had well-plastered lateral sides. Currently, it is difficult to ascertain if the platforms were built with the sole function of supporting the wooden beams that belonged to the overlying storage rooms (some of the beams in situ were found exactly in the middle of the platforms) or if they may have played other roles. Be that as it may, the remarkable functional reconversion of this representative space into a storage area would suggest that a significant change in the historical conditions of Vardāna might have occurred.

3 Pottery and artefacts

The preliminary dating of the pre-Islamic building periods identified in the citadel of Vardāna that we propose in this contribution is based mainly on pottery comparisons, though the specific local traits of this pottery do not always allow precise analogies. A few coins of Asbar type,⁷ unfortunately never found on floors but inside the filling layers, as well as the results of C14 analyses⁸ carried out on burnt wood from the storage rooms in the *eastern sector* of the palace, also helped to define the chronological framework of the palace to the Early Middle Ages (5th–8th centuries CE). In the following discussion, we shall focus on a selection of artefacts that have contributed to the fixing of some chronological moments that are particularly relevant to outlining the different cultural contributions recognisable in the material evidence unearthed at Vardāna. The ceramic material in the layers underneath the pebbles and sand is poor and consists mainly of fragments of modelled *khums* manufactured in a well-baked reddish clay (Fig. 4:1–2). The ornamental features of this production, characterised by rims decorated with finger impressions and black or red stripes of slip poured on the body of the vessels, are comparable with those in the northern area of the Bukha-

7 This series of coin started to circulate in the middle of the 5th century CE and their imitations were found up to the 8th century CE (see NAYMARK 2010: 25, Figs. 12–13).

8 C14 analysis was carried out on a single sample of burnt wood (KV 2013-SU 334) found in the storage room located in the eastern sector; more specifically, it consisted of a fragment of burnt wooden beam. The analysis was executed in 2014 in the Centre of Dating and Diagnostic (CEDAD), Department of Engineering of Innovation, University of Salento, Brindisi (Italy), under the direction of Prof. L. Calcagnile. The calibrated dating indicates a frame between 410 and 610 CE.

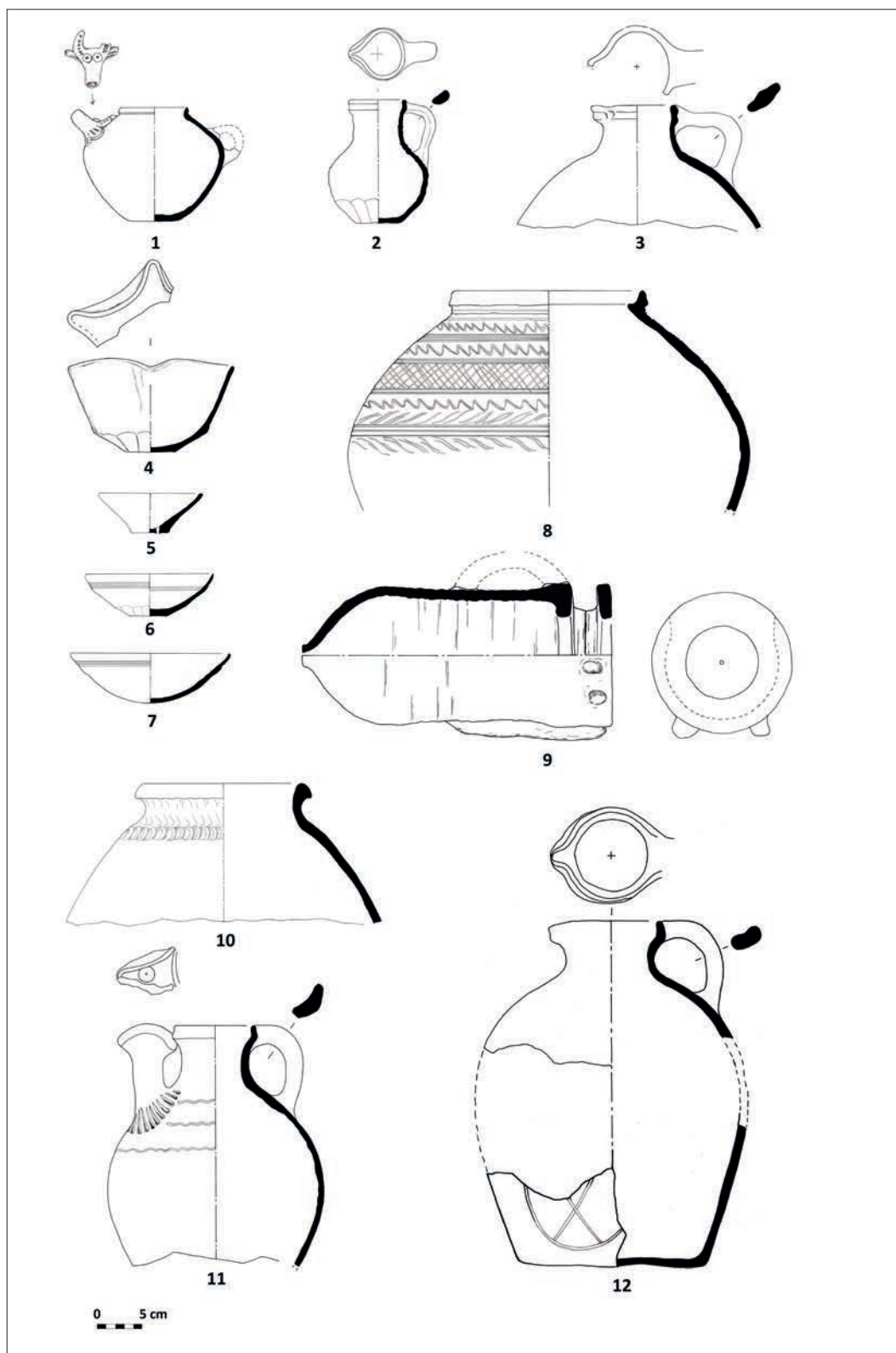


Fig. 7: Pottery from the Early Medieval palace: (1) small pot with bull *protome* spout; (2) juglet; (3) jug; (4) bowl with festoon-like rim; (5) filter; (6, 7) bowls; (8) globular jar; (9) mouse trap; (10) jar; (11) jug with moulded spout; (12) water jug (drawings by M. Sultanova, copyright The Society for the Exploration of EurAsia).

ra oasis, for instance at the sites of Kizil Kir-Setalak (KUL'TURA 1983: 33, 100). These sites date from the 3rd to the 6th centuries CE and their development is connected with the arrival of people from the regions of the Central and Lower Syr Darya area who belonged to the Kaunči and Djetei Asar cultures.⁹ The variety of modelled rims found in the lower levels of Vardāna complicates any attempt to produce an effective typology. Considering all this, the suggested preliminary dating of this ancient building period is between the end of the 4th century CE to the beginning of the 5th. The first building phase of the Early Medieval palace yielded scanty ceramic fragments, mostly modelled jars and bowls¹⁰ that would suggest a chronological framework not so distant from the earlier one (Fig. 4:3).

Our knowledge of the pottery production of the second building phase of the palace is considerably better thanks to three consistent ceramic complexes identified in the *eastern sector*¹¹ (Fig. 7). The rich variety of shapes allows us to date this phase to around the 7th to the 8th centuries CE. Similarities with the coeval urban productions of Sogdiana,¹² such as at Paikend (MUHAMEDŽANOV ET AL. 1988: 155–163) and Panjikent (BENTOVIČ 1964: 265–298), are displayed in particular by the globular jars decorated with wavy lines, the bowls and the tableware characterised by petal-like cuts at the base of the vessels. A bowl with festoon-like rim imitating metal vessels (Fig. 7:4) and a globular pot with spout decorated with a bull *protome* (Fig. 7:1) represent two indisputable examples of classic “Sogdian” vessels dating to this period (BENTOVICH 1964: 284, 287). Besides the pottery that is in line with the more widespread Sogdian production of these centuries, there is a consistent bulk of pottery, mainly used for storage purposes, which seems to follow the pottery tradition of the earlier building phases. The predominant group is that of the *khums*, decorated with finger impressions, now made on the potter’s wheel (Fig. 7:10). The fabric is coarser than the one attested in the earlier jars and the firing conditions were not uniform, as shown by the grey core and the red borders of the body clay visible in the fracture of the sherds. The vessels have an ovoid shape, a barely protruding neck, and a slightly convex or flat foot. The external surface is rough and usually of whitish colour, suggesting that the vessel surface was moistened immediately before the firing process. As with earlier specimens, stripes of slip are applied to the body, forming irregular streaks. The Kizil Kir traits

already present in the earlier pottery production evolved into a characteristic local style in which the lower finger impressions became more elongated and slightly oblique. On the neck, the finger impressions, small and circular, are not very deep. Sometimes the rounded rim presents pinched horizontal decorations. Jugs and juglets probably used for storage purposes were made in the same material and present the red stripes of slip poured on the surface (Fig. 7:11, 12).

Another feature detected on the pottery from both Vardāna and Kizil Kir-Setalak¹³ is the presence of incised symbols, commonly known as *tamgha/nishan*. There are connections with the Middle Syr Darya region again, in fact the most important repertoire of such symbols comes from Tashkent area (GRICINA 1984, 86) and from Sidak, in the Turkestan oasis (southern Kazakhstan) (SMAGULOV/ĀCENKO 2014), though *tamgha* were also found elsewhere in Uzbekistan in earlier times (LYASOV 2010: 213–223; KABANOV 1981: 20–22, 64). After many years of excavation, the repertoire of symbols found at Vardāna has become quite large, even if the symbols are not always complete (Fig. 8).

Most of them are incised on the shoulders of storage jugs and *khums*, but they can also be present on the lower part of the body of jugs and pots, on the lids, on the flasks and on the bowls. In one case, there were two different symbols incised on the same vessel, one placed on the shoulder and one on the lower part, while in two cases there were more symbols placed one next to the other. On one small jug, the same symbol was represented twice, in a specular way (Fig. 8:23). Some of them were simply traced using the fingers, while others were incised with a tool, possibly a wooden stick. The accuracy used in carving the symbols is also different. Interestingly, at Vardāna we identified some recurrent symbols. Concentric circles that ended in a pointed motif were found on two jars and on a jug (Fig. 8:17–19), while semicircles were identified on the lower part of a bowl (two semicircles) and on the lower part of a pot with rounded foot (three semicircles), all dating to the 7th to the 8th centuries CE. Interestingly, we identified a symbol that encompassed a broad period of time. It consists in a U-shaped motif cut by a horizontal line and was found both on two vessels (a pot and a jug) dating to the 7th to the 8th centuries CE (Fig. 8:4, 5) and on the shoulder of a large *khum* datable to the earlier period (Fig. 8:3). It is possible that some of the Vardāna symbols could simply be potter’s marks, as in the case of the double appearance of symbols (one of them could be a potter’s mark), but the others could be interpreted as talismanic signs or as family/clan heraldic displays,

9 On this, see LEVINA 1971 and 1996.

10 For comparisons, see SILVI ANTONINI ET AL. 2009: Figs. 19, 31–32. See also KULT'URA 1983: 100.

11 A complex of pottery was found on the burnt floor of the storage rooms; the other two were found in two rooms with sufa in the northern corridor.

12 For a general overview, see SOKOLOVSKAĀ (2015: 237–247) and BRYKINA (1999: 269–271).

13 At Kizil Kir-Setalak there were found 48 symbols incised on jars, jug and flasks. For further discussion, see KULT'URA 1983: 106–107.

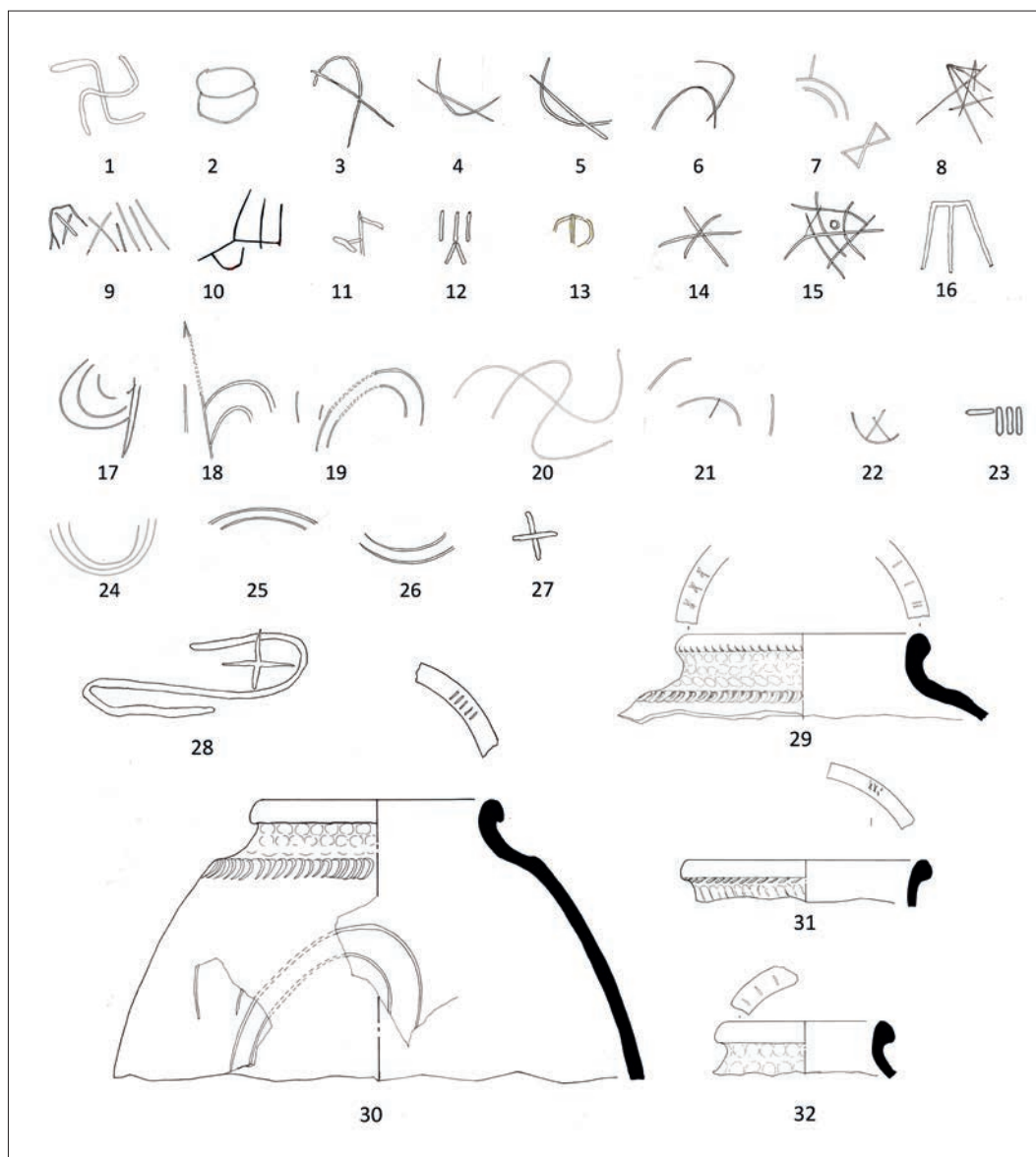


Fig. 8: Incised signs found on the pottery from Vardāna
(drawings by M. Sultanova, copyright The Society for the Exploration of EurAsia).

similar to crests, as possibly the symbol detected on vessels belonging to different periods. We can also advance the hypothesis that some signs could display the capacity of the vessels or the contents, as in the case of the rims of *khums* marked with incised lines and crosses (Fig. 8:29–32). For instance, this kind of symbol could have had some function in the villages that had to pay taxes in the form of agricultural produce, as we can infer by the reading of the accounting texts found in Mount Mugh archives, where the quantities of each product delivered as tax are displayed (SMIRNOVA 1970: 95–97).

Besides symbols, pictorial drawings could also be incised on the vessels, for example the bird incised on a jar found in the layers of filling of the Early Medieval palace (Fig. 9:1). The bird, probably a peacock,

is represented schematically and holds something in its beak. An effective comparison comes again from Sidak (Fig. 9:2), where a bird very similar to the one discussed here was incised on a jar (SMAGULOV/ÁCENKO 2013: 214, Fig. 3). In that case, the bird is associated with a fish, suggesting it was part of religious symbolism. At Kyztepa, in southern Sogdiana, a bird is schematically represented on a clay disc (Fig. 9:3) while a small peacock can be seen on a cup found on the nearby site of Aultepa (KABANOV 1981: 106–108). Another strict comparison is with the Crimea, where a similar subject is depicted on a ceramic jug (Fig. 9:4) found in Avaric contexts (BÁLINT 1989: 75, Fig. 13). Apart from the incisions of birds on pottery, the most striking comparison within Sogdiana perhaps remains that of the “bird

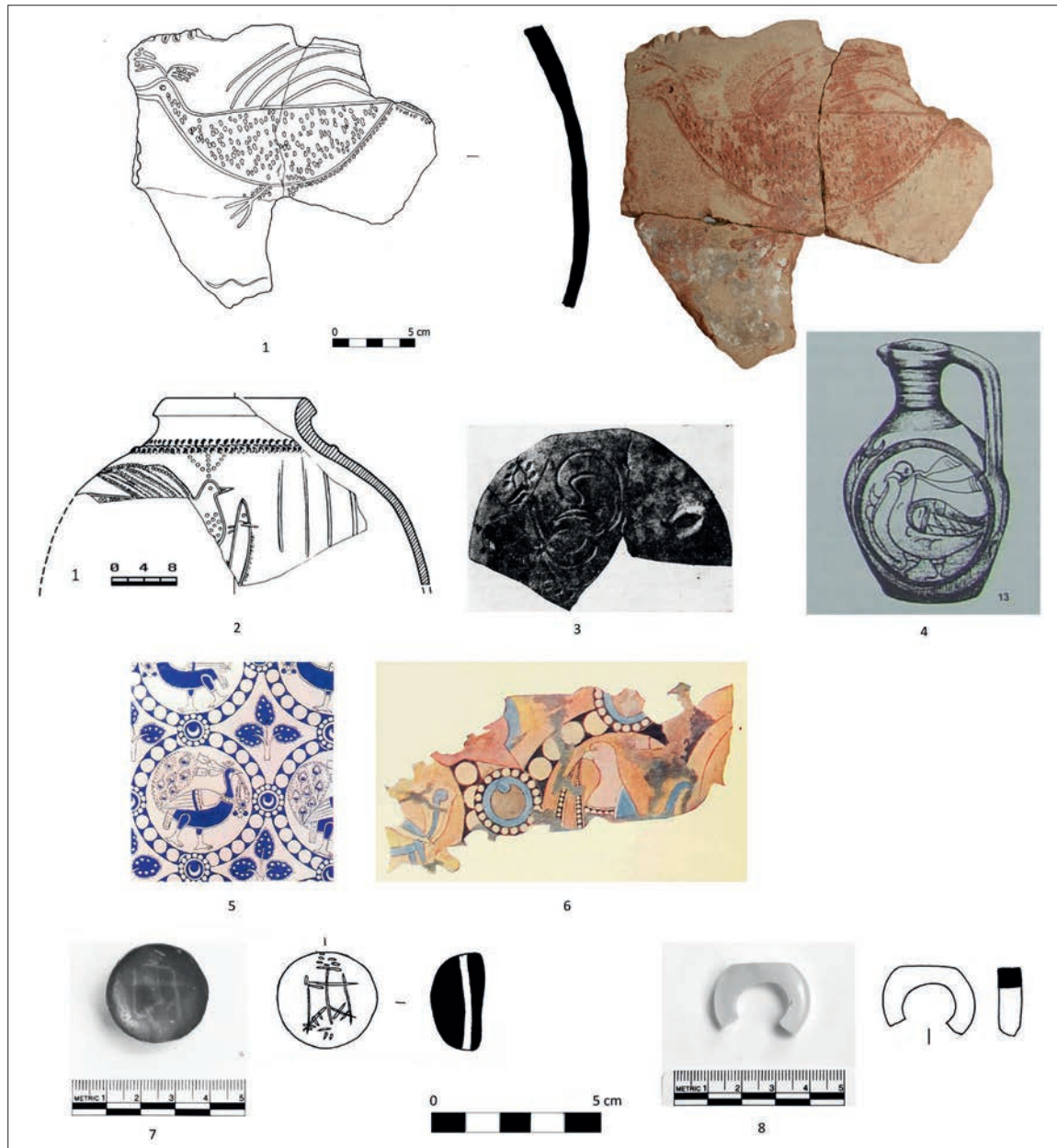


Fig. 9: (1) Bird incised on a ceramic vessel from Vardāna (drawings by M. Sultanova, copyright The Society for the Exploration of EurAsia); (2) Bird incised on a jar from Sidak (after SMAGULOV/YATSENKO 2013: 214, Fig. 3); (3) Bird incised on a ceramic vessel from Kyztepa (after KABANOV 1981: 108, Fig. 56); (4) Bird depicted on a jug from Crimea (after BALINT 1989: 75, Fig. 36, n. 13); (5) Detail of peacocks on mural paintings from Afrasiab (after AL'BAUM 1975: pl. 55); (6) Detail showing peacocks on mural paintings from Varakshsha (after ŠIŠKIN 1963: Pl. 16) and at Qizil, in eastern Turkestan (in present-day Xinjiang, China) (ŠIŠKIN 1963: Pl. 16). Moreover, peacocks are represented on the

wooden columns from an Early Medieval dwelling in Paikend (SEMENOV/MIRZAAMEDOV 2002: Fig. 55). Naršaḥī narrates that in the village of Tawavis, located in the eastern part of Bukhara oasis, everybody kept peacocks in their house (NARŠAḤĪ: 13). The several examples presented here suggest that this theme was widespread in different cultural traditions that used and displayed it on several mediums

with pearls”, a widespread textile motif that recalls a Sassanid influence, used to decorate the clothes of several personages depicted on the Sogdian mural paintings of Afrasiab (Fig. 9:5) (AL'BAUM 1975: Pls. 6, 15, 30, 55), found also at Varakshsha (Fig. 9:6) (ŠIŠKIN 1963: Pl. 16) and at Qizil, in eastern Turkestan (in present-day Xinjiang, China) (ŠIŠKIN 1963: Pl. 16). Moreover, peacocks are represented on the



Fig. 10: (1) Bronze model of a stirrup from Vardāna (drawings by M. Sultanova, copyright The Society for the Exploration of EurAsia); (2) Iron stirrup from Samarkand (after RASPOPOVA 1980: 100, Fig. 70, n. 2); (3) Iron stirrup from Kanka (after BOGOMOLOV/GENDEL'MAN 1990: Fig. 3, n. 33); (4) Bronze stirrup? (after BRUSENKO/GALIEVA 1982: 125, Fig. 1, n. 5); (5) Bronze stirrup (after PAROLI/RICCI 2007: pl. 50, n. 3a–b); (6) Bronze stirrup (after GENITO 2002: 246, Fig. 9); (7) Bronze stirrups (after CEGLIA/MARCHETTA 2012: 229, Fig. 7); (8) Stirrup-like artefact (after LŐRINCZY 1992: 85, Fig. 3, n. 7); (9) Iron stirrup (after KISS/SOMOGYI 1984: pl. 9, grave 109-9); (10) Iron stirrup (after IVANIŠEVIĆ/BUGARSKI 2012: 275, Fig. 7, no. 1).

and according to local fashion and cultural characteristics. This happened not only in high-level artistic representations such as mural paintings, but also at a popular level, as demonstrated by their presence on common pottery. Some Sassanid influence in the Bukhara oasis has been suggested several times, for instance on the basis of the adoption of one series of Sassanid drachms of Vahram V as models for the local Bukharkhuda coinage (NAYMARK 2010: 7–8), as well as by the Sassanid iconographic models detected on the mural paintings discovered at Uch Kulakh.¹⁴

Other artefacts that clearly displays a Sassanid influence are sealstones. Although Sassanid seal stones from archaeological contexts are rare, a distribution of this type of object is attested in the Bukhara oasis and includes two chalcedony artefacts¹⁵ from Vardāna, a sealstone representing a “figure with sticks”, used as amulet, and a plain seal-ring, both dated to the 7th to the 8th centuries CE (Fig. 9:7, 8). As well as being used as a seal, the sealstone from Vardāna could have been used as amulet, possibly with a protective function related to fertility. Interestingly, an almost identical sealstone representing a “figure with the sticks” was found in the palace of Varakhsha (ŠIŠKIN 1963: 66, Fig. 27).

Another artefact that contributes to the creation of a chronology of the palace and encourages discussion of the Turkic cultural presence in this part of the oasis is the puzzling bronze model of a stirrup found in the filling layers of the Early Medieval palace (Fig. 10:1). The stirrup is roughly circular and is only 6.6 cm wide. Interestingly, this item is characterised by an unusual quadrangular strap loop decorated with two protruding vertexes, and it was found broken in its lower part, possibly deliberately. Models of stirrups are rather rare and most of them come from southern Siberia and Altai, where they are always made of iron (SAVINOV 2005: 129–135). Functional iron stirrups from Sogdiana are extremely rare as well, and to our knowledge only one has been found. It comes from a tomb near Ulugh Bek observatory in Samarkand (RASPOPOVA 1980: Fig. 70, n. 2) and probably dates to the Early Medieval period (Fig. 10:2). As far as the regions influenced by Sogdian culture are concerned, an iron stirrup was found in the *rabad* of Kanka (Tashkent area) and dates to the beginning of the 11th century CE (BOGOMOLOV/GENDEL'MAN 1990: 98, Fig. 3, n. 33) (Fig. 10:3). Another bronze artefact from the medieval layers of Kanka could be also an example of a model of a stirrup, even though the discoverers interpreted it generically as part of a horse harness (BRUSENKO/GALIEVA 1982: 125, Fig. 1, n. 5) (Fig. 10:4). According to AZBELEV

(2014: 315–319), stirrups evolved from aristocratic accessory to functional military items during the first Turk Khaganate. It was the prestige associated with this item more than its function that motivated its large-scale adoption among the Turks, who gradually transformed it into a widespread military innovation thanks to their specialisation in metallurgy and their privileged access to the iron mines of Altai. Bronze is a favourite material among the ornaments and amulets and we have not excluded the possibility that our find could have been owned as a symbol of the prestigious social status acquired by the Turks.

Some finds from Early Medieval cemeteries in Europe that yielded Avaric-type materials could represent pertinent examples of bronze stirrups used symbolically. Burial no. 41 from Castel Trosino (Italy) belonged to a girl and yielded a couple of small-size bronze stirrups (width 9.4 cm) decorated with two animal *protomae* (PAROLI/RICCI 2007: Pl. 50, n. 3a–b) (Fig. 10:5). The so-called burial of the “young horseman” (no. 33) from Vicenne-Campochiaro in Italy (GENITO 2000: 246, Fig. 9) contained two different stirrups, one in iron and another in bronze. The latter (Fig. 10:6), of modest dimensions (width 9.5 cm), was laid on a cobble at some distance from the horse, suggesting a symbolic deposition. The strap loop of this find recalls two more bronze stirrups from a male burial (no. 150) in Vicenne (CEGLIA/MARCHETTA 2012: 229, Fig. 7), where the stirrups were not functional and rather demonstrated a technological innovation, a revolving strap loop (Fig. 10:7). An interesting example of a symbolic stirrup comes from Hungary: grave no. 1 excavated in Szegvár-Oromdűlő, which contained the remains of a lady with a horse, yielded a stirrup-like artefact in bone of almost the same measurements as those of the stirrup from Vardāna (LŐRINCZY 1992: 85, Fig. 3, n. 7) (Fig. 10:8). Leaving aside any stylistic discussion, it is useful to stress that the circular body of the stirrup found at Vardāna is similar to those of the Early Medieval period from southern Siberia¹⁶ (early Turkic type) and Europe (early Avaric type). However, the bronze material and the suspension loop with protruding vertexes of our stirrup have no comparison with any of the examples from southern Siberia, but echo instead the bronze European models of stirrups mentioned above and two functional iron stirrups, one from the Avaric necropolis of Cikò in Hungary (KISS/SOMOGYI 1984: 45, pl. 9, grave 109-9) (Fig. 10:9), the other from a probable Byzantine hoard found at Rujkovac in southern Serbia (IVANIŠEVIĆ/BUGARSKI 2012: 275, Fig. 7, no. 1) (Fig. 10:10). The stirrup found at Vardāna remains, for the moment, unique in Sogdiana and it is difficult to ascertain its prove-

14 See SILVI ANTONINI ET AL. (2009: 90–94), in particular the sub-chapter “Le pitture”, by C. LO MUZIO.

15 For further discussion, see POZZI 2014.

16 For more details on the stirrups found in Altai and southern Siberia, see AZBELEV 2014 and GAVRILOVA 1965.

nance. However, it is possible that this item originated from the cultural relationships that probably existed between Avars and Sogdians, at least as far as metal working is concerned. The existence of some activity of Sogdian goldsmiths among the Avars has already been suggested by HARMATTA (1996: 112), who analysed the runic and Sogdian inscriptions incised on a silver-gilt strap tip from tomb no. 1280 at the Avaric Zamardi cemetery in Hungary. Interestingly, the Sogdian letters identified on the strap tip indicate the names of the two different owners of the belt, both of Turkish origin.

4 Conclusions

To conclude, the rectangular building discovered on top of the citadel of Vardāna represents an original example of a Sogdian royal palace dating to the Early Medieval period and its foundation could be probably interpreted as part of the “*phénomène des fondations ou refondations urbaines*” (GRENET 1996: 374) that Sogdiana experienced from the 5th century CE onward. The well-defined organisation of the spaces modulated according to a tripartite plan and the system of internal and external corridors constitute the original traits of this building. The rectangular plan is the result of an initial unitary project and is rather uncommon among the many Early Medieval Sogdian castles often characterised by a square plan, such as Kafirkala or Aultepe (LEBEDEVA 2000: 144–145, Figs. 1, 2). By-pass corridors are an architectural device found both in the above-mentioned castles with square plan but also in wider citadels such as Paikend (MIRZAAHMEDOV/OMELČENKO 2013: 55, Fig. 2), even though they are usually developed in combination with bastions and loopholes or with an external ring of rooms. This is not the case at Vardāna, where the peripheral corridor is not characterised by any of these features. It imitates instead the blind corridor that encircled the castle of Aktepa at Junusabad (Tashkent), even though at Vardāna there are no angular towers or inner partitions and the internal layout of the two buildings is completely different (FILANOVICH 1983: Fig. 4). The inner side-corridor that encircled one part of the palace of Vardāna (the *western sector*) is also unusual. Side-corridors are present at the palace of Ikšid at Afrasiab, where the famous wall paintings were found, but they are present only outside two rooms (1, 3) and not the whole sector (AHUNBABAIEV 1999: Fig. 3). The palace of Erkurghan, though different in chronology and in the inner layout, has a side-corridor in the western part of the building and it could possibly be used for a comparison (SULEJMANOV 2000: Fig. 53).

The palace of Vardāna lacked bastions and loopholes, but it adopted other features typically military in function, such as the reinforcement of the

external walls and the elevation of the dwelling area. Vardāna was located in a strategic place, across the border of the oasis, and can be considered a “door” to the northern steppe, as described in some passages of the *Tārīḥ-i Buḥārā*, where Naršaḥī (NARŠAḤĪ: 10, 16) states that Vardāna was located on the frontier of Turkistan and that Vardān Khudāh retreated to Turkistan several times during the Arab attacks. It is not excluded that the peculiar character of the architecture at Vardāna could be due to its peripheral position and to the possibly ambiguous role that this place played in relation to both the oasis towns and the nomads.

Each sector of the palace was probably used for specific functions: the western part housed the living areas, the central sector was probably connected with the entrance to the palace, while the eastern sector was used for representative purposes. During the last period of occupation (7th–8th centuries CE), the representative spaces of the palace, located in the *eastern sector*, were converted into a storage area, while many rooms and the western surveillance corridor were partitioned into smaller spaces. This change of layout could suggest a new arrangement of the military presence and the need to enlarge the storage spaces, confirmed also by the abundant presence of storage pottery. All these features suggest that the citadel was planning to resist eventual sieges. It is possible that during the 7th–8th centuries CE, this palace became a defensive outpost, relegating to secondary function the representation of political power. According to the combined analysis of coins and literature as carried out by NAYMARK (2001: 295), the usurper of Bukhār Khudāh, named Vardān Khudāh by Narshakhī and Ṭabari, has to be identified with Khunak Khudāh, a name found also on a particular series of silver Bukhār Khudāh coins. Since Narshakhī says that Khunak restored the palace of Varakhsha (NARŠAḤĪ: 17–18), it makes sense to suppose that the representative function missing at Vardāna in the last period of occupation of the palace could have been transferred to Varakhsha, the traditional “seat” of the Bukhara king, which might explain why the palace of Vardāna had a prevaillingly military character.

The material culture unearthed at Vardāna suggests a long-lasting cultural fusion between this area and the Middle Sir Darya region, as proven by the characteristic pottery, but also evident through ties with the Sassanid world. The presence of symbols and decorative motifs in the pottery highlights the importance of this medium in the transmission of cultural symbols and possibly also in the socio-political and economic interpretation of the archaeological evidence.

New considerations on the Turkic presence in Bukhara oasis could be also made in light of the discovery of the bronze model of a stirrup. Naršaḥī mentions a Turkish origin of the king of Vardāna in-

volved in the struggles with Arabs between the 7th and the 8th centuries CE (NARŠAĪ: 10). Strangely, the lord of Vardāna was remembered with an Iranian title instead of a Turkish: it is possible, therefore, to propose the hypothesis that this leader, a usurper hoping to rule the whole oasis, preferred to maintain a traditional title in order to legitimate his position with the local rulers. Be that as it may, the model of a stirrup found at Vardāna, probably used symbolically, is archaeological evidence that confirms how deeply the Turkic heritage (mostly recognisable cultural traits and symbols) filtered into Sogdian culture during the Early Medieval period, which also stimulates the debate on the existence of wider contacts with the western world, mediated by others nomadic groups such as the Avars.

The material culture unearthed at present at Vardāna seems to fit well with all the legendary cultural influences echoed by Naršaġi in the *Tārīḡ-i Buḡārā*, such as the Sassanid and the Turkish. Through the centuries new cultural elements certainly filtered through into the local substrate of Vardāna, showing how this peripheral town probably benefitted from the volatile political situation of Sogdiana both in terms of cultural openness and its ability to elaborate its own original identity. Further studies will advance our knowledge of the geopolitical role of borderline oasis towns similar to Vardāna and of their role in the transmission of culture throughout the different regions of Central Asia and farther afield.

Bibliography

- AHUNBABAĖV, H.G.
1999: *Dvorec iḡšidov Sogda na Afrasiabe*, Samarkand.
- AL'BAUM, L.I.
1975: *Živopis' Afrasiaba*, Tashkent.
- AL-HAMADĀNĪ, IBN AL-FAQĪH
Abrégé du livre des pays. Traduit de l'arabe par Henri Massé, 1973, Damascus.
- AL-IṢṬAḤRĪ, IBRĀHĪM IBN-MUḤAMMAD
Viae regnorum. Descriptio dittonis Moslemicae. Edited by M. J. de Goeje (= Bibliotheca Geographorum Arabicorum 1), 1927², Leiden.
- AL-MUQADDASĪ, MUḤAMMAD IBN-AḤMAD
The Best Divisions for Knowledge of the Regions. Translated by Professor Basil Collins. Reviewed by Dr. Mohammad Hamid Alta'i, 1994, Reading, UK.
- AZBELEV, P.P.
2014: Eše raz o rannih stremenah, *Rossijskij arheologičeskij ežegodnik* 4, 297–322.
- BÁLINT, C.
1989: *Die Archäologie der Steppe: Steppenvölker zwischen Volga und Donau vom 6. bis zum 10. Jahrhundert*, Vienna/Cologne.
- BEN TOVIČ, I.B.
1964: Keramika verhnego sloâ Pendžikenta (VII–VIII vv.), in: ÂKUBOVSKIĪ, A.Ū. (ED.), *Trudy Tadžikskoj archeologičeskoi epeđicii. 1954–1959* (= Materialy i issledovaniâ po arheologii SSSR 124), Moscow/Leningrad, 265–298.
- BOGOMOLOV, G.I./GENDEL'MAN, P.I.
1990: Metalličeskie izdeliâ s gorodiša Kanka, *Istoriâ material'noj kul'tury Uzbekistana* 24, 93–106.
- BRUSENKO, L.G./GALIEVA, Z.S.
1982: Materialy raskopok kvartala X–načala XI vv. na gorodiše Kanka, *Istoriâ material'noj kul'tury Uzbekistana* 17, 124–136.
- BRYKINA, G.A. (ED.)
1999: *Srednââ Aziâ i Dal'nij Vostok v èpohu srednevekov'â. Srednââ Aziâ v rannem srednevekov'e*, Moscow.
- CEGLIA, V./MARCHETTA, I.
2012: Nuovi dati dalla necropoli di Vicenne a Campochiaro, in: EBANISTA, C./ROTILI, M. (ED.), *La trasformazione del mondo romano e le grandi migrazioni. Nuovi popoli dall'Europa settentrionale e centro-orientale alle coste del Mediterraneo. Atti del Convegno internazionale di studi, Cimitile-Santa Maria Capua Vetere, 16–17 giugno 2011* (= Giornate sulla tarda antichità e il Medioevo 4), Naples, 217–238.
- CERASUOLO, O.
2009: Il rilievo del sito di Vardanzeh, in: SILVI ANTONINI, C./MIRZAACHMEDOV, D. K. (ED.), *Gli scavi di Uch Kulakh (oasi di Bukhara). Rapporto preliminare, 1997–2007* (= Rivista degli studi orientali. Nuova serie 80, suppl. 1), Pisa/Rome, 211–216.
- DE LA VAISSIÈRE, É.
2005: *Sogdian Traders. A History. Translated by James Ward*, Leiden/Boston.
- FILANOVIČ, M.I.
1983: *Taškent. Zaroždenie i razvitie goroda i gorodskoj kul'tury*, Tashkent.
- GAVRILOVA, A.A.
1965: *Mogil'nik Kudyrgè kak istočnik po istorii altajskih plemen*, Moscow/Leningrad.

- GENITO, B.
2000: Archaeology of the Early Medieval Nomads in Italy: The Horse-Burials in Molise (7th century), the Case of the Horse-Burials from South-Central Italy, in: BÁLINT, C. (ED.), *Kontakte zwischen Iran, Byzanz und der Steppe in 6.-7. Jh.* (= *Varia archaeologica Hungarica* 9), 229–247.
- GRENET, F.
1996: Crise et sortie de crise en Bactriane-Sogdiane aux IVE et Ve siècles: de l'héritage antique à l'adoption de modèles sassanides, in: ACCADEMIA NAZIONALE DEI LINCEI (ED.), *La Persia e l'Asia centrale da Alessandro al X secolo: Convegno Internazionale, Roma, 9-12 Novembre 1994* (= *Atti dei convegni Lincei* 127), Rome, 367–390.
- GRICINA, A.A.
1984: K semantike znakov na keramike Kaunčiskoj kul'tury, *Istoriâ material'noj kul'tury Uzbekistana* 19, 84–94.
- HARMATTA, J.
1996: A zamárdi avar nagyszíjvég rovásírásos és szogd feliratai, *Somogyi múzeumok közleményei* 12, 107–112.
- IBN ḤAWQAL, MUḤAMMAD ABŪ'L-QĀSIM
Configuration de la Terre (Kitab Surat al-Ard). Introduction et traduction, avec index par J.H. Kramers et G. Wiet, 1965, 2 vols., Paris.
- ILYASOV, J.
2010: Nomad Heritage: Kushan Tamga-Signs from Southern Uzbekistan, in: PIM, J.E./YATSENIKO, S.A./PERRING, S.A. (ED.), *Traditional Making Systems: A Preliminary Survey*, London/Dover, 213–225.
- IVANIŠEVIĆ, V./BUGARSKI, I.
2012: Les étriers byzantins: La documentation du Balkan central, in: Lazaris, S. (ed.), *Le cheval dans les sociétés antiques et médiévales. Actes des journées d'études internationales organisées par l'UMR 7044 (étude des civilisations de l'antiquité). Strasbourg, 6–7 novembre 2009* (= *Bibliothèque de l'antiquité tardive* 22), Turnhout, 135–142.
- KABANOV, S.K.
1981: *Kul'tura sel'skih poselenij Ūžnogo Sodga III–VI vv.*, Tashkent.
- KAMALIDDINOV, Š.S.
1993: "Kitab Al-Ansab" Abu Sa'da Abdalkarima Ibn Muhammada As-Sam'ani kak istočnik po istorii i istorii kul'tury Srednej Azii, Tashkent.
- KISS, G./SOMOGYI, P.
1984: *Tolna megyei avar temetők* (= *Dissertationes Pannonicae* 3/2), Budapest.
- LEBEDEVA, T.
2000: Genезis zamkovoј arhitektury Central'nogo i Ūžnogo Sodga v rannem srednevekov'e, *Istoriâ material'noj kul'tury Uzbekistana* 31, 141–155.
- LŐRINCZY, G.
1992: Vorläufiger Bericht über die Freilegung des Gräberfeldes aus dem 6.–7. Jahrhundert in Szegvár-Oromdűlő. Weitere Daten zur Interpretierung und Bewertung der partiellen Tierbestattungen in der frühen Awarenzeit, *Communicationes Archaeologicae Hungariae* 1992, 81–124.
- MARQUART, J.
1898: *Die Chronologie der alttürkischen Inschriften*, Leipzig.
- MUḤAMEDŽANOV, A.R./ADYLOV, Š.T./MIRZAAHMEDOV, D.K./SEMENOV, G.L.
1988: *Gorodiše Pajkend. K probleme izučeniâ srednevekovogo goroda Srednej Azii*, Tashkent.
- MIRZAAHMEDOV, D.K./OMEL'ČENKO, A.V.
2013: *Otčet o raskopkah v Pajkende v 2011–2012 gg.* (= *Materialy Buharskoј arheologičeskoј èpèdicii* 12), St. Petersburg.
- MUḤAMEDŽANOV, A.R./SULEJMANOV, R.H./URAKOV, B. ET AL.
1983: *Kul'tura drevnebuharskogo oazisa, III–VI vv. n.è.*, Tashkent.
- NAYMARK, A.
2001: *Sogdiana, its Christians and Byzantium: A Study of Artistic and Cultural Connections in Late Antiquity and Early Middle Ages*, unpublished PhD dissertation, Indiana University, Bloomington.
2010: Drachms of Bukhār Khudā Khunak, *Journal of Inner Asian Art and Archaeology* 5, 7–32.
- NARŠAḤĪ, ABŪ-BAKR MUḤAMMAD IBN-ĠA'FAR
The History of Bukhara. Translated from a Persian Abridgement of the Arabic Original by Narshakhī by Richard Nelson Frye (= *Mediaeval Academy of America. Publication* 61), 1954, Cambridge, MA.
- PAROLI, L./RICCI, M.
2007: *La necropoli altomedievale di Castel Trosino: bizantini e longobardi nelle Marche. Catalogo della mostra: Museo archeologica statale di Ascoli Piceno, 1 luglio–31 ottobre 1995*, Florence.
- POZZI, S.
2014: Sasanian-Style Sealstones from the Bukhara Oasis (Uzbekistan), *Rivista degli studi orientali* 87, 135–154.
- RASPOPOVA, V.I.
1980: *Metalličeskie izdeliâ rannesrednevekovogo Sodga*, Leningrad.
- SAVINOV, D.G.
2005: Miniaturnye stremena v kul'turnoj tradicii Ūžnoj Sibiri, in: TIŠKIN, A.A. (ED.), *Snarāženie kočevnikov Evrazii*, Barnaul, 129–135.
- SEMENOV, G.L./MIRZAAHMEDOV, D.K.
2002: *Raskopki v Pajkende v 2001 godu* (= *Materialy Buharskoј arheologičeskoј èpèdicii* 3), St. Petersburg.

- SILVI ANTONINI, C. ET AL.
2009: Gli scavi di Uch Kulakh (Uzbekistan). Campagne 2008–2009, *Rivista degli studi orientali* 82, 59–96.
- ŠIŠKIN, V.A.
1963: *Varaḥša. Opyt istoričeskogo issledovaniâ*, Moscow.
- SMAGULOV, E.A./ÂCENKO, S.A.
2013: Graffiti Sidaka (Ūžnyj Kazahstan), *Izvestiâ Nacional'noj akademii nauk Respubliki Kazahstan. Seriâ obšetvennyh i gumanitarnyh nauk* 289, 210–226.
2014: Novye nahodki serij doislamskih znakov/tamga/nišan v Turkestanskom oazise (gorodiša Kul'tobe i Sidak): svâz' s kočevym mirom, in: EROFEEVA, I.V. (ED.), *Problemy izučeniâ nematerial'nogo kul'turnogo naslediâ narodov Kazahstana i Central'noj Azii: toponimika, èpigrafika, iskusstvo. Sbornik materialov meždunarodnoj naučnoj konferencii*, Almaty, 274–281.
- SMIRNOVA, O.I.
1970: *Očerki iz istorii Sogda*, Moscow.
- SOKOLOVSKAÂ, L.F.
2015: *Neglazurovannaâ keramika srednevekovo-go Samarkanda kak faktor èkonomiki gorodskogo remesla (po materialam gorodiša Afrasiab konca VII-načala XIII v.)* (= *Arheologiâ Central'noj Azii. Arhivnye materialy* 1), Samarkand.
- STARK, S.
2007: Mercenaries and City Rulers: Early Turks in Pre-Muslim Mawarannahr, in: POPOVA, L.M./HARTLEY, C.W./SMITH, A.T. (ED.), *Social Orders and Social Landscapes. Proceedings of the 2005 University of Chicago Conference on Eurasian Archaeology*, Newcastle, 307–333.
- SULEJMANOV, R.H.
2000: *Drevnij Nahšab. Problemy civilizacii Uzbekistana VII v. do n.è.–VII v. n.è.*, Tashkent/Samarkand.
- ṬABARĪ, ABŪ ĠA'FAR MUḤAMMAD B. ĠARĪR
The Zenith of Marwānid House. Translated and Annotated by Martin Hinds (= *Bibliotheca Persica. The History of al-Ṭabarī* 23), 1990, Albany (NY).
- XUANZANG
Si-Yu-Ki. Buddhist Records of the Western World. Translated from the Chinese of Hiuen Tsiang (A.D. 629) by Samuel Beal, 1884, London.