

MARSHAK ON SOGDIAN CERAMICS

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B[oris] I[l'ich] Marshak. *Keramika Sogda V–VII vekov kak istoriko-kul'turnyi pamiatnik (K metode izucheniia keramicheskikh kompleksov) / Sogdian Pottery of the 5th–7th Centuries as Historical and Cultural Phenomenon (on the methods of the study of pottery complexes)*, Sankt-Peterburg: Izd-vo. Gosudartsvennogo Ermitazha, 2012. 383 pp. ISBN 978-5-93572-454-2. (In Russian)

As indicated in the Preface written by his wife, Valentina I. Raspopova (pp. 9–12), and translated in English at the end of the book (pp. 382–83), this work goes back about 50 years and was the Ph.D. thesis of the author, defended in 1965 (available for consultation at the Library of the Institute of the History of Material Culture in St Petersburg). It concerns the ceramic material of the “lower levels” of a residential quarter at Panjikent, a remarkable city of the Upper Zeravshan Valley in Sogdiana (nowadays in Tajikistan), abandoned at the end of the 8th century, and where numerous mural paintings were discovered in temples and in the rich houses of Sogdian merchants who were then trading between China and Byzantium. The author attempts to show the evolution of the pottery along with the main phases of the history of the city, established according to the construction, destructions or reconstructions of its rampart.

Raspopova mentions that almost no changes were made as far as the hypotheses, dates and conclusions that were advanced then, and that no publication subsequent to 1965 was added. She briefly mentions the existence of articles done along with this work, but unfortunately without precise references. One should then know that Parts I (pp. 13–57) and IV (p. 206–47) had been published almost identically in two articles of the author respectively in 1964 and 1961. She does not mention either – and this is unfortunate – her own article (1969) which concerns the “upper level” of the same residential quarter. I would also emphasize here that Boris I. Marshak, whom I often met and to whom I had posed the question, did not wish to publish this thesis, probably because he knew that it would take him fully as much time to revise it as it took him first to write it.

The author came from a long lineage of famous archaeologists and epigraphists of the School of St Petersburg. He directed for a long time and until his death the excavations at Panjikent. He is internationally known for his publications on the history of art of the Early Middle Ages. This book is of a quite different nature and reveals an unknown facet of this great scholar, marked with scientific rigor, using mathematical formulae in order to report the diversity of shapes and decorations and to make statistical analysis on the pottery discovered on the site. One should remember, of course, that the use of computer science and of database programs which hide similar calculus did not exist yet at that time.

The book consists of four parts and a short conclusion, and includes a great number of illustrations (172). One can only regret that no introduction or plan has been added in this publication that would in any way present the site and the residential quarter concerned here, especially the distinction made between the “lower” and “upper” levels.

Part I (pp. 13–57), already published in 1964, gives the stratigraphic and architectural description of the “lower levels” of area XII, a residential quarter next to the rampart, excavated by the author between 1955 and 1960, with soundings reaching the virgin soil. Marshak begins by mentioning the rare coins that have been discovered there: in the “upper level,” seven Abbasid *fels* (760–762 CE) and a treasure of silver coins of the second half of the 8th century with the names of the governors of Bukhara and Samarkand; in the “lower levels,” but apparently not *in situ*, an imitation of a coin of Peroz, dated by Smirnova (1963) to the end of the 5th – first half of the 6th century, found

under the wall of room 2 (which, as shown later by the author is related to the second period of construction), and a copper post-Kushan coin found in the sounding to the virgin soil which the author dates to the 3rd century but which could also, according to us, date to the 4th century or even later.

The author also explains the excavation methods used then (a spade's depth of 20 cm, or layer of 50 cm, unless clear strata could be followed). Four major periods of construction, including phases of repair or reconstruction and followed by phases of abandonment and/or destruction, have been highlighted. They are all linked with the rampart, from which historical hypotheses are established with reference to what is known of the history of Sogdiana from written sources. The re-use of the walls of the houses of the preceding period is frequent, and a second floor as well as all the typical elements of the architecture of the "upper level" (ceremonial main room, columns, niches, sofas, etc.) appear already during Period II.

The pottery issued from each of the major phases makes a *kompleks* which corresponds to a "ceramic period." Six such *kompleksy* (numbered from bottom to top) have been delineated. The author does not hide the fact that often successive *kompleksy* may be mixed together, or that attributions to one period rather than to the following should be revised since stratigraphy is extremely complicated, some of the rooms having been abandoned when others were still occupied.

K.I comes from a fill placed under the walls of a room (No. 17) linked to the first rampart of the city. This rampart, 2.2 m thick, made of raw bricks, had rectangular towers. The dating of K.I is ambiguous, the author considering it either as contemporary with the first rampart, or admitting indirectly that it comes from a previously existing settlement at that place.

K.II has only a little pottery and corresponds to a phase of abandonment or destruction of the first construction stage. Mixing with K.I is deemed possible.

K.III represents the pottery of the second major period of construction of the rampart, rebuilt partly on the ruins of the preceding one. The new rampart is made of bricks, rammed earth and pisé, and is much wider than the first one (5.7 m thick), sometimes including it where it is still extant. The walls of the previous houses are often re-used. Jars with plastered bottoms, one of which has stamps (the profile of a person) on the rim, belong to this *kompleks*.

K.IV corresponds to the progressive abandonment of the area, visible only on the houses but not on the rampart itself.

K.V/1 contains the pottery (in small quantities) of the third major period which is linked to a new recon-

struction of the rampart, since the preceding one had been destroyed on its upper part. The author considers that this is associated with a strengthening of the citadel on the site. The new rampart is now narrow, with square towers and arrow slits, and comparisons are made with Termez during the 5th-6th century and with Khorezmia during the 7th and 8th century. At that time, the houses seem to be temporary constructions, poor in material. The author mentions that, in some places, confusions with K.IV are possible, as would be confirmed by the presence of a silver and cornelian ring incised with a zebu found in the fill of rooms 24 and 25 which antedates the reconstruction of Period III. He later notes (p. 181) that V. G. Lukonin dates this ring not to the 5th century but to the 6th-7th century and considers it to be Iranian in origin.

K.V/2 represents the numerous and homogenous pottery found in an impressive layer of ruins (1.2 to 1.6 m thick) which covered all the constructions of Period III and has been found all over the city. At that time, there was no occupation in area XII, and there are breaches in the rampart. Above this thick fill, structures linked to the fourth period of construction were found. This is considered to have been the most important period in the history of the city, dated by O. G. Bol'shakov (1964) to the end of the 7th and first quarter of the 8th century. It was followed first by an abandonment, then by a partial repair dating to 740, before the total disappearance of the city a few years after 770. It should be stressed, though, that a later re-occupation is attested, as shown by the presence of a few glazed shards dating to the beginning of the 9th century, as well as of a shard of a cooking vessel with an Arabic inscription dated to the 9th-10th century (see Bentovich 1964). Since the fills had completely covered up the rooms of the previous houses, this fourth period is visible only in a massif or platform of bricks one meter high associated with its own fill and linked to a new repair of the rampart, made of bricks. Unfortunately, nothing is left of this rampart that later disappeared in the slope.

The pottery of this fourth period constitutes the **K.VI**, certain shards of which are close to those of the "upper level" of the 8th century. It is therefore dated to the second half the 7th century. Finally, the author mentions the presence of pits which are considered to be linked to the construction of one of the buildings of the "upper level" and which perforated the previous layers of the major fill. They contain, besides the pottery of K.V, some shards of the "upper level" and seven Sogdian coins of Bidian/Bilgä and of the "Queen of Panjikent." This allows dating these pits to the first quarter of the 8th century. In order to preserve an unmixed *kompleks*, it was decided to designate as **K.V/3** the pottery of these pits. One should notice here

that the author wonders about the contrast within these pits between the scarcity of the pottery of the 7th–8th century and the relative abundance of coins of this period. The Abbasid *fels* mentioned above were discovered on the floors of this upper building. He also mentions the presence of temporary constructions linked to the last rampart, but since their pottery only dates to the 8th century, they are attributed to the “upper level.”

The extreme complexity of this description leads us to sum it up into a table, adding here the quantity of shards/vessels and the absolute dates (sometimes revised after the Ph.D. was defended) given respectively at the beginning and at the end (pp. 179–81) of Part II.

Table I. Summing up the data from Parts I and II

<i>Kompleks / pottery period</i>	<i>Period of construction</i>	<i>Characteristics</i>	<i>Dating</i>	<i>Absolute Dates (pp. 179–181)</i>
K.I (dozens of shards)	Period I	Construction of the first rampart. No ceramics on the floors of occupation, but in the fill found under a room linked to the first rampart, which leads to infer the existence of a previous settlement.	Post-Kushan coin dated to the 3 rd century	Middle of the 5 th century or 440–480
K.II (>700 shards)	Abandonment of Period I	Period I and possible mixtures with K. I, rampart partially destroyed, little material.	Immediately follows Period I. Relatively long period. Coin of Peroz (end of 5 th –beginning of 6 th century) under wall of room 2 dated to Period II.	
K.III (dozens of shards)	Period II	Major reconstruction of the rampart (thick). Re-use of the walls of the preceding houses.	Long duration. Jars with stamped rims (profile of a person). Houses with second floor, sofas, niches, columns...	
K.IV (>700 shards)	Abandonment of the houses of Period II	Rampart still existing	Silver ring now dated to the 6 th –7 th century found in a fill antedating construction of Period III.	
K.V/1 (dozens of shards)	Period III	Reconstruction of the upper part of the rampart (narrow), 5 th century. Possible confusions with K.IV.		Ca. 530–600
K.V/2 (>1500 shards)	Abandonment of Period III	Thick layer of ruins all over the city. Mixing with K.IV possible at some places.		
K.V/3 (>1500 shards)	Pits made from the “upper level”	Mixed material	Sogdian coins (Bidian/Bilgä, “Queen of Panjikent”)	Second half of 6 th century, but mixed with “upper level.”

K.VI (pottery only partially studied)	Period IV	The most important period of the city. Repair of the internal face of the rampart, which later on fell down in the slope. Platform/massif of bricks.	Dated to the 7 th century (p. 177)	620–660. It has been added that the constructions date to the second half of the 7 th century, but the pottery dates to the first quarter of the 8 th century.
“Upper level”	Not dealt with here (but see Part IV)		Starts just before 720–730. Second half of the 8 th century.	Abbasid <i>fels</i> , etc.

Part II (pp. 58–181) is the main corpus of the book and deals only with the pottery of the different *kompleksy* of the “lower levels.” K.VI disappears from this part, except briefly on pp. 176–80, because it had not yet been completely studied at the time when the book was written. The author gives a short review to remind what each *komplex* corresponds to, as well as an approximative figure for the number of shards concerned (see our Table I above).

After a quick presentation of the methodology used – i.e. distinction between the material coming from the fills and that from floors or closed units – drawings of the complete vessels or of rare shapes, detailed descriptions, listing of the diagnostic elements, and statistical studies when the number of shards is sufficient, etc., the author begins his study of the pottery. It starts with the techniques of fabrication and then treats the different shapes of vessels (always giving preference to complete examples): i.e., successively, cups, table jugs, goblet-jugs, spouted jugs, jugs with a pinched mouth, rhytons, one unique amphora with gouge-grooved decoration, water jugs, pots with a large opening including jars, small jars and opened vases, flasks, rare shapes, vessels from earlier periods, handmade cooking vessels, wheel-turned cooking vessels, handmade table ware, lids, candlestick-lamps and pans. Along with the description of each of the shapes, he compiles a list of diagnostic criteria from No. 1 (p. 64) to No. 229 (p. 176), not counting those to which an alphabetic letter is given. Using diverse mathematical formulae as mentioned above, the author attempts to differentiate each *kompleks* and to establish the evolution of each type of vessel from period to period. This list, unfortunately, is not useful since it does not follow any logical order. It starts with technical criteria, then proceeds to shapes and either concerns the rim and/or the collar, and/or the handles, and/or the numerous types of decoration, or the temper, etc.... Thus it is impossible to remember

what each figure stood for. The author is well aware of the problem and notices that the number of criteria increases after each season of excavations, becomes unwieldy, that drawings are necessary and that intuition also plays an important role. Furthermore and unfortunately, there are too often no references to the illustrations. Admittedly, many tables support the text, like studies of the percentages per period in order to find out the phases of appearance/disappearance or of maximal use of a shape, but they often deal with too large groups to be useful (for instance, cooking ware vs table ware or storage ware). Similarly, studies done on the proportions of the vessels in order to establish a typology lead the author to declare that rather than tree-like typologies, he prefers his tables, where all the diagnostic criteria for a vessel shape are disposed on the same level, because they show better, according to him, the links between all the variants. We must admit that these tables, like the mathematical formulae, are incomprehensible and do not highlight anything clearly. In our opinion, the deliberate intention to integrate at once all the criteria on the same level instead of proceeding by successive stages as in arborescent typologies does not emphasize the important characteristics which, on the contrary, are flooded in a tide of data. Furthermore, the author also considers that different potters’ workshops may have had as determining a role as has chronology in the differences observed in the pottery, which renders the task even more difficult.

Throughout these pages, nevertheless, numerous comparisons are made, on the one hand with other Sogdian sites known at that time like Tal-i Barzu or Kafyr Kala, or with local ethnographic data, and, on the other hand, with other regions from Sialk to Sasanian Iran through the Achaemenids, Greeks and Parthians, and from Byzantium to Siberia and India, showing thereby the already vast knowledge of the author. One should note that he considers that there

is no influence of Sasanian toreutic on Sogdian ceramics, but rather either a Parthian or Achaemenid impact (p. 106, where he adds a reference [1971b] dating from after the original thesis of 1965) or a Parthian or Sasanian influence (p. 111).

All this study leads him to consider that there were two major stages in the history of the site. These stages, from p. 123 on, are associated with the periods of construction (stage 1 = Period I; stage 2 = Periods IV–V).

At the end of this part (p. 176), the author goes briefly back to K.VI linked with the last major reconstruction of the rampart. He gives only a quick description of the pottery, since its study is said to be incomplete. He mentions that it does not contain any shard close to those of the “upper level” as is the case in V/3, though four Sogdian coins with square perforation as well as a stamp on a jar in the shape of a Byzantine belt buckle come from this *kompleks*. He dates this to the 7th century, but the actual dates should be later, at least the end of the 7th and first quarter of the 8th century. The author also admits that it is not yet clear whether K.VI is homogenous or whether it should be divided into several phases. He notices that its pottery is different from that earlier, as evidenced both by technical considerations and by the shapes, slip and decoration (clay less tempered, slip either mat and rough or bright orange, not completely oxidized core, appearance of several registers of waves and grooves, disappearance of collars on jars, etc.), even if several shapes from the earlier periods still exist.

He now considers each *kompleks* as one period and proposes the following dating (pp. 179–80):

- the “upper level” should start just before the abandonment of 720–730;
- VI = ca. 620–660;
- V/3 = ca. second half of the 6th century;
- IV–V/1 to V/3 = should not have been longer than 50 years, i.e. ca. 530–600;
- between II and IV, however, a long period with several reconstructions while I and II succeeded immediately each other;
- the dates of I should be situated around 440–480.

He then goes back to the absolute date of the second period of construction which he links here with K.III to V/3 (p. 180). This is certainly a paragraph added afterwards and the terminology used is confusing. Up until now, Period II was linked only to K.III. What is probably meant here is the second stage of the history of the site. Several examples of finds similar to those of the “upper level” dated to the 8th century are mentioned, like the stamps on the rims of jars, and here the date of the silver and cornelian ring with a zebu attributed to K.IV is corrected (6th–7th, instead of

5th century). One does not understand, though, how this can allow dating III–V to the 6th century, since we are dealing here either with intrusions from the upper level, or with some errors in the stratigraphy.

Finally, the major conclusions derived from the stratigraphy are underlined (p. 181): the site was founded around the middle of the 5th century and is rather poor at the beginning. Then the rampart is strengthened at the beginning of the 6th century. Around the middle of the 6th century, important changes occur in the economy of the city and the rampart is rebuilt. The last main reconstruction of this wall is dated to around the middle or the third quarter of the 7th century, when the construction of the “upper level” also starts. The great number of handmade vessels found in the city is said to be a proof of constant links with the villages around. Altogether, although some changes occur haltingly in the different *kompleksy*, the pottery shows a constant and regular evolution, a proof that the population did not change drastically.

Part III (pp. 182–205) tackles the question of Sogdiana altogether, including Kashka Darya, during the 5th and 6th century, a still obscure period, on the basis of comparisons made on the pottery of different excavated sites. The stratigraphy of Tal-i Barzu plays a major role, and the absence of statistical studies on all the other sites makes this study fragile, according to the author. He considers that, even though Sogdiana belongs then to one and same culture, the different potters’ schools led to regional particularities. The middle and second half of the 6th century is the period when the Turks invaded the area and when a civil war broke out, so that many sites disappear at that time, but Panjikent put up exceptional resistance, the breaches in the rampart being dated to after V/3. One can only regret that the author did not make a comparative chronological table that would have summarized all these data and would have made the reading much easier. We propose one here (Table II, next page), and add to it the data coming from Part IV that concern the 7th and 8th centuries.

Part IV (p. 206–247) deals with the Sogdian pottery of the end of the 7th and early 8th century, and with the influence of the toreutic on it. Most of this chapter (from p. 219 on) was published in the author’s 1961 article. This part, actually, is irrelevant to the title of the book, since it concerns the “upper level” or does not even deal at all with Panjikent itself.

The author uses the observations made before him by G. V. Grigor’ev (1940) concerning the major transformation that the pottery underwent after TB IV, especially the tableware which then adopts new shapes and decoration (pear-shaped jugs, shouldered cup-goblets, covering with mica, etc.) and which

Table II: Summing up the relative and absolute dates of Sogdian sites according to the author

<i>Panjikent</i>	<i>Tal-i Barzu</i>	<i>Kafyr-Kala</i>	<i>Mug</i>	<i>Kaunchi</i>	<i>Kashka Darya</i>	<i>Absolutes Dates</i>
	I			II		2 nd -4 th century
	II					End of 3 rd -1 st half of 4 th century
	III					Short duration
I-(IV)	IV (starts before Panjikent I)		2 nd phase		Many sites with material similar to Panjikent I-II	(IV th) – 1 st half of 5 th , until 1 st half of 6 th century
V						Second half of 6 th century
VI						620–660 with additions: Architecture dated to the second half of the 7 th , and pottery to the first quarter of the 8 th century.
Pits of V/3 “Upper level” “New Pottery Style”	V	Potters’ quarter				End of 7 th – early 8 th century. This has to be corrected to the middle of the 8 th century after the additions to the dates of VI.
	VI					Abbasid period (coins)

obviously copies metalware. According to Grigor’ev, this is due to influence from Sasanian Iran. At Panjikent, this “new style” appears only after K.VI, therefore after the middle of the 7th and during the first quarter of the 8th century. The author makes comparisons with the pottery from other sites in Sogdiana like Chilek and Afrasiab, or in Kashka Darya, Chach and Ferghana and points out that it is often linked with finds of coins dated to around 700. He then concludes that the transition took place between the second quarter and the end of the 7th century, since the “new style” appeared only after the abandonment of the settlements and manors at the end of the 6th century. It is important to stress here that, since the author has himself corrected the dates of K.VI to the first quarter of the 8th century (see our Tables I and II), the appearance of this “new style” has to be postponed to a later period, i.e. not before the middle of the 8th century.

He then uses the numismatic data to reconsider the dates of Tal-i Barzu V and VI and notes the presence of a destruction layer followed by an abandonment all over Sogdiana around the middle of the 8th century.

Following Bol’shakov (1964), he links this observation with the Arab conquest of Qutaiba, followed by the Sogdian insurrection during the 730s, before Nasr-ibn Seyyar put an end to the rebellion and helped the Sogdians who had fled to Turkestan come back. The years 740–760, under Abu Muslim, were a period of peace and reconstruction. The final destruction of Panjikent, Tal-i Barzu or Varakhsha is dated to the years 770–780, when the Arabs put an end to the rebellion of Muqanna’s partisans.

Then the author investigates the potters’ quarter discovered at Kafyr Kala, where many vessels of the “new style” were found in proximity to large kilns. Several archaeologists worked on that area but no complete publication was done. He first reconsiders all the data at hand about the shape and size of the kilns. Then he underlines the new techniques of manufacture that are visible on the pottery, like the thinning down in facets of the bases of the vessels which he says were made from a lump of clay, and the rationalization of the decoration by the use of stamps, the sprinkling of mica on the external surface, or the presence of a white thick and polished slip. According to him, these new

techniques are, on the one hand, a simplification of the work for mass production, this pottery being found in a large area from Samarqand to Panjikent, but, on the other hand, they make the production more complex, since an effort is made to copy metal vessels. He then proceeds to the description of each of the known shapes made in this "new style" (this is in the 1961 article): plates, cups-goblets with handle divided into three major types – I, shouldered with an oblique rim/collar; II, with a cylindrical shoulder; III, with a wavy rim – and jugs with a narrow neck.

He further compares them abundantly either with vessels shown on the mural paintings of the last period at Panjikent, or with the silver vessels from the collection kept at the Hermitage Museum and dated to the post- or final Sasanian period, or to vases discovered in Turkish graves in Siberia, or to those from Tang China, not forgetting to mention all the similar shapes discovered in Sogdiana or in Semirech'e. He emphasizes clearly that, while it is obvious that this new style of pottery copies metalware, the origins of the prototypes remain unclear because of the intensive relations between Iran, Sogdiana and China during the 7th (and, we might add, the 8th) century. He mentions metal vessels from the Hermitage Museum where surprising mixtures of influences are visible. He considers, however, that the decoration has clear local roots, even if some of the same motifs are to be found also in Iran or China. He describes in detail the stamped motifs (either geometric, vegetal or figurative) and supposes an evolution from the most realistic to the most stylized ones until they totally disappear during the 8th century, leaving only blank facets on the same shapes of vessels.

The jugs without sprinkles of mica but covered with a white polished slip have a decoration that was previously unknown and that reminds the author of carved wood, or of some specific designs on the mural paintings at Panjikent. To these jugs with white slip also belongs a small group with original anthropomorphic decoration. He finally adds small flacons to this new style of tableware, saying that they are all different and altogether rare items.

He sums up this review underscoring that this "new style" is very different from the pottery of earlier periods. He proposes that there were several centers of production to explain the scarcity of types II and III of the cups-goblets at Kafyr Kala, while they are rather numerous at Tal-i Barzu and Panjikent. He also describes the more common pottery found together with this new tableware in the kilns of Kafyr Kala, like water jugs, pots with wide opening or jars, some of which may have mica and decoration, in particular spouts in the shape of animals, or applied motifs in

the shape of palms/grape leaves at the base of the handles. The cooking ware has handles, is wheel-turned and sand tempered, but is rarely decorated. He ends by mentioning rare shapes.

As a result of his description of the pottery of the "new style", and of the comparisons he made, the author concludes that it does contain some features of the previous pottery and wonders whether its origins are to be found only in metallic vessels or if they could not be due to some avant-gardist potters' centers. He therefore wants to search for a similar evolution in the shapes that are not influenced by metal vessels. In any case, he observes a homogenization of the pottery all over Sogdiana at the end of the 7th century and first third of the 8th century (but we repeat here that this date needs to be revised later, more probably to after the middle of the 8th century). This leads him to consider the 7th and 8th centuries as an intermediary stage in the history of pottery of the Early Middle Ages, enriched – especially in tableware – with influences coming from all the surrounding areas through the intensive trade going on at that time. He notes the absence of relations with India, though the same sprinkling of mica is known there at the same time. Finally, he mentions that a more important change happens in the 9th century with the disappearance of traditional shapes and the introduction of glazed ware.

Conclusion (pp. 248–50). After a period, during the 5th and 6th century, of more or less domestic production where the potters' creativity played a major role explaining the differences in pottery from site to site, a "new style," copying metalware, is introduced all over Sogdiana at the end of the 7th and beginning of the 8th century. According to the author, the best key to understand these earthenware replicas is to study the local metalware, because Sogdian toreutic must have undergone considerable evolution due to the exchanges made with neighboring regions (Byzantium, Sasanian Iran, the Turks and China). The architecture and the intensity of the currency circulation at Panjikent itself underline the wealth and accomplishments of the city. The same can be said of other sites in Sogdiana like Varakhsha, Afrasiab or Shakhristan.

As shown by our review, the book is extremely dense, rich in illustrations and in valuable information, especially in the immense repertoire of comparisons the author provides. It is certainly understandable why V. I. Raspopova wished to publish it. Nevertheless, it is clear that the book is stamped by the date when it was written, that there are many problems of stratigraphy or of intrusions, and that, in spite of the efforts made by the author to demonstrate an evolution in the typology of the material from one period to

another, it is barely discernible, unless this residential quarter lived for a much shorter period than supposed originally. A great deal of new information has come up since then, including at Panjikent itself, and one can only regret that no important publication has ever been published on the pottery of the “upper level” since that of Bentovich in 1964. There are no illustrations in Raspopova (1969), and subsequently we have only the recent annual reports.

We mentioned at several occasions that the dates need to be revised and that, if only because of the corrections made by the author himself or by his wife for the dating of K.VI, the “new style” could not go back earlier than the 8th century. Recent excavations at Afrasiab/Samarqand confirm this point of view and indicate a date during the first Arab occupations, i.e. not before the second half of the 8th century (see, for instance, Grenet 2008a).

As far as the influences of toreutic on the “new style” are concerned, we noted the author’s inclination to see in them those of the local Sogdian metalware rather than those of post-Sasanian Iran. However, the discovery a few years ago on the citadel of Kafyr Kala of an important number of bullae with various motifs, among them several Sasanian ones, has to be mentioned (Cazzoli and Cereti 2005 and review by Grenet 2008b), as well as recent publications on the Sasanian and post-Sasanian glass, or Islamic glass (Whitehouse 2005 and 2010), where identical shapes to those of this “new style” of pottery are attested.

About the author

A distinguished archaeologist and ceramics specialist, **Bertille Lyonnet** has published extensively on archaeological excavations in Afghanistan, Tajikistan, Uzbekistan, Syria, and Azerbaijan. Among her important recent publications is a monograph *Les cultures du Caucase, VI^e–III^e millénaires avant notre ère: leurs relations avec le Proche-Orient* (2007). She is a member of the Mission Archéologique Franco-Ouzbèke (MAAF-Ouz) and is currently working on the final publication of the ceramic material from its excavations at Samarqand (from the Late Bronze Age to the Mongol conquest).

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