
This monograph deals with the excavations of the Mongolian-German-Orkhon-Expedition (MONDOOrEx) in the Uighur capital Karabalgasun, carried out between 2009 and 2011.

The first part is dedicated solely to the Uighur capital and begins with a discussion of the historical sources and the recent research history, subjects which have not previously been critically analyzed in this fashion. The extensive analysis of the city layout, which has been compiled by Airborne Laserscanning, is particularly noteworthy for improving substantially our knowledge about the dimensions of the city and the layout of different city areas.

The book then turns to an analytic-discursive presentation of the excavated material and the relevant stratigraphies for the city's history, obtained from the researched areas HB1 (the Manichean sacral complex) and HB2 (the so-called temple or palace complex).

Of particular interest in the results is the emphasis on Sogdian influences, which have always been either pushed into the background by the ostensibly superior Chinese influences or simply ignored entirely. The Middle-Asian-Sogdian tradition of isolated building structures would point to the influence of Sogdian ideas, while their construction and building technique correspond to Chinese tradition.

The second part of the book sets the excavation results into the context of the early settlement and urban history of Central Asia, particularly in Mongolia, southern Siberia and Buriatia. The difficulties for interpreting late nomadic ramparts or settlement structures archaeologically are undeniable. However, the number of archaeologically researched settlements has risen along with the gradual expansion of research at Karabalgasun, particularly in recent years. To set the Uighur capital within the wider settlement context may be as yet only preliminary, but nevertheless yields some interesting results. In this way the city can be considered an essential part of nomad state building: the capital makes the state.

This monograph should become a standard reference on the capital of the first Uighur khaganate, whose history is barely known from the primary sources. The work at the site is still in a sense in its early stages, so much remains to be done. However, now we have a summary overview of recent, as well as past research on Karabalgasun, including importantly new, much more accurate maps. The recent archaeological excavations made possible for the first time a scientific publication on the history of the Uighur capital and as such, it is a seminal contribution to the research on the city within the context of the late nomadic cultures of Central Asia. [Copies of Dr. Dähne's earlier publications about Karabalgasun, may be found at: <https://dainst.academia.edu/BurkartDahne>].


As described on the Publisher’s website:

The first scholarly monograph on Buddhist mandalas in China, this book examines the Mandala of Eight Great Bodhisattvas. This iconicographic template, in which a central Buddha is flanked by eight attendants, flourished during the Tibetan (786–848) and post-Tibetan Guiyijun (848–1036) periods at Dunhuang. A rare motif that appears in only four cave shrines at the Mogao and Yulin sites, the mandala bore associations with political authority and received patronage from local rulers. Attending to the historical and cultural contexts surrounding this iconography, this book demonstrates that transcultural communication over the Silk Routes during this period, and the religious dialogue between the Chinese and Tibetan communities, were defining characteristics of the visual language of Buddhist mandalas at Dunhuang. Readership: All those with an interest in cross-cultural interactions in Chinese and Tibetan visual culture and Buddhism, as well as specialists in esoteric Buddhism, Silk Road art, and Dunhuang studies.

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[The following have all been written/compiled by Daniel C. Waugh]


Near a third longer than the first edition (which I reviewed in this journal, Vol. 10 [2012]: 164–67), Hansen’s book offers much to stimulate discussion and has the potential to be very valuable for teaching. While I have but sampled Chapters 1–7 here, they appear to reproduce without change the ones in the original book (criticisms of it notwithstanding). The most valuable change in this edition is her addition of a...
good many well-selected source texts, keyed to each chapter. Some are descriptive travel accounts, most are early documents written in Chinese, Sogdian, Prakrit or other languages, and translated here. They include some of the best known evidence that is cited in histories of the silk roads; it will be a boon to teachers and learners to have them. The other major addition to this edition is a new chapter which, as the cover promises, provides “coverage of the Mongols and Marco Polo.” It is mostly Marco, and begins rather inauspiciously with the misleading statement that the Mongols “made travel along the ‘grasslands’ route possible” (p. 391), as though prior to that it had not been. My impression is that this new chapter, rather detached from the rest of the book, was cobbled together rather quickly, the subject (a potentially worthy one) deserving a lot better than what we are given. There is little here to provide any understanding of the “grasslands’” route in Marco’s time, and certainly not earlier. The chapter underscores the challenges in trying to produce a broadly conceived history of the silk roads, where the dominant interpretive paradigms have yet to be adequately re-thought even in a work such as this one which set out to overturn at least some of them.


This book seems to have generated some buzz, and more than once I have fielded inquiries from individuals wondering whether it would be one for those interested in the historic silk roads to prioritize reading. I’m afraid I had to respond with skepticism, though that judgment was based on something less than the careful analysis which should be undertaken to write a proper review of it. What you get here are some impressions, but with little claim to analysis in depth.

Frankopan is a historian at Oxford, apparently a Byzantine specialist who has an earlier book on the history of the First Crusade. (The crusades in fact get a lot of his attention.) His footnotes here would suggest he has done a huge amount of reading, with a good many citations being to recent literature that I confess has to date escaped me. He notes that he has the good fortune to have learned Russian, which helps explain some of the emphasis in the book.

His book though is one which invokes “Silk Road” only to turn the term into something meaningless. His chapters involve many roads, of Heaven, Hell, Gold, Silver, Empire, Black Gold, etc., etc. all of which brings him down to the present with some acid and not misplaced comments on geopolitics involving the Middle East by the time he finishes (“Road of Genocide,” “American Silk Road,” “Road of Superpower Rivalry,” “… Road to Tragedy”). If we are in an era of “new Silk Roads,” I confess I don’t quite know how they possibly relate to the older ones except as slogans.

This is not to say that he just quickly glosses that earlier history, even if often his glib formulations might give pause. He certainly has some sensible ideas—notably, for example, in his explicit attempt to balance an assessment of the Mongols. But in a sense, this is the anti-Silk Road book (if we think the traditional paradigms about what it was), deliberately avoiding much serious discussion of China and other parts of East Asia. His purported focus is a somewhat vague “what is in the center,” in particular what many would call the Middle East and Central Asia. Along the way, he does offer some laudable comments on the interest of the Mughals of India in promoting long-distance trade. Yet the actual history of Central Asia gets short shrift here, notwithstanding the decision by the publisher or author to put an image of the interior of the dome on the Tillia Kari Madrasa in Samarkand on the cover (a structure that was re-created from scratch in the late 20th century). In many ways the book is oddly Eurocentric, as it chronicles the rise of the West with reference to the “Age of Discovery” and its exploitation of the riches of the East and even the Americas. A lot of the story here is that of the Great Game great power rivalries, which did not end in 1907 with the Anglo-Russian treaty, but have continued in one form or another to the present.

This is the kind of ambitious, sweeping treatment which will invite specialists to nit-pick. There certainly are for this reader some red flags in small matters: placing the Caspian at the center of medieval Arabic maps, confusing Bala-saghun with Kharbalgasun, suggesting Marco Polo made it to Qaraqorum, mis-identifying the location of one of the Sasanian rock reliefs in Iran... While it is laudatory that he devotes some attention to the Vikings in Eastern Europe and the Volga trade, when he gets down to modern Russia, wanting to say something about Russian fascination with the “East”, he distorts the essence of the Slavophile-Westernizer controversy. Does any of this matter in the larger picture? I’m not sure, if the goal here in the first instance to invite readers to try to place contemporary geopolitical concerns into a deeper historical context. The occasional mistake is not the same as weaving a tapestry of “alt-facts”, as so many of our politicians nowadays do. But just don’t think a lot of this has to do with the historic Silk Road exchange across Afro-Eurasia, however we might wish to define that concept in perhaps more meaningful terms.


My editorial obligations to my authors have so far robbed me of the time I might have spent reading Peter Jackson’s new book. From what is as yet a cursory examination of it, I would strongly advise readers to drop what they are doing and read it carefully. Jackson is one of the leading historians of the Mongol Empire and the medieval Islamic world. His previous publications include an authoritative history of the Delhi sultanate, a widely ranging treatment of *The Mongols and the West 1221-1410*, which is essential reading for anyone who would wish to study the Mongol Empire, and (with David O. Morgan) the now standard edition in English of
William of Rubruck’s valuable 13th-century account of the Mongols.

Jackson’s new book, buttressed by 128 pages of notes, another 32 ages of bibliography, a glossary, some good maps and genealogical tables, promises to be the most judicious and nuanced account of a subject that has not been addressed so fully in the vast outpouring of scholarly and not so scholarly writing about the Mongols. While there is a lot here on the political history of the establishment of Mongol rule in Islamic lands, the focus is on the ways in which the Mongols interacted with their Muslim subjects, ultimately in important cases themselves converting to Islam. There have always been serious questions about the impact of the Mongols, in this case specifically in what we might term the “Middle East”, but too often discussions have revolved around a simplistic good-bad dichotomy. Close examination of the sources reveals a lot of change over time, differences according to region, and so on. The discussion here includes a careful examination of how Islamic norms may or may not have been affected by indigenous Mongolian traditions and legal perceptions. The larger issue of Mongol policies with regard to other religions is an important part of the discussion.

Those who have understandably mined Juvayni and Rashid al-Din for the history of the Mongols should find much new here to ponder, since Jackson is careful to delineate how their viewpoints differed. For all the fact we tend so to admire especially Rashid al-Din for his intellectual accomplishments, it is important as well to understand how his history deliberately distorts certain issues in Mongol history, however well informed he may have been thanks to insider information. Jackson also makes use of a previously untapped source, the Akhbār-i mughūlān attributed to Qu'Lb al-Dīn Shirāzī, which sheds new light on the rise of Hülegu.

Jackson emphasizes that, while he is well aware of the tendency in much recent scholarship to want to focus on the positive aspects of Mongol rule, he is not one to downplay the very real destructiveness of their invasions and the in fact quite mixed fate of those who found themselves under Mongol rule. I feel duly chastised for having invoked the idea of a Pax Mongolica in the past, a term that Jackson readily admits that, while he is well aware of the tenor of those who found themselves under Mongol rule. I feel duly chastised for having invoked the idea of a Pax Mongolica in the past, a term that Jackson readily admits that, while he is well aware of the tenor of those who found themselves under Mongol rule.


One of the desiderata for expanding our knowledge of the silk roads is to have readable and up-to-date studies of individual cities. The Routledge series “Cities of the Ancient World,” in which Burns’s volume appears (his *Damascus* appeared in it earlier, and he is also the author of the best compact guide to the archaeological and architectural sites in Syria, *Monuments of Syria*), promises to fill such a need. In addition to his two volumes, to date one on Miletos (by Alan Greaves) has been published, and the list of those ahead includes Palmyra, Ebla, Antioch, and in one volume, Memphis, Babylon and Cairo (a curious combination).

Given the horrendous destruction in Aleppo in the ongoing civil war in Syria, in a sense Burns’s book is an epitaph for the city that is one of the oldest and truly most important of all the urban sites in the Middle East. Despite the loss of important buildings and extensive damage to others, as Burns...
expands, “What I hope to convey... is some sense of Aleppo as it was in the hope that it helps inspire a new phase of regeneration in the future” (p. xvii). Apart from his research in the historical sources, he spent a lot of time there prior to the war and photographed everything of consequence. The book is generously illustrated with those photos, though unfortunately not all are done justice by Routledge (many of the images are pretty muddy, which certainly is not true of the originals). There are also some good maps, a glossary, a substantial bibliography, and an index.

His website <http://monumentsofsyria.com/> is one of the best resources for learning about Syria’s historical buildings and sites, with generous selections of color photos for each. It also contains his continually updated information about the sites destroyed and still under threat as the warfare continues. For Aleppo, he has links to a number of other reports that provide the grim details, which are not part of the book under review here.


My guess is that this volume, which should be of interest beyond the circle of textile specialists, may escape the attention it deserves. It contains a wide range of essays, the first section grouped under “East Asia” focusing on Japanese textiles and especially kimonos, with an eye to connecting contemporary fashion and design with earlier traditions. For me, the last of the essays in this section is of particular interest: Ewa Orlińska-Mianowska, “Reception of the Orient in the Eighteenth-Century European Silk Industry” (pp. 53–64).

The three essays under “Central Asia” are: Marta Żuchowska, “Transferring Patterns Along the Silk Road: Vine and Grape Motifs on Chinese Silks in the 1st Millennium AD (67–80) ; Pawel Janik, “The Faces from Noin Ula’s Embroidery – Xiongnu or Kushans?” (81–90); Astrid Klein, “The Language of Kūčeš Clothing: A Comparative Study of Wall Paintings and Textiles” (91–102).

The Third Section, entitled “From Central Asia to Near East and Europe—Influences” includes: Kosuke Goto, “The Celestial Lotus: on the Sources of Ornamental Patterns Woven in Silk Samite” (105-18); Maria Ludovica Rosati, “Textiles Patterns on the Move: Looking at the Iconographical Exchanges along the Silk Route in the Pre-Modern Period as Cultural Processes” (119–31); Beata Biedrońska-Słota, “The Cross-Cultural Role of Textiles Exemplified by Textiles with Arabic Inscriptions and Some Other Motifs (133–43); Cemile Tuna, “Silk Trade from Bursa to Krakow on the Silk Road” (145–53).

The final section, “Technique and Tradition Throughout Asia,” has two articles: Natalia Shabalina, “Colour is a Sign of National Traditional Ornamental Art” (157–67); Racep Karadag and Yusuf Yildiz, “Characterisation of Dyes, Metal Threads and Silk Yarns from 16-18th-Centuries Ottoman Silk Brocades” (169–79).

Those who would wish to learn more about the work of the Polish Institute of World Art Studies should consult the separately published Sprawozdanie i bibliografia / Report and bibliography 2000-2015 (Warszawa–Toruń, 2015; ISBN 978-83-62737-70-3), where the introductory essay is in both Polish and English, followed by a detailed bibliography of publications.

For those who are not aware (I was one, until somewhat by accident I came across this book), SEECHAC is the acronym for the Society for the Study of the Cultures of the Himalayas and Central Asia, whose previous colloquia were convened by Prof. Gérard Fussman in 2009 and 2011; its current president is Prof. Frantz Grenet. As with most conference volumes, this one includes some papers that were not actually presented at the time and omits some that were. What we have here in this sinfully lavish, large-format volume is an array of fascinating essays, many of which surely will open new vistas for those of us who study “silk roads” in a still somewhat blinkered approach. As all are in English and thus accessible to my readers, I list here the contents and titles:


Elise Luneau. “Transfers and Interactions between North and South in Central Asia during the Bronze Age” (13–27).

Lhagvasuren Erdenebold. “Preliminary Excavation Findings from Shoroon Bumbagar, Ulaan Kherem, Mongolia” (29–54). [Note: While readers of The Silk Road will have seen some of the images from this important Turkic tomb in an article by Sergey Yatsenko, Vol. 12 [2014]: 13-24, the quality of the color plates here is far better than anything I have seen, even in the Mongolian book devoted to the discovery.]


Ciro Lo Muzio. “Skanda and the Mothers in Khotanese Buddhist Painting” (71–89).

Frantz Grenet. “The Deydier Vase and Its Tibetan Connections. A Preliminary Note” (91–103). [Note: In his n. 2, Grenet refers to the full version of a paper on the vase by Men’shikova and Nikitin, that was supposed to be published in Journal of Silk Road Art and Archaeology, Vol. 7, but was not, nor was it in the volume from the Marshak memorial conference held at the Hermitage in 2012 where it was first presented. I do not know whether it has yet appeared.]


Eva Allinger. “An Early West Tibetan Manuscript from Hanle Monastery, Ladakh” (147–71).


Lewis Doney. “Narrative Transformations: The Spiritual Friends of Khri Stong Id ge brtsan” (311–20).


Ágnes Birtalan. “Between the Himalayas and Inner Asia: The Mongolian Case” (375–84).


This is a posthumous Festschrift honoring the prominent specialist on the antiquities of the Altai, Vladimir Dmitrievich Kubarev (1946–2011). More than the first hundred pages are devoted to tributes and reminiscences about him and a bibliography of his publications. The remainder of the book contains 27 substantial articles by a pleiad of prominent scholars who have worked on many of the topics that occupied Kubarev, often in collaboration with him. The topical headings for the sections are: “Archaeology of the Bronze Age”; “Archaeology of the Early Iron Age”; “Archaeology of the Medieval Period”; “Rock Art”. An essay of Kubarev’s entitled “The Altai—the Ancient Treasure-house of Asia” serves in place of a conclusion. Citations from the various articles have been consolidated for a single bibliography. The articles are illustrated with many high quality images, including excellent color plates. Most of the essays are in Russian, the exceptions (in English) being the contributions by Henri-Paul Francfort, Güneri Semic, Hayashi Toshio and Esther Jacobson-Tepfer. The long and interesting article by
Elena Stepanova describing her reconstruction of a Scythian saddle from Pazyryk Barrow No. 3 is presumably the same as what was published in English in *The Silk Road* 14 (2016): 1–18 *+ Plate I*. And at least a portion of the article on petroglyphs by Aleksei Rogozhinskii also appeared in this journal (elaborated in greater detail) in an article he jointly authored with Sergey Yatsenko (Vol. 13 [2015]: 109–25). This volume certainly is a fitting tribute to Kubarev and, at first blush, promises a lot of new information and interpretation.


The author of this massive work of classification and analysis has considerable experience in excavation of early Central Asian sites and currently heads the Bactrian section of the Central Asian Archaeological Expedition of the Russian Academy of Sciences’ Institute of Archaeology. The book opens with a long review of the historiography of the study of the material, then devotes separate chapters to each distinct region—Chorasmia, Bactria-Toocharistan, Sogd and Margiana—before pulling the material together to discuss the stages of the development of such terracotta sculptures. There are two appendices: on the typology of small statues of Chorasmia and separately, for Bactria, Sogd and Margiana—before pulling the material together to discuss the stages of the development of such terracotta sculptures. There are two appendices: on the typology of small statues of Chorasmia and separately, for Bactria, Sogd and Margiana. Analytical tables occupy more than 200 pages, and there are another 170 or so pages of illustrations. Whereas earlier studies of this material tended to focus on issues such as iconography, in her examination of more than 1200 examples, she focuses on what one can learn from the archaeological contexts and the possibilities for employing techniques of statistical analysis, as abundantly illustrated in the computer-generated graphs and pie charts.


We can be grateful that the Russians are now publishing some of the important documents about the early Russian expeditions that contributed greatly to our knowledge of the silk roads. Petr Kuz’mich Kozlov (1863–1935) participated in half a dozen major expeditions to Inner Asia, heading three of them. We already have his diaries from the Mongolia-Tibet expeditions of 1923–26, during which the first major Russian finds at the Xiongnu cemeteries of Noyon ul in Mongolia were made. The editors here were also responsible for that earlier publication in 2003 (*Dnevnikii Mongolo-Tibetskoi ekspeditsii 1923–1926*).
Here is a sampling of article titles that caught my eye, but which is not intended as any judgment on the interest and importance of the whole, which undoubtedly should be on the required reading list of anyone interested in the archaeology of East Asia.

**Vol. 2**
Li Feng, Elizabeth Berger, Liang Zhonghe, Jeremiah Trinidad-Christensen. “Intrasite Organization in the Late Bronze-Age: The Application of Full-Coverage Survey Methods at Guicheng, Shandong Province, China” (pp.1-39 + Pls. I, II). [Interesting especially for the illustration of methodologies that obviously have a wide application.]

Julia Elikhina, Olga Novikova and Sergey Khavrin. “Chinese Lacquered Cups of the Han Dynasty from the Collection of Noyon-Uul, the State Hermitage Museum: Complex Research Using the Methods of Art History and Natural Science” (93–109 +PIs. VI–VIII). [While these cups have received considerable attention in the past (see, e.g., Pirazzoli-t’Serstevens in *The Silk Road* 7 [2009]: 31–41), the technical analysis here sheds new light on production processes and provenance.]

Pauline Sebillaud, Liu Xiaoxi, Wang Xinsheing, Xing Chun-guang. “Revealing a Wall with RTK—A Non-destructive Investigation of a Chinese Medieval Walled Site” (125–32). [Another article interesting especially from the methodological standpoint, explaining how the application of a Real Time Kinematic (RTK) geopositioning technique enabled the precise mapping of a settlement site outside of Kujindui, located between Harbin and Shenyang, the site dating from the Liao or Jin period.]

**Vol. 3**
James T. Williams. “Demography and Conflict During the Warring States and Han Periods in Northern Liaoning” (1–10) [One of Williams’ first ventures in serious archaeological survey, with excellent results, was as part of the Silkroad Foundation-National Museum of Mongolia Tahilt excavation project in 2007 (see his report in *The Silk Road* 5/2 [2008]: 42–47). He has now moved on to much more ambitious and technically advanced work.]

Pan Ling. “The Transformation of Cultural Exchange Between North China and the Eurasian Steppe from the Late Warring States Period to the Middle Western Han” (95–106). [With a particular focus on the evidence of open-work belt plaques, concludes that “the Zhang Qian mission to the Western Regions would seem less of a trail blazing expedition and more of a renewed step toward ‘re-opening’ or resuming previous connections between northern China and the Eurasian Steppe.”]

Mandy Jui-man Wu. “Contact and Exchange in Northern China: A Case Study on the Tomb of a Zoroastrian-Sogdian, Kang Ye (512–571 CE)” (107–28). [The author, who teaches at Hanover College, developed this project with the guidance and encouragement of a number of prominent specialists. Apart from her analysis of the imagery on Kang Ye’s deathbed, she provides in an appendix a translation of his epitaph.]
Vol. 4

Shao Huiqiu and Yang Jianhua. “The Northern Zone and Mongolian Plateau Metallurgical Province: The Cultural Foundations of the Xiongnu Confederation” (47–67). [Typological classification, not metallurgical analysis, of objects is the basis for this interesting essay. The article cites a broad range of research, including Russian reports on sites such as Dyrestui and Ivolga.]

Julia Elikhina, Olga Novikova and Sergey Khavrin. “Details and Fragments of Chinese Chariots of the Han Dynasty from Noyon-uul in the Collections of the State Hermitage Museum: Complex Research Using the Methods of Art History and the Natural Sciences” (69–85 + Pls. V–VII). [More on the technical analysis that previously had not been done on the Hermitage’s important Xiongnu collection.]

Cai Dawei, Luan Yiting, Zhao Xin, Chen Yongzhi, Zhu Hong and Zhou Hui. “Ancient DNA Analysis of Uighur Human Skeletal Remains from Durvuljin No. 1 of the Khulhiin Am Site, Mongolia” (109–14). [An introduction to this very interesting Uighur cemetery was published by Ochir et al. in The Silk Road 8 (2010): 16–26. The new DNA analysis is an important step forward in determining the as yet uncertain origins of the Uighurs.]


As the editors indicate, this is the last of this series that will appear as an annual journal volume. Subsequently, the same editorial team and publisher will transition to a series of edited volumes under the new title Inner and Central Asian Art and Archaeology: New Research, which will appear at less regular intervals but “with a stronger thematic, geographical, and/or chronological focus.”

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Ken Parry. “Reflections on a Silk Fragment from Toyuq: Christian or Manichaean?” (167–92, 313-14 [Pls. 1–5].


Petra Sijpsteijn and Étienne de la Vaissière, “Introduction” (207).


Asan I. Torgoev. “New Data on the Islamization of South-Western Semirech’e” (277–87)

Addresses of authors (289).