

**PANEL: The Hephthalites (Wednesday July 6 9.30 – 4.30)**

*Convenors: Dr. Madhuvanti Ghose (Dept. of Art & Archaeology, SOAS, London) and Dr. Etienne de la Vaissière (EPHE, Paris)*

This panel aims to discuss current issues pertaining to the Hephthalites in South and Central Asia. The current research on various aspects of the study of the Hephthalites through numismatic and textual sources as well as art and archaeology will be presented and certain conclusions about our knowledge about these people will be reassessed through discussion. Some of the key questions will include the identification of the different nomadic groups, tracking their history and chronology, discussing the Khingila question, new finds which can throw light on these issues from Gandhara, Kashmir, and Sogdia as well as questions related to the art produced during this time in areas under the Hephthalites will be addressed.

***Rethinking the Hephthalites: political and ethnic denominations in Central Asia***

*Dr. Etienne de la Vaissière: EPHE, Paris*

XIXth c. historiography has focused the historical researches on ethno-linguistic affiliations while it seems that with the available data, and especially Chinese sources, it is possible to sustain the opinion that most of the different waves of invaders in IV-Vth c. Central Asia were political entities devoid of any idea of a common ethnic background. It is not sure at all that any idea of an Hephthalite language for instance should be maintained in XXIth c. historiography.

***The Hephthalites in the Bactrian documents***

*Prof. Nicholas Sims-Williams: SOAS, London*

Some years ago Helmut Humbach recognized the name of the Hephthalites in the abbreviation “ēb” found on some of their coins. This is now confirmed by the full form “ēbodalo” and its derivatives, which occur many times in the recently discovered Bactrian documents, both in the legal and economic documents which I published in 2001 (*Bactrian documents from Northern Afghanistan*, Vol. 1, OUP 2000 [2001]) and in the still unpublished letters. In this paper I will examine these references to see what they can tell us about the Hephthalites and their relations with other peoples such as the Bactrians and the Persians.

***Numismatic evidence of the Hephthalites***

*Mag. Klaus Vondrovec :Austrian Academy of Sciences, Vienna*

Based on purely numismatic evidence the Hephthalites represent one of the four main groups of the so called “Iranian Huns”, next to the Kidarites, Alchon and Nezak-Shah. Only a few coin types can be attributed to the Hephthalites for sure, although numerous specimens exist. Their origins can be traced to the drachms from the Sasanian ruler Peroz, which are modified to an independent type. Latest finds not only provide us with new coin-types but show a developing pattern of their circulation, together with other coins. Combined with archaeological data, their internal chronology will be reconsidered in this paper.

***Hephthalite images on the Bactrian sealings and elsewhere***

*Dr Judith A. Lerner New York, USA*

In addition to the linguistic evidence for Hephthalites in the Bactrian documents (to be presented by Prof. Sims-Williams) several of the clay sealings associated with the documents offer visual testimony for a Hephthalite presence in the northern Hindu Kush, specifically in the vicinity of Rob (modern Rui), the source of many of the documents. A series of male “portrait” busts, typically in three-quarter view, with tulip crowns or simple diadems, along with male busts in profile and a “double portrait” of a man and woman seem to represent the period of Hephthalite rule. This paper will analyze these and images on other seals and in other media that have been identified as “Hephthalite.” By drawing on representations from the Hephthalites’ immediate spheres of Central Asia and India as well as eastward in Xinjiang and northwest China, and by examining such details as physiognomy, headdress, hairstyles and dress, I hope to establish some stylistic and chronological markers for the figural art of this period.

### ***Manych bowl***

*Dr Tigran Mkrtcheyev and Iliya Ahmedov: State Museum of Oriental Art, Moscow, and Historical Museum, Moscow, Russia*

This spherical silver bowl with a multi-person composition was found in the North Caucasus near the river Manych and presented to the Historical Museum in Moscow in 1967. Its diameter is 14 cm, and height 5.8 cm. The exterior surface of the bowl is cast and then engraved. It is decorated with a multi-person narrative composition and has a large ring medallion at the bottom which encloses an embracing and kissing couple. The narrative composition is divided into probably four scenes. We can propose the existence of a main hero – a bearded elder with a staff, shown in three of the scenes.

The narrative composition and some features of the iconography (figure of the bearded man with staff) show that the bowl represents one of the last stages of Hellenistic tradition with the person’s garment and dancing couples demonstrating the links with the Dionysian cult, which had existed in the Orient for a long time. One can also see some Indian influence in the iconography of the bowl. On the basis of analysis of the iconography, we propose that the bowl was made by local craftsmen in Tokharistan around c.5<sup>th</sup> -6<sup>th</sup> centuries, and was probably a copy from an earlier object.

### ***The Hephthalite empire as reflected in the Sogdian funerary reliefs from Northern China***

*Prof. Frantz Grenet & Pénélope Riboud: CNRS, Paris*

Most of the funerary couches from Northern China which are now known date from the 570's and 580's. It can be assumed that the “exotic scenes” connected with the carrier of the defunct refer to an earlier period corresponding to the peak of their carriers, when the Hephthalite empire was still the dominant power in the western Tarim basin, Central Asia and Northwest India. Several scenes from the couch in the Miho Museum and from those which were carved in Xi’an for the *sabaos* An Qia and Wirkak can be connected with the various directions of Hephthalite expansion.

***Western Turks as Patrons of Buddhist Monuments in the Hindu Kush: Reconsidering the Hephthalite Contribution***

*Prof. Deborah Klimburg-Salter: University of Vienna, Austria*

Until recently, most researchers have followed Ghirshman (1948) in attributing the Buddhist monuments in the Bamiyan Valley to Hephthalite patronage. This contribution will summarize the most recent studies reviewing this question including Kuwayama's re-evaluation of the Hephthalite hypothesis presented in a number of articles begun in the 1970's and published in a collected volume in 2002. Based on archaeological and literary evidence, Kuwayama defines more precisely the areas controlled by the Hephthalites and the Western Turks. The political–military disposition of the confederation of the Western Turks in turn encouraged the development of a “new” trade route traversing the Bamiyan Valley as an alternative to the earlier route passing through the territory of the Hephthalites.

Kuwayama's hypothesis will be placed within the context of the most recent evidence for the dating of the main complex of images and painted caves in the Bamiyan Valley and the art historical and archaeological evidence for Buddhist art elsewhere in the Hindu Kush and south of the Hindu Kush (e.g. Verardi and Inaba in *Verardi and Paparatti 2004*). Recent studies demonstrate the late flourishing of a Buddhist culture in central Afghanistan from the second half of the 6<sup>th</sup> century with significant activity continuing well into the 8<sup>th</sup> and 9<sup>th</sup> centuries. Some of these studies also demonstrate the importance of the Khalaj Turks as patrons of Buddhist monuments in the region during this period. In closing I shall propose that the model defined by Di Cosmo (1999) as Trade-Tribute Empires (551-907), the second phase within his framework for the periodization of Inner Asian history, may assist us in better understanding the dynamic relationship between the political, economic, and military institutions in central Afghanistan from the 6<sup>th</sup> century to *ca.* the 8<sup>th</sup> century.

***Hephthalites in Gandhara: some more archaeological evidences***

*Dr M. Nasim Khan: University of Peshawar, Pakistan*

The history of ancient Gandhara, particularly after the Great Kushans to the arrival of Islam, has always remained a matter of great dispute. This is evidently due to the lack of sufficient data as source material for reconstruction of the history of the region. Although serious work has been done in this regard, the Hephthalite period could not be fairly reconstructed by the scanty information retrieved from different archaeological and other sources. Archaeological investigation currently taking place in Pakistan has brought to light some of the darker aspects of Gandharan history. The recent discovery of Hephthalite antiquities at Kashmir Smast and other areas, especially Bajaur, are of great significance. The aim of the present paper, therefore, is to extend previous research further and strengthen the history of the Hephthalites in ancient Gandhara.

***Is there a Hephthalite style in Indian art?***

*Dr Madhuvanti Ghose: Dept. of Art and Archaeology, SOAS, London*

This paper will examine some objects that have been dated to the 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> centuries CE from Gandhara and northern India in order to determine whether one can label

them “Hephthalite”. Comparisons with Hephthalite objects from Central Asia and the Gupta art of India will be made in order to come to some new definitions.