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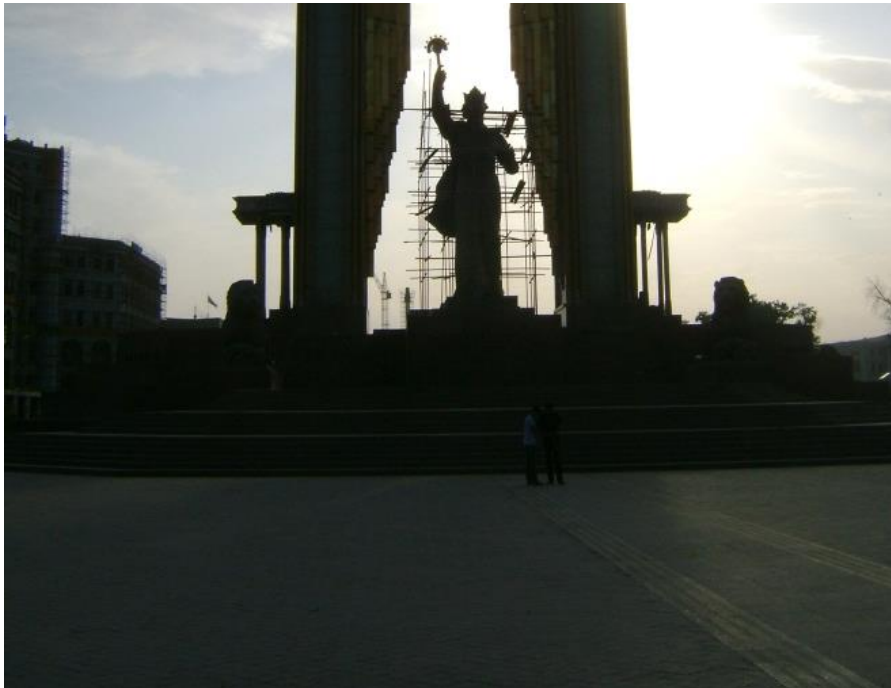
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Samanid material culture and identity formation in Post-Soviet Tajikistan



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Thesis submitted for the degree of PhD

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Abstract

This thesis investigates the Samanids (819-1005 CE), an Early Islamic, Central Asian dynasty, as subjects and objects of identity formation. It examines their complex material cultural heritage and the role this may have played in synthesising their pre-Islamic roots and new religion. Having invented their own traditions, today the Samanids are themselves invented traditions, functioning as foundation figures in contemporary post-Soviet Tajikistan, part of the new social order production through symbols of power. This thesis looks at how this past is referenced in museums, monuments and memorial culture, and how this points the way to Tajikistan's future. Two of the chief means of state communication of power and legitimation, today, as in medieval times, are architecture and currency. It is this study 'in the round' of Samanid identity formation and exposition of the interplay of past and present that is this thesis' unique contribution to knowledge. Analysing objects directly ascribed to the Samanids, including the Samanid Mausoleum, a portrait medallion and their coinage, suggests that they modified how they portrayed themselves dependent on audience. These objects produced at the Samanid centre are compared to those found at the Empire's periphery, within the present borders of Tajikistan, such as the upper Zarafshan Valley minarets and the intricate and sophisticated carved wooden Iskodar Mihrab, columns and panels found in nearby mosques. Their anthropomorphic designs are unusual in an Islamic religious context. Comparison of centre and periphery demonstrates Central Asia's complexity in 9-10th century; however, the Tajikistani government today is arguably trying to project back a desired monocultural present on a heterogeneous past. While the Samanids as national identity symbols have been discussed by political scientists, these have not focused on the architecture and materiality of the new state's cultural creations and how this may (or may not) inculcate identity and produce social cohesion. The Somoni statue is centrally sited in Dushanbe, where Lenin once stood. An understanding of how the Soviet past continues to inform the present is key to current Tajik culture and identity formation. Tajik culture is seen as 'socialist in form and national in content', in the reversal of the famous maxim.

Every writer creates his own precursors.

Jorge Luis Borges

Every age, every culture, every custom and tradition has its own character, its own weakness and its own strength, its beauties and cruelties, it accepts certain sufferings as matters of course, puts up patiently with certain evils. Human life is reduced to real suffering, to hell, only when two ages, two cultures and religions overlap. A man of the Classical age who had to live in medieval times would suffocate miserably just as a savage does in the midst of our civilisation. Now there are times when a whole generation is caught in this way between two ages, between two modes of life, thus loses the feeling for itself, for the self-evident, for all morals, for being safe and innocent.

Hermann Hesse *Steppenwolf*

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CHAPTER ONE - Memory, material culture and identity formation in Samanid Bukhara and post-independence Dushanbe

Memory is not an instrument for surveying the past but its theater. It is the medium of past experience, just as the earth is the medium in which dead cities lie buried. He who seeks to approach his own buried past must conduct himself like a man digging.

Walter Benjamin *Berlin Childhood around 1900*

*In a reversal of the usual maxim...
in order to understand the past, one must study the present.*

RN Frye *Greater Iran: A 20th Century Odyssey*

Celebration of twenty years of Tajik independence

In celebration of twenty years of Tajikistan's independence (*Istiqlol*, истиклол) in 2011, large posters decorated public buildings, streetscapes and parks in Dushanbe and across the country (see **Figs. 1-4**). Many of these had a photograph of the current leader, President Emomali Rahmon, shown in numerous active and imposing guises. He stood by an electrically lit tunnel, advertising the Rogun Dam (**Fig. 2 left**) or in a wheat field; presenting Tajikistan's important future projects and agricultural productivity. Rahmon is credited with bringing fruitfulness to the land and water to his people, the source of life, like an ancient potentate. Control of water resources was also a symbol of power for early Islamic rulers, shown by the care and attention they paid to creating their palace gardens (see Chapter Three). Rahmon is also shown next to world leaders such as Dmitry Medvedev¹ (**Fig. 2 bottom right**), where his imposing stature comfortably breaks the isocephaly. This, added to his full head of dark hair, seems to signify his right to rule, in the same way as a hale body or full beard has done in images of past rulers. Where Rahmon's figure does not appear, we see his words, exhorting his citizens to celebrate independence: *"The independence of Tajikistan will bring freedom and independence for all people. It is a source of happiness, necessary to improve general development*

¹ Russian President (2008—2012) and Russian Prime Minister (2012—present).

in all fields of life".² The only other figure who appeared almost as frequently as the President himself on posters celebrating twenty years of Tajik independence, was the early Islamic ruler Ismoil Somoni (Ismail Samanid),³ the new 'founding father' of the independent Tajik nation (**Fig. 1 and Fig. 2 right**). Since 1999, the Samanid dynasty has been very much in the frame as a national symbol. Compared with the multiplicity of ways in which Rahmon is presented, the image of Somoni was always that of the modern statue in central Dushanbe, one that has little connection to the Samanid ruler or his own likely self-image. Compared to the present, history is presented as static and unchanging, an emblem hiding the complexities of past and present. Rahmon seemed careful, however, never to equate himself visually with Ismail Samanid in the same poster; when the two appeared together, either one or other of them took centre stage.



Figure 1: Somoni statue (in centre), Rudaki statue and Majlis building, Independence Day Poster, Tajikistan, 2011⁴

² «истиклолият барои тамоми мардуми тоҷикистони нишонаи озодиву соҳибхитӣ сарчашмаи бахту саодат омили муҳимии пешрафт ба шартҳои асосии тараққиёти тамоми соҳаҳои ҳаёт мебошад».

³ Isma'il ibn Ahmad's name rendered in Tajik. 'Ismoil Somoni' and 'Ismail Samanid' are both used here, convention dictates that the former is used for the modern Tajik monument, whereas the latter is used in historical accounts. Thus, this name also involves a transposition (see below).

⁴ *My flourishing and prospering Tajikistan!*



Figure 2: Poster (left): President Rahmon and Rogun, mountain of light of Tajikistan, 2011, Above: Poster Somoni Statue “Independence”, and Below: Poster, Rahmon and the Russian Prime Minister, Dmitry Medvedev, 2011

There was no visual recreation in these 2011 posters of the two posters either side of the entrance to the Arbob Palace, Khujand in 2007 (**Fig. 3**), depicting Rahmon and Somoni as equals and mirror images of the other. It is noteworthy that Somoni here is an illustration, similar to that used on the currency, rather than the photograph of the Dushanbe statue that was used in posters all over the country for the twenty years of independence celebration, suggesting the canon for depicting Somoni had not yet been formalised. The striking imagery of these two leaders presented a clear message, Rahmon brought stability to the country following the Civil War (1992–1997), just as Somoni had, and like the medieval ruler, would lead the country into a bright future. This tells us naturally more about our own time and current Tajik concerns rather than the Samanids as complex historical figures.



Figure 3: Rahmon and Somoni, Arbob Palace, Khujand, 2007 © Nazpari Sotudeh

Thus in one poster (**Fig. 4**) it was surprising to see Rahmon actually replace Somoni in his arch of government, assuming Somoni's victory and power for himself, against an imagined composite background, representative of independent Tajikistan, which includes the Palace of Nations placed in a mountain scene and fresh water lake in the foreground.⁵

⁵ This poster, seen in Qurghonteppa, was probably made in or at least for the city, as it includes local landmarks, e.g. Qurghonteppa mound and Somoni Statue. So arguably this was not part of the usual 'canon' of poster design and was the only time I saw Rahmon in Somoni's arch.



Figure 4: Rahmon shown in Somoni's arch of the nation, instead of the medieval king, Qurghonteppa, 2011: "Master of a free country".

This modern statue of an early Islamic, Persian speaking ruler, erected for the Samanid Celebration in 1999 can be seen as a "little fragment of the medieval lodged in the heart of the postcolonial" (Cohen 2000:2).⁶ It stands in the centre of Dushanbe, on Rudaki Street, the main city thoroughfare, and opposite the Majlis or Parliament building. Thus, the statue, at the centre of power, was also central to the 2011 independence celebrations, where rank after rank of soldiers and civilians went past under the eye of the early Islamic ruler (**Fig. 5**). Somoni physically, if not completely psychologically, has replaced Lenin as founding father, although Lenin has a much stronger claim to this role. Ironically, it is he who should be seen as the true founder of the Tajik nation as it is currently constituted, following on from his decisive part in the formation of the Tajik Soviet Socialist Republic (SSR) in 1929.

⁶ Following Cohen's description of Dante and Joan of Arc statues, Meridian Hill, Washington DC (Cohen 2000).



Figure 5: Independence Day, dress rehearsal, September 2011

The Somoni statue has been the centre of a frenzy of government rebuilding,⁷ including the Rudaki National Library and park in front of Palace of Nations and nearby the new National Museum of Tajikistan. Much of this seems designed to dismantle the low-rise, constructivist and neoclassical Soviet city centre, and create a new postcolonial power nexus of capitol sites, built in various styles which combine pastel shades with columns and porticos. This new architecture references the country's various pasts; including the Sasanian and Achaemenid Empires from Greater Iran, the Greco-Bactrians⁸ as well as the early Islamic dynasty of the Samanids.

This prioritisation of the Samanid dynasty by Tajikistan today is interesting as there is no continuity between the two historical periods.⁹ Equally there is little similarity between the geographical areas of the two states (**Fig. 6**). The region over which the Tajik state extends was marginal to the much larger

⁷ See <http://www.eurasianet.org/node/64115> (accessed 19/02/2013). Tajikistan spent around 210 million dollars or a tenth of its annual budget on buildings and pomp celebrating twenty years of independence.

⁸ Dushanbe itself was a Greco-Bactrian site (3rd-2nd century BCE), with citadel, shahristan and necropolis (Litvinskiy 1994a), long before it was a Soviet city.

⁹ Like Petrarch looking back on Roman triumphs, across the intervening medieval period (Dagenais & Greer 2000).

Samanid Empire whose great metropolises lie outside Tajikistan; in Uzbekistan, Afghanistan and Iran. However, the material culture which has come down to us was not just produced in cities, as the seemingly peripheral Zarafshan valley region reminds us (see Chapter Four). What is shared, of course, between the Samanids and Tajikistan today is the consonance of Hanafi Sunni Islam¹⁰ and the Persian language, compared to the rest of Central Asia, which is Turkic speaking. This combination means that the Samanids are less easily claimed by either Turkic speaking Uzbekistan or Shi'i Iran.

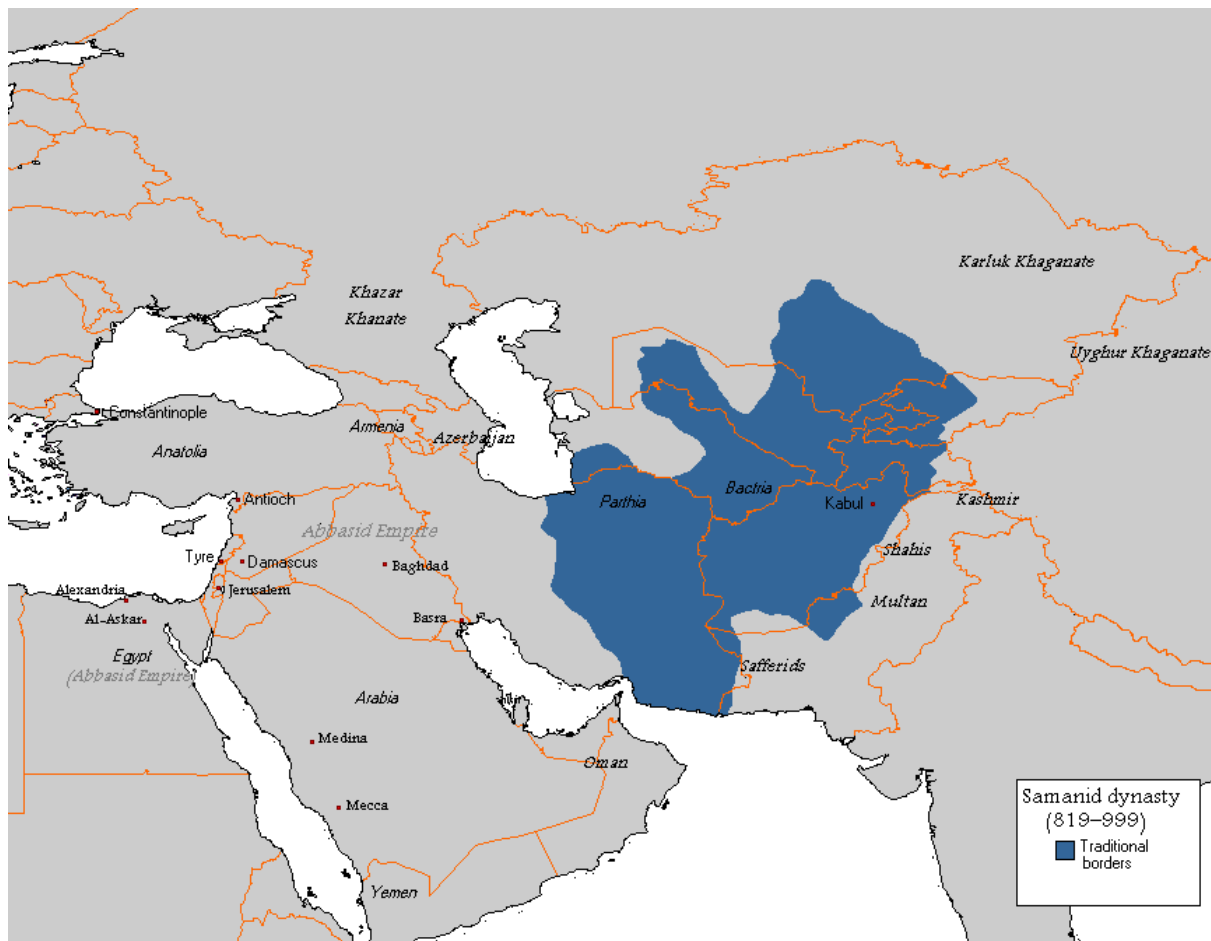


Figure 6: Map showing Samanid Empire compared to modern international borders (in orange)

Over a decade ago, Rahmon's grip on power in Tajikistan seemed precarious, still recovering from the Civil War, shored up by Russia and marked by an ineffectual authoritarianism, compared to the other Central Asian states (Atkin 2002). In 2009, however, Heathershaw was able to talk about the emergence of legitimate order in Tajikistan, "Tajikistan has order in the establishment of rules and

¹⁰ Tajikistan has a Sunni majority, and only c.5% Ismailis, which is however the largest Ismaili minority worldwide in a sovereign country.

practices of governance. This order is legitimate in that it is widely resigned to in public discourses and practices which accept its basic validity. It is emergent in that it is not a state but a process and thus highly contingent” (2009:1315).

In November 2013 Rahmon was inaugurated into his fourth term as Tajik president, giving him another seven years in power. There was an 86% turnout of Tajikistani citizens of which 83.6% voted for Rahmon. However, according to the OSCE the elections lacked credibility; having a “lack of genuine choice and meaningful pluralism” due to restrictions in candidate registration. The formalistic campaign was covered in state media, giving Rahmon a high level of visibility compared to other candidates, but generated limited public interest.¹¹ Probably because the outcome was clear from the start. Thus while Nourzhanov believes that the vote gave Rahmon a popular mandate as a strong man and peacemaker,¹² it seems more likely that there was disillusionment that any other candidate could be successful.¹³ Arguably it is Rahmon’s ability to harness Tajikistan’s multiple historical and cultural resources into the nationbuilding project which has also shored up his powerbase and legitimacy to his subjects, even though, on another level, these messages are viewed as state propaganda.

A major part of Tajikistan’s nation formation, as shown by the posters and other state media, including museums, is the Samanid dynasty. This thesis believes, following Heathershaw & Herzig (2011:10) that “‘the Samanid state’ is a historiographically and politically subjective source of statehood rather than an historical and scientifically objective one”, as arguably any source of statehood is politically subjective. Furthermore, because of the political subjectivity of Tajikistani¹⁴ discourse, it is important to understand this phenomenon. Thus this thesis is concerned with the uses and abuses of the past both as a way of making sense of the present and showing the way to the future, taking the example of how Ismail Samanid, the founder of the Samanid dynasty, has been used as a foundation figure in contemporary Tajikistan. This has been well documented in the literature on post-Soviet Central Asia, where it is linked to the ubiquitous Lenin figures.¹⁵ In much the same way that Tajikistan has Ismail

¹¹ <http://www.osce.org/odihr/elections/107944> (Accessed 17/03/2014).

¹² Nourzhanov, 2013 <http://www.e-ir.info/2013/12/23/presidential-elections-in-tajikistan-emomali-rahmons-fourth-term-at-the-helm/> (Accessed 17/03/ 2014).

¹³ See <http://innovation.soup.io/tag/Tajikistan?since=351008590> for humorous anti-Rahmon cartoons about this election (accessed 21/08/2014).

¹⁴ ‘Tajikistani’ denotes a civic belonging, while ‘Tajik’ is the ethnonym. There does not seem to be a real concept of the civic *Tajikistani* in Tajikistan, however. Thus, the adjective ‘Tajiks’ obliterates minorities from view.

¹⁵ For Samanids as foundation figures see e.g. Shozimov 2004 & 2005, Buisson 2008, Buisson & Khusenova 2011 and Marat 2008.

Samanid, Uzbekistan has taken on Amir Timur as founding father,¹⁶ erecting statues to him across the country, Kyrgyzstan has its own hero, Manas, the Kazakhs have Abylai Khan and the modern president Turkmenbashi played a similar role in Turkmenistan. This idea of national defender is found throughout Central Asia, incarnated in these masculine figures, mounted warriors, whether mythic or real, contemporary or historic who are designed to protect the nation. A Soviet worldview is still in evidence in 'post-Soviet' Tajikistan as a technique of power, seen as the only possible language which is simultaneously saturated and empty (Roy 2007:xxi).

Thesis aims and outline

This thesis takes a broad angle view, centring on postcolonial state display of power and identity formation, both in the Samanid period and in post-Soviet Tajikistan. Both new states (as most premodern and modern states) employ the same visual means to communicate state power and inculcate identity across heterogeneous territories: monumental architecture and currency. Architectural capitol complexes in 21st century Dushanbe and 9-10th century Bukhara, the Samanid capital, are investigated here as to whether the structure and appearance of these buildings informs us about the balance of power in the society which produced them. While we can walk around the architecture being constructed in contemporary Dushanbe, Samanid Bukhara is mostly known from historical texts, which have been investigated here, in conjunction with other possible royal Samanid architecture which has survived. Most importantly, the dynastic Samanid Mausoleum in Bukhara. This building's multiple meanings are discussed within the context of Bukhara's capitol complex. These buildings and monuments are contextualised through a discussion of other state-sponsored material culture such as the currency. Whilst monumental architecture might be concentrated in the capital and major towns, money travels to every corner of a national territory, and in the case of the Samanid coins, beyond.¹⁷ All citizens come into contact with coinage as part of the fabric of everyday life. Currency is often unremarked on, and thus is seen as part of a 'banal nationalism' as conducted by a pedagogic state (Billig 1995, Hymans 2004).

We then look at non-state sponsored visual culture, where identity may be displayed and formulated from the ground up. In the Samanid period this is seen to take the form of ceramics and woodcarving and in Tajikistan today, contemporary art. This provides another interpretative layer in the dialogue of

¹⁶ Even though, ironically, the Shaybanid Uzbeks were victorious against Timur's descendants.

¹⁷ Many hundreds of thousands of Samanid coins were exported to the north-west in the course of the tenth century. Many Samanid dirhams have been found in European hoards see e.g. Mitchiner 1987.

identity formation, as does viewing Tajik museum displays of these Samanid objects such as ceramics and the Iskodar Mihrab. Do these Samanid objects also contribute to Tajik identity formation today? Thus, in essence, the material of the two thesis sections mirror each other around the Samanid dynasty, seen as both subjects and objects of identity formation.

My aims with this research are firstly to increase understanding about Samanid material culture specifically that connected with the dynasty, architecture and currency. There is relatively little art historical work done on this early Islamic period of 9th and 10th centuries in Central Asia and North-east Iran, especially in western languages. While the Samanids appear in many histories, and their sponsorship of New Persian literature is much discussed, how they might have used their material culture in identity formation during this key postcolonial period in Central Asia has not been investigated. The Samanid Mausoleum and their coinage are rarely discussed together. Islamic coins are more likely to be researched by numismatists and historians than art historians.

Secondly, I aim to put forward ideas as to how post-Soviet Tajikistan uses material culture, including architecture and currency in its identity formation. While the Tajik use of the Samanids has been investigated by social and political scientists as a symbol of nation formation, the dynasty has not been looked at in depth from a historical or material cultural viewpoint, in an attempt to understand the both the Samanids as symbols *and* as real historical figures. Neither has the modern architecture of Dushanbe been researched to the extent of contemporary architecture in Astana, Tashkent or Ashgabat.

While both parts of this thesis could be dealt with separately, this thesis is concerned with the various ways in which the past and present might dialectically influence and have a bearing on the other,¹⁸ how the present interprets the past (in its own image), and how the past continues to inform the present. Both parts of the thesis have equal weighting. It is seen as vital to understand the history before discussing the politics of the past, the Samanids are not just propaganda symbols as characterised by political scientists, and it was the journey that they have made from one to another which was interesting to me. The uses and abuses of the past are always with us and it seems useful to hold up a mirror to them.

This thesis crosses time frames and disciplines in its research on material culture by and about the Samanids. Marrying two periods seemed an exciting challenge at the outset, but it is not easy amassing a vastly different set of data and theory to interrogate it, from contemporary politics and nationalism studies to early Islamic ceramics and studies on garden design. It was also made more

¹⁸ For a discussion of this on ancient Egypt see Assmann 2003.

complex by needing to have some understanding of where both Samanids and post-Soviet Tajikistan had come from, a preceding period that was very different from their own, Sogdian and Soviet pasts had to be negotiated, both at the time and by the writer of this thesis. This data is in the appendices, because the thesis concentrates on the contemporary context, however the antecedents have informed both the periods under view and the thesis itself, as the various pasts show the present what is possible. This interdisciplinary research situates itself within material culture studies, which is seen as incorporating areas of disciplines including art history, archaeology, anthropology, history, sociology, geography and political science. The material dimension is essential to our understanding of culture, its reproduction and interpretation across time and space. Indeed, material culture studies “might be regarded as an academic manifestation of characterisations of our contemporary cultural condition as ‘postmodern’, involving indeterminacy, heterodoxy and pluralism” (Tilley et al 2006:1).

Identity is by its very nature amorphous and difficult to pin down, changing with new exigencies. Successful identity programmes embrace these grey areas, like the Samanid Mausoleum or the Tajik flag, and they are able to mean all things to all people, depending on context. And it is context which is important. The Samanid Mausoleum is placed in its context of their intellectual worldview, as much as this can be understood today, as well as physically, in Bukhara's capital complex. The building cannot simply be linked typologically to other domed-square mausolea, which is how it is usually viewed by art historians. It had different messages to convey, which may be viewed and enriched by comparing its iconographic programme with that of the coinage and other elements of material culture, it seems that they modified their message dependent on audience. Just as is done in Tajikistan today.

Following Bahri, “in conjuring up ancient history alongside the present, one is asking not for a reduction of disparate geopolitical experiences in one generic framework of human motivation and behaviour stripped of historical and material contexts but a sensitivity to their interrelationship as a means of better understanding both in relation to the here and now” (Bahri 1996 in Ingham & Warren 2003:4). Thus, before looking at some of the themes and theories which it is considered run through this investigation of identity and material culture, we will first outline why the Samanids are considered important today, picking our way between the myths and history of the dynasty. Of course, even ‘objective’ history based on supposedly empirical facts is produced in a specific social and geographical context, and may be heavily interpreted and embedded in a web of predispositions, structures that make up habitus (Friedman 1992:194ff. & 205). Both myth and history are involved with creating a narrative of identity about a viable past.

Fieldwork

During the course of my PhD, I spent a month in Uzbekistan and Tajikistan in 2008, visiting museums and Samanid Mausoleum and Khoja Mashhad. I was also looking at modern manifestations of identity formation, such as the Somoni Statue. I then returned for a longer period in 2010-2011 where I spent

eight and a half months in Tajikistan and a further two weeks in Uzbekistan. During this period, I lived in a number of Tajik homes in Dushanbe where I was a paying guest.

Becoming acquainted with academics in the Tajik Academy of Sciences and the University of Central Asia, especially Larisa Dodkhudoeva and Sunatullo Jonboboev, was also helpful. I co-wrote an article (Dodkhudoeva, Mukhimov & Hughes 2013) and edited an English translation of an academic publication on Sacred Places. My trips to Qurghonteppa,¹⁹ enabled me to meet with hakkumat officials and museum staff, giving me a more regional viewpoint. I also did c.10 semi structured interviews and questionnaires with Tajik friends and scholars such as Antoine Buisson, Pulat Shozimov, Academy of Sciences, Mouattara Bashirova, Swiss Development Corporation and Musafar Azizov, Ministry of Culture. I also spent time talking to students about what they thought of their past. I used the Tajik Academy of Sciences library and that of the Franco-Uzbek archaeological mission in Samarqand. I spent many a productive hour in the National Antiquities Museum discussing Tajik friends' interpretation of the objects and the displays in general.

Together with international PhD students and Academy of Sciences' scholars, we set up a seminar which was a good way of building future international and interdisciplinary relationships. Many of the Tajik friends I met originally were contacts and friends of colleagues from the Institute of Ismaili Studies in London, where I worked during my PhD, who put me in touch with their many contacts, most of whom, but not all were Ismailis.

I travelled to the Zarafshan Valley with a Turkish PhD student of architecture, as well as to Shartuz, Khulbuk, Takhte Sangin, Chorku, Khujand and Penjikent. I also travelled to Darvaz and the Pamirs with Professor Muzaffari, Head of the Anthropology Centre, Academy of Science and his family on holiday. Travelling around, I was either with Tajik friends or on my own in shared taxis, as there is no public transport. I was learning Tajik; however the interviews took place in English or with an interpreter as my language skills were not fluent enough for this. As my research is interdisciplinary, so was my fieldwork data collection. I spent far longer in the field than is normal for most art history researchers. I wanted to spend time in Tajikistan, living with families, making Tajik friends, sharing celebrations such as weddings and festivals and listening to Tajik music. It is to be hoped that this rich experience has made the thesis concomitantly richer. Thus, this was not quantitative research, and the people I spoke to mainly were self-selecting. I did, however, go out on the street of a town called Somoni just outside Qurghonteppa, with a large statue of the medieval ruler, and ask passers-by what they thought of the king and their town's renaming. However, in general, this thesis is more object rather than people-based, as that is my academic background.

¹⁹ Arranged by Paul Marchant, Sworde Teppa, English Language Centre, with many thanks.

Samanids: History and myth

The Samanids (819-1005 CE) “hold a special place in the historical consciousness of the Iranian world”, (Treadwell 2012a:3) with a ‘mystique’ connected to the fact that they are seen to have saved the legacy of ancient Iran from extinction and united Transoxiana and Khurasan under Persian-speaking rulership for the only period in the regions’ history. The dynasty under their founder Ismail Samanid has been linked to the Sasanian dynasty founded by Ardashir (Frye 1975a:160). While their coinage depicted them as loyal caliphal vassals (Chapter One), as they included the reigning caliph’s name, in reality the dynasty was independent of Baghdad. In its heyday, the Samanid Empire stretched from Uzkend, the easternmost town of Ferghana in the east, eventually to Rayy in central Iran in the west, a distance which took two months to cover on horseback (**Fig. 7**). The area was crossed by two major rivers, the Oxus (Amu Darya) and the Jaxartes (Syr Darya).

History has ascribed the dynasty an important dual role, firstly in the Islamisation of Central Asia, where the area was made a permanent part of the Islamic world. Even if the region was no longer under centralised political rule from Baghdad, it was culturally connected to the caliphal centre. Increasing commercial relations and trade further connected Central Asia to the Muslim world. Equally the Central Asian²⁰ educated elite began travelling across the caliphate, taking up posts in administration, as well as being court scientists, poets and philosophers, spreading ideas from one region to another. Secondly the Samanids are also known for their great literary and scientific patronage,²¹ presiding over a Persian cultural and political revival as well as the incorporation of these traditions into Islamic discourse. Thus, while the Samanids are part of the Islamisation of the mashriq,²² they are also an important part of the process of promoting Central Asian cultural influence within the Islamic world. The Bukhara-Baghdad axis through Khurasan is credited with the internationalisation of the Islamic religion²³ (Frye 2011:38). Thus, this period is key to understanding the history of Central Asia, as by the tenth century

²⁰ While ‘Central Asia/ Central Asian’ is an anachronistic term, it is used in the secondary historical literature on 9-10th century to designate Khurasan and Transoxiana, as such its use has been continued here. Thus, medieval Central Asia includes the territory of Afghanistan today.

²¹ Because the Samanids’ historical and literary heritage is well covered in the literature, see e.g. Treadwell 1991:99ff, 172ff., Scott-Meisami 1993, 1999, 2000, Peacock 2007 e.g. 35ff., 2012 and because of limits of space it has not been further discussed here.

²² The region of al-Mashriq or ‘the Eastern Territories’ comprises Sistan, Khurasan and Mawarannahr seen as an independent geographical and historical entity under the house of Saman (al-Muqaddasi 1994:xxiii), i.e. north-east Iran, Afghanistan, and southern Central Asia, between the Amu Darya and Syr Darya.

²³ And far more important than the Tabriz-Isfahan-Shiraz axis which only came to the fore after the fall of the Samanids (Frye 2011:38).

the mashriq had in cultural terms acquired a homogeneity unprecedented in the history of the region. The Samanids ...[took] Islam into districts where previously other faiths such as Zoroastrianism, Buddhism and Manichaeism had flourished... This was an accomplishment of singular importance – a single world view shared by the majority of the population, albeit in a very nominal form in the case of many new converts. (Treadwell 1991:50-51)

The part that material culture played in these cultural changes is discussed in Chapters Two – Four.

The Samanids had a long lasting influence over the development of art, science and culture in Central Asia, “this was the superb creation of a Persian Islamic culture which had reconciled and absorbed the western Iranian Sasanian past with a Central Asian and Eastern past, mixed into an Arabic Islamic crucible, with a resulting genius which opened a new vista in the history of Islam” (Frye 1975b:202). They have been credited with making Islam into a world religion, not just the preserve of Arabs or Arabic speakers, through their promotion of Persian as a language of government and literature (Frye 1984). Treadwell makes two main points about Samanid identity: firstly that the key to understanding their history is their role as Central Asian rather than Persian rulers, and secondly the linguistic preconditions for cultural renaissance for which the dynasty is celebrated were well established before the Samanid period (Treadwell 2012a:5). However, it does seem that more court sponsored patronage of the Persian language took place in the Samanid court than in those of the preceding north-east Iranian dynasties (Mahmoodi-Bakhtiari 2003).²⁴

²⁴ Mahmoodi-Bakhtiari believes that the Samanids adopted a systematic, scientific method in saving the Persian language from gradual death, due to ‘patriotism’ as well as personal and social identity (2003:256).

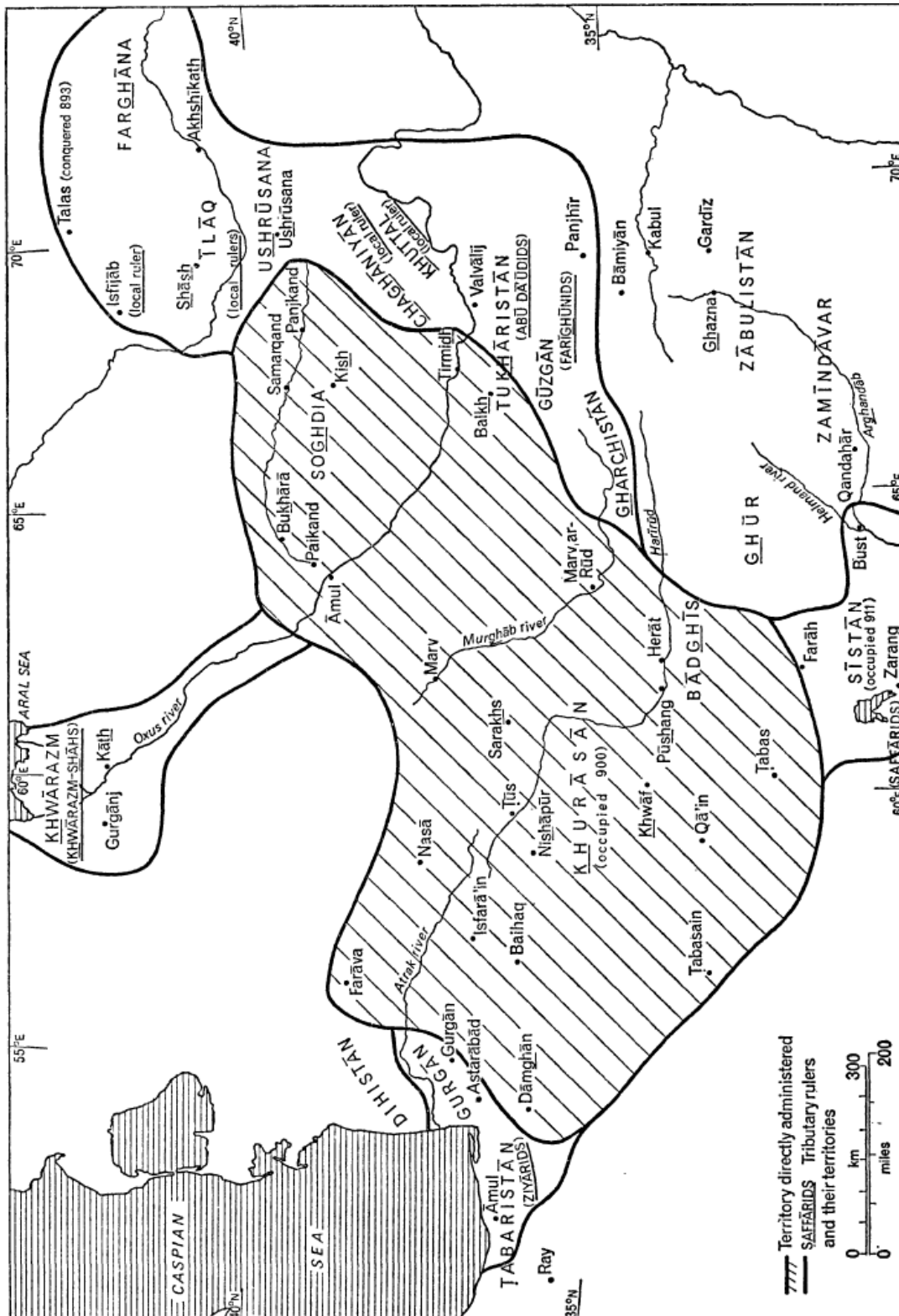


Figure 7: Map of Samanid Empire showing directly administered territory and vassal states, from Frye 1975a:139 © Cambridge University Press.

The dynasty is also credited with providing a kingship model and legitimisation techniques followed by subsequent premodern Islamic polities: as outlined in Nizam al-Mulk's *Siyasat-nama* (Book of Government).²⁵ Equally "[i]t was their reputation for orthodoxy and military vigour that marked out the dynasty as a model for later generations of Muslims and set the tone for later chroniclers of their history like Ibn Zafir" (Treadwell 2005:165). The Samanids were seen to 'command right and forbid wrong' within the Islamic world's borders, as well as carrying on *jihad* both inside and outside the borders to convert non-Muslims to Islam (Tor 2013:485). Their reputation as *ghazi*²⁶ warriors supposedly contributed to Amr, the Saffirid overlord's defeat at the hands of Ismail, by causing the defection of Amr's own men. However adherents of other religions, including Buddhism, were allowed to continue practicing in the Samanid Empire, even within or close to their capital, Bukhara (see below).²⁷ This would suggest that religion was used to legitimise and glorify wars against the pagan Turks and later against the Shi'i Buyids which were fought for political and economic purposes (as is usually the case). The Turkish slave trade was one of the Samanid economy's mainstays, both for use internally and to send to Baghdad (Frye 1975b). There is, however an almost complete lack of precise information on Samanid missionary activities in Turkic Central Asia (Tor 2009).²⁸ This is not what the Tajiks emphasise today of course, neither *jihad* nor slave-trading are acceptable to modern international audiences as part of contemporary national identity creation. Although, of course, the battles against the pagan Turks play very well in post-Soviet Tajikistan, as they prefigure Tajik-Uzbek animosity today.

The three great Arab geographers, Istakhri (d. after 951) ibn Hawqal (d. after 980), and Muqaddasi (d. after 985),²⁹ described the Samanid kingdom of the *mashriq* in superlative terms (see Appendix A):

[The region of al-Mashriq] is the most important of regions, the most sublime. Here are the most scholars. It is the source of wealth, the abode of science; the solid support of Islam and its mightiest fortress. Its sovereign is the most illustrious of sovereigns, its army the best of armies. The people are of great fortitude, correct in opinion. Their prestige is considerable, their resources extensive (al-Muqaddasi 1994:260).

²⁵ See Frye 1975a:143ff, Abu 'Ali Hasan b. 'Ali Tusi, (1017 or 1019 – 1092 CE), the famous Seljuq vizier.

²⁶ A *ghazi* is an Islamic fighter against non-Muslims.

²⁷ The Sogdians, unlike Sasanians in Fars were unused to political controls over their religion, which displays a well-known syncretism reflecting their long-distance Silk Road trade (see e.g. Azarpay 1981). It is suggested here that within Sogdia, Samanids continued to allow a variety of religions being practiced. Equally Buddhism is not a religion of the book in the same way as Judaism or Christianity.

²⁸ See below, and Golden 1990. Little is known either about the detail of Turkish proselytising or Samanid military gains against the Turks (Tor 2009). But in any case, little is known from historical sources about the Islamisation of the entire Middle East, seemingly uninteresting to contemporary writers, in spite of having far-reaching socio-religious effects (Buliet 1992).

²⁹ They are following in al-Balkhi's footsteps (d. 934 CE) whose works have not survived. He founded a new discipline, that of human geography or social anthropology, using principles of Arab rationalism. (Gaubert 1999:20).

It is fascinating to reflect why this was, the area was not simply 'remotest Central Asia' peripheral to the caliphal centre,³⁰ but an important area in its own right. "Without exception [the geographers] are more fulsome in their praise of the personal and social attributes of the inhabitants of the region [Transoxiana and Khurasan] and the efficiency and humanity of its rulers, than they are for any other region within the Muslim umma. Indeed, none of them devotes the same attention to any other part of the Muslim world" (Treadwell 1991:26). Thus, connected to the respect the geographers had for the area, is the respect which was given to the Samanid dynasty. It seems that the Samanids, at least at the start of their rule, were highly regarded in Mawarannahr.³¹ Ismail, the dynastic founder was seen as having all the necessary good qualities as ruler, and indeed was almost seen as an idealised king, where many tales relate to his sense of justice (see below). It is suggested here that the Arab geographers can be seen as the medieval equivalent of the Soviet ethnographers (see Appendix D), concerned with discovering and describing the peoples within the borders of the new empire, as part of the imperial administration. Consolidating the new political authority, they are not just bringing knowledge of the periphery to the centre but are delineating the empire itself. Both Arab geographers and Soviet ethnographers were agents of empire and part of the homogenisation of the peoples under the new imperial rule on both the symbolic and very real planes.³²

In Chapters Five and Six we discuss the portrayal of the Samanids in the post-Soviet space in Tajikistan, conceptions which are partially based on contemporary and later medieval views of the dynasty. These possibly apocryphal stories contributed to the Samanid *mythos* and how they are viewed today. Positive views of the dynasty are easy to find and are promulgated by Tajiks, but are possibly ignored by their near neighbours, the Uzbeks (see below).³³ Thus the Tajik government prefers to discuss the Samanids' magnanimity, justice and contribution to science, positive attributes which also characterise the dynasty. It also suits the modern Tajik government, with its fear of Islamic fundamentalism within and outside its borders (see Chapter Five) to emphasise the dynasty's secularism and acceptance of other religions.

The Samanid dynasty is being mythologised by Tajikistan's identity production today, where myth both signifies something which is unspoken as well as being part of ideological speech. Myth is seen as a historical communication which seems natural; according to Barthes, it is a system of signification, a message rather than an idea, which has already been worked on as suitable for

³⁰ Blair & Bloom 2003:172. It is argued here that their characterisation of the area as 'remotest' begs the question, remote to who? This not only 'Others' and exotifies the region, but also becomes the prism through which historical hypotheses are made.

³¹ *Mawarannahr* – the medieval Arabic geographical term equivalent to Transoxiana.

³² See also Silverstein 2007:64 and Haug 2010:40ff.

³³ According to Kamoliddin, the nationalist Uzbek historian, Saman Khuda, the Samanid ancestor, was Turkic (see below).

communication. Myth has a double function, “it points out and it notifies, it makes us understand something and imposes it on us (1993:117). Following Barthes, if we focus on the function of the Samanids as mythical signifiers as part of an inextricable whole of meaning and form, they are no longer symbols or alibis of Tajik nationalism they are actually its very *presence*. In this way we pass from semiology to ideology and aim to unpack the way that myth “transforms history into nature”, by telling the myth as a story which is at once true and unreal (Barthes 1993:129). We next further elucidate how this process works.

Postcolonialism, power, national identity and their realisation through architecture and state symbols

Postcolonialism

The two periods covered in this thesis are analogous in various ways. Not only does the Samanid state, according to Tajik government literature, herald the contemporary state of Tajikistan, but they were both important periods of identity formation in the region after periods of conquest. Both periods can be formulated as post-colonial.³⁴ Indigenous elites who had retained their own identity, had however undergone fundamental changes during the colonial periods, which were watersheds in the region’s history, bringing about key orientation shifts. Elites largely became Muslim during the period after the Arabic conquest and Communist during the Soviet period, as it was only through these avenues that it was possible to exert power and influence and participate in elite networks. Ordinary people also followed suit.

Forms and structures in colonial architecture in Transoxiana and Dushanbe accompanied the conquerors, who brought with them new institutions such as the mosque to Transoxiana and to Dushanbe the theatre, Parliament building and museum. These institutions were part of a fundamental *détournement* of old social patterns. New institutions were built in alien international styles, which appeared to have little to do with indigenous architectural forms. But native forms seemed to have crept through, by accident or design, connected to local materials, craftsmen and

³⁴ See Cole & Kandiyoti 2002, Chioni Moore 2005, Heathershaw 2010, Cummings 2009, 2013. Not all scholars see the Soviet period or preceding Imperial Russian occupation as colonial, e.g. Khalid sees the USSR as an “activist, interventionist, mobilizational state that seeks to sculpt its citizenry in an ideal image” (2006:232). Equally the Samanids are not always characterised as postcolonial, according to Anderson, postcolonialism is a feature of the modern world (1991). Which this thesis disagrees, as even if pre-modern empires took different forms to their modern counterparts, certainly they built empires and subjugated other ethnic or cultural groups who they perceived as different, and it is this relationship which can be characterised as colonial.

sensibilities. Thus, the hypostyle mosque in Samarqand was a type known throughout the Arab lands, but its probable wooden *laternendecke*³⁵ ceiling was recognisable to Sogdians as familiar part of their built heritage (Khmelnitsky 1992:64-66). Muslim architecture all over the Islamic world adopted and adapted ideas and stylistic forms in a dynamic process of modification. However, the resulting style was always imprinted with an unmistakable Islamic stamp. Equally, while Soviet architecture in Dushanbe was in the neoclassical style, Islamic forms and motifs were intentionally included to 'nationalise' Soviet architecture. "Certain desacralised Islamic or Persian patterns (arabesques, arches and *iwans*) were selected as 'national' motifs, and their combination with neoclassicism was perceived to be a solution to the problem of expressing the national spirit in an international language" (Dodkhudoeva, Mukhimov & Hughes 2013:283).³⁶ In the same way Dushanbe's Soviet name, Stalinabad, was given a local gloss through its suffix.

However, post-independence, people were free to express themselves culturally:

[i]n both cases there was a political divorce but... not a cultural one. In short, post-colonialism as I see it refers to a situation in which conquered peoples have adopted key beliefs and values of their conquerors without being absorbed by them in ethnic terms, and also without being able to ignore the former conquerors when they ceased to be ruled by them (Crone 2006:10).

Crone is writing about 10th century Iran, but the same is true, it is argued here, for the post-independence period in Tajikistan. Just as the Samanids drew upon pre-Islamic, indigenous or Iranian as well as colonial Islamic sources both for their iconography and to make sense of their world, so the Tajik government today consciously draws on its pre-Islamic and early Islamic, medieval past framed by a colonial Soviet conceptualisation as means of identity formation. It is suggested that both Baghdad and Moscow retained their centrality to a certain extent in postcolonial elite imaginaries, as economic and intellectual centres beyond the region. They remain important prisms through which the rest of the world is seen. Neither the Samanids nor the Tajiks wished to ignore their former conquerors but are more interested in carving out new relationships, ones in which their political independence is recognised, the Persian language maintained and with it their ability to nourish their deep historical and cultural roots. However, the languages of Arabic in the early Islamic period and Russian in post-independence Tajikistan continue to be important. Thus, while the Samanids presided over what is called an Iranian Renaissance, in reality it was "an Islamic-Iranian renaissance... and the

³⁵ A *laternendecke* ceiling consists of four diagonal struts laid over the corners, and further diagonals laid over them, leaving an opening in the middle, thus from the larger outer square, one moves up to smaller squares, each offset by 45 degrees.

³⁶ However, it could be argued that in the medieval period in the Islamic world, the *ivan* and towers were also used on secular buildings such as the Rabat-i Malik caravanserai, Karmina in Uzbekistan (1020-60CE), not just religious buildings. The mihrab was the only marker of a religious Islamic building. The building's corner towers, which hark back to the Sogdian *kushk* (also found on the Samanid Mausoleum) are now gone however (Hillenbrand 1994:343).

Islamic part was more important and more characteristic than the Iranian side" (Frye 1975a:147).

Thus, it is important to emphasise it was not just a recreation of what had gone before, but something new.

The commissioners of monumental postcolonial architecture are using it and other material culture to negotiate their world, where often architecture becomes a kind of 'iconographical bridge'. As Vale explains, discussing postcolonial capitol complexes:

Closely related to Geertz's notion of assumed blood ties, is the tendency of the national political leadership to want to assume architectural ties to some favoured period in the past. Architecture and urban design may be used as an iconographical bridge between preferred epochs, joining the misty palisades of some golden age to the hazy shores of some future promise by neatly spanning all troubled colonial waters." (Vale 1992:50-51)

The Tajiks certainly see themselves as Samanid blood descendants, as well as being heirs to their cultural achievements, however subjective or invented that might seem. But the case here is more complex, the Soviet or Arab Muslim colonial periods are not simply spanned and forgotten, they are reused, redefined and reworked, as part of the population's continued lived experience, thus forged into something new. It is the colonial period of the Turkic dynasties, a mere thousand years, which is passed over and forgotten in Tajikistan's current identity formation as realised in postcolonial architecture as well as in almost every Tajik museum.³⁷ It is argued here that synchronic iconographical bridges are also possible, where other cultural forms are taken up in a desire to underline a connection either real or putative between two cultures.

Following Vale (1992), it is seen here that designs for postcolonial public buildings seem often seem to have to pick their way through the central paradox outlined by Ricoeur "it is a fact, every culture cannot sustain and absorb the shock of modern civilisation, this is the paradox: how to become modern and how to return to sources; how to revive an old dormant civilisation and how to take part in an universal civilisation" (1965:277). In some ways this holds true for the Samanid Empire in the 10th century just as much as for Tajikistan in the 21st century. The universal civilisation for Ricoeur is not just modern technological and political forms, it is also the mediocrity of culture which can be seen over and over again in the global village. To counter this every culture should enter into a dialogue with its own past. These ideas have been taken up by architectural historians such as Frampton who propose a *critical regionalism* in architecture to counter both modernist and post-modernist forms of architecture. In this characterisation of the built environment there is an intimate connection between

³⁷ Two exceptions are the Regional Museum of Sogd in Khujand, which displays the history of the Turkic dynasties (see Chapter Five) and the anachronistic modern mausoleum of Rudaki, the Samanid poet, which resembles Timurid rather than Samanid architecture (see Chapter Six).



Figure 8: Monumental Hammer and Sickle, Soviet era, Khujand, 2008³⁸

architecture and identity (Frampton 1992), which might not be felt with globalised architectural forms. However, this should not be seen as a simple synthesis, syncretism or nostalgia.

Thus, in these postcolonial worlds, the colonial architecture of both Bukhara and Dushanbe continues to be built upon, and interrogated as an ongoing conversation, it is not ripped out at the roots. Tajikistan was slow to move its Lenin statues and other monuments to their Soviet past, such as the

³⁸ The statue had been removed from this central location by the time I returned in 2011.

massive hammer and sickle sculpture on Khujand's main thoroughfare (**Fig. 8**). However, the streetscape's meaning was not static, as new postcolonial architecture and monuments appeared next to colonial buildings, changing their meaning, often unintentionally (Cummings 2013b:616). It is argued that neither Samanids nor Tajik society wished to return to where it was before it was conquered. It is in this blend of colonial and indigenous ideas that invented traditions form, in architecture as in other cultural forms as a way of legitimising the new polity. Following Hobsbawm, invented traditions are seen as happening in periods of rapid change seen to characterise both the early Islamic and post-Soviet periods:

We should expect it to occur more frequently when a rapid transformation of society weakens or destroys the social patterns for which 'old' traditions had been designed, producing new ones to which they were not applicable, or when such old traditions and their institutional carriers and promulgators no longer prove sufficiently adaptable and flexible, or are otherwise eliminated. (Hobsbawm 1983:4—5)

Thus, it seems that in spite of the end of political power, the cultural power of the new ideas brought with conquest remained. It is argued that even with the collapse of communism as a political and economic paradigm, the post-Soviet period in Tajikistan³⁹ retains a deep resonance with the Soviet worldview. Thus "a Foucauldian analysis of the post-Soviet space is therefore interesting precisely because it would be expected that with Soviet collapse forms of knowledge, objects, subjects and practices of knowledge would be radically altered" (Cummings 2009:1085). Which has not happened as Western commentators might have expected. With this ontological and epistemological uncertainty which comes at the end of an age, how are new forms of knowledge and belief symbolised? In Tajikistan it seems in many cases that there has been a separation of signifiers and signifieds and if not the same symbols, then a similar method of symbolisation has remained from the Soviet period, just as the same tune is used in the important Tajik state symbol of the national anthem, only the words are different, post-independence. However, there is no absolute debunking (yet) of the Soviet period, or Soviet thought patterns. The Arabs' Islamic legacy to the Samanids has been abiding, lasting until today. Central Asia, just like the other regions which became Muslim, with the important exception of Spain, remained Muslim.

However a postcolonial quest for identity does not just come from above, it is also investigated in other material cultural production, like that of contemporary art in Tajikistan, created by and for an intellectual rather than political elite.⁴⁰ Equally during the Samanid period, the woodworking from the Zarafshan, including the Iskodar Mihrab and columns from religious contexts are important non-state expressions of identity, or have been explicated so by Tajikistan today, especially the Iskodar Mihrab

³⁹ As in the rest of Central Asia, to greater or lesser extent.

⁴⁰ Though not necessarily through choice (see Chapter Five below).

(see Chapters Four and Five). Attempts have been made to connect the profusion of styles seen in Samanid ceramics to different groups as expression of group identity, however there is no scholarly consensus as yet (see Chapter Two). We next turn to state symbols of power as they are direct expressions of state communication.

State symbolisation of power

It is taken as axiomatic today that monumental architecture is a symbol of power of the individual or group who commissioned and built it, directed at both internal and external audiences. Architecture is a symbol and a metaphor (Tilley 1999) of conspicuous consumption and display of beauty, craftsmanship or sheer size, meant to represent the permanence and solidity of the dynasty or institution which built it. In the case of the state, by its presence monumental architecture legitimises other powers that the state uses both for and over its people, setting up a dialogue between ruler and ruled and cementing relative places in socio-political hierarchies. It is argued here that part of the state symbolisation of power is being able to create architecture or symbols which may be viewed from many points in the city or countryside, either because of their size or their commanding location, such as the Palace of Nations in Dushanbe, the Arg in Bukhara, or even the Zarafshan minarets. These buildings arguably set up an exchange between ruler and ruled, or viewer and viewed, where not only is the symbol of government omnipresent but that the subjects might be under the ruler's surveillance via this panopticon in very real ways.⁴¹

A new state's visual representations of itself are often designed to have "multiple simultaneous frames of reference" (Vale 1992:48) reflecting a past that is a palimpsest. However monumental capitol complexes do not just symbolise *national* identity, this would be too simplistic, maintains Vale, instead "what is passed off as a quest for national identity is in reality a product of the search for a subnational, personal and supranational identity" (Vale 1992:48). Thus, architecture will demonstrate what is visibly unique about the state, differentiating it from its neighbours, especially if the relationship is a conflicted one, such as the Tajik-Uzbek. Monumental architecture also symbolises the dominant group or majority within a nation, rather than reflecting the iconography of the minority. The power of the designer or the commissioning body, here ultimately President Rahmon is also connoted by monumental architecture. The situation in the Samanid period is a bit different, as

⁴¹ Jeremy Bentham's 'panopticon' is an architectural, centrally placed apparatus which induces a "state of conscious and permanent visibility that assures the automatic functioning of power" (Foucault 1991:201).

architecture was commissioned by individuals, members of the ruling dynasty, viziers or rich people rather than the state as such (Treadwell 1991).

Monumental architecture and the built environment embody Bourdieu's views on habitus, as they are part of the shared social space and have symbolic power. Habitus is seen as inherited dispositions or a web of practices, understandings and structures, and is part of schemes of perception, thought or action in society. "Habitus thus implies a 'sense of one's place' but also a 'sense of the place of others'" (Bourdieu 1989:19). Thus, architecture may create and display social habitus which is at once 'real' and 'symbolic', linked to the symbolic capital that elites are claiming. Their goal is to exercise power over the creation and maintenance of the nation's worldview, by being able to manipulate the shared social space to their ends and needs. Tajikistan's cultural capital in the forms of ancient architecture or museum objects may be poor, as is its economic capital or standing on the world stage so the symbolic capital and prestige which the nation is trying to accrue through its identity production, must, it is argued here, work harder.

This dialogue between ruler and ruled is also taking place when people are using and viewing coins, stamps and posters which, together with renaming of places, are mundane reminders and tools of banal nationalism, which bring national symbolism into everyday experience, with the goal of unifying the population. The choice of currency's images and script are important windows into core state identity. Coins are seen as a metalanguage, beyond immediate and specific messages in the texts and designs, they have "a manner of discourse, a kind of symbolic language," which in the case of Samanid coins was an "Islamic metalanguage, which made of coins, as of much else, boundary markers in the symbolic universe of Islam" (Wasserstein 1993:305). Coins show visible changes to the political situation, through where the coin was minted and, in whose name(s).

The Samanid dynasty used a currency called after Ismail Samanid, *Ismailis*, which had high silver content, and Islamic Kufic script, used throughout their vast trade routes, and found in Baltic hoards. However, their other currency, the Bukhar Khudat, with its pre-Islamic figural motifs shows us another window on Samanid identity. The figural medallion of Mansur ibn Nuh was directed at a courtly audience rather than the general public (see Chapter Two).

Equally, modern Tajikistani currency is called *Somoni* after the Samanids, especially Ismaili Samanid, in a pleasing recreation of history, and shows a selection of Tajik 'heroes', carefully chosen to represent Tajikistan's regions.⁴² Both Samanid and Tajikistani coins are seen as 'symbolically banalising' the ideas conserved in the currency thereby ensuring that they neither consciously

⁴² Pamirs, Kulyab, Khujand, Isfara, Tursunzoda and Garm are all referenced on the banknotes (see Chapter Five).

remembered, nor forgotten, thus preserving them as part of the fabric of daily life (Billig 1995:42).⁴³ It can be argued that the Islamic messages on the Samanid currency, were not just a symbolic gloss, but the coins' uniformity over a large area, actively went some way to changing the collective identity of those who used them. By the end of the Samanid period, the population was more Muslim than at the start.

Thus, this binary between virtual or 'symbolic' and the real is a false one, which too often dismisses the role of ideas and their representation and simulation in text, images, sound and the built environment as mere afterthoughts to the logic of material exchange. Cummings (2002, 2011) and Heathershaw (2009, 2010 and 2013) have explicated power in Tajikistan from a symbolic or virtual viewpoint, building on ideas from Foucault, Barthes and most saliently, Baudrillard. They question whether symbols of statebuilding such as the posters, new architecture and giant flagpole can be seen as a symbolic gloss encrusted on real politics and employed to hide institutional failure, however Cummings concludes that "symbols often convey meaning about domestic self-images and politics that cut-and-thrust political bargaining may not... they give a sense of the bigger picture, of what the stakes are about, about what aspects of collective identity matter or have ceased to matter" (Cummings 2013:1092-93). Thus, it is viewed here that the use of the double-headed bull protomes as seen on Achaemenid Persepolis on such a significant building as the Tajik National Museum are not just decoration. Instead they have a message about a wider desire for collective identity, which it is argued, can be seen as questionable and largely imagined. Tajikistan's connection with the Achaemenids is distant at best, Sogdia was one of the furthest satrapies of Empire.⁴⁴

Identities and ethnonationalism

Soviet ideas of *ethnogenesis*⁴⁵ were used to categorise the groups that were thought to make up the newly formed Union (see Appendix E). The term *genesis* with its roots in biological formation is problematic, presenting ethnic groups as essentialist and primordial, and conflating social and historical processes with natural ones. This denies individuals their agency, such as the ruling and intellectual elites who are best placed to be active in changing their world.⁴⁶ However, it is seen here that identities no longer presuppose continuous cultures or traditions. Everywhere individuals and

⁴³ Discussing Croatia's adoption of the kuna currency in 1994 (Billig 1995).

⁴⁴ Not in itself a barrier to claiming the imperial mantle, similar to Great Britain, the furthest edge of the Roman Empire, which saw itself as the inheritors of the Classical Empire in the late 19th and early 20th centuries.

⁴⁵ That is to say the formation or appearance of ethnic groups.

⁴⁶ Following social theorists such as Benedict Anderson (1991), Michel Foucault (1980), Anthony Smith (1991, 1995, 1999). Friedrich Barth understood ethnicity to be subjective, fluid and situational, embedded in socio-economic and political relations (1969).

groups are improvising identities from re-collected pasts, drawing on various media, symbols and languages (Clifford 1988). In the Western literature⁴⁷ that appeared post-1991, the USSR was seen to have *made* these new territorial nations, by creating many of these nationalities, such as the Uzbeks, rather than merely 'discovering' their ancient past.

However, after independence in 1991, new states in the process of nation formation needed to enforce their legitimacy on their citizens, and a shared culture and historical past is one common way in which this is done. An authoritarian state is more likely than a civic one to present itself as a cultural historical entity. In this case ancestral heritage is used as a replacement for political legitimacy (Shnirelman 2009:557). In the uncertainty left by the end of the communist state; national identity seemed ready made to step into the breach, as it provided continuity with their own pasts, both as reflected during the communist period and longer ago. National identity, like power, can have both positive and negative effects, both stabilising and destabilising the people and nations involved. "No nation in the former Soviet Union has more symbolic resources and more confusion about how to master them than Tajikistan" (Beeman 1999).⁴⁸ It is argued here however that in the 15 years since that statement, the Tajik government under Rahmon has become expert at manipulating aspects of Tajikistan's past as a means of symbolic capital, thus creating a new worldview for Tajikistan.

Sacred sites and ceremonial complexes both ancient and modern can also embody national or ethnic identity. These might be war memorials to the Great Patriotic War or mausolea where holy men or women are buried. The modern mausoleum of the national poet Rudaki in Panjrud near Penjikent (see Chapter Six) has been rebuilt three times to different plans, and is now the centre of a grand complex, museum, library and gardens, such is the importance of the poet to Tajik national identity. Rudaki's prominence is also seen on the highest denomination note (500 TSM), the main street in Dushanbe is called after him, and there was also a gallery in the Bekhzod Museum dedicated to him, underlining not just the poet's importance to Tajikistan, but also how poetry is a key element in national identity. While objects, architecture and other historical material culture are the cultural property of one person or nation; poetry, together with music may be appreciated by all, as intangible cultural heritage, ownership is not based on legal or actual possession but is claimed by virtue of being of the 'same culture'. Because of the Samanid Mausoleum's location, now within the current state of Uzbekistan, its potential political power and contribution to Tajik national identity is severely curtailed, compared to if Bukhara had been part of Tajikistan. In which case, as the ancient and holy capital of the Tajik-speaking empire, the political links would have been strongly drawn.

⁴⁷ E.g. Smith, Law et al (1998), Spivak et al 2006, Suny 1993, 2001, Tishkov 1997 and Abashin 2012.

⁴⁸ See <http://www.gloria-center.org/1999/12/beeman-1999-12-07/> (accessed 08/09/2009).

Central Asian ethnic groups often believe themselves to be primordially constituted, following the Soviet characterisation of them and many modern and educated Tajiks I spoke to believe in the importance of their traditions, which are seen to have continued unchanged from the past. And it is certainly true that there are traditional elements in Tajik culture which seem connected to ancient beliefs such as Zoroastrianism (Scott 1984). A young friend, Alludin, talking about tradition, told me that if they didn't have their traditions what would they have? In his eyes, it is tradition which gives life meaning and depth, countering the meaninglessness of modern life.⁴⁹ The question of 'identity' in the Samanid period, is concomitantly even harder to pin down (see Chapter Two).

The temporal and geographical forms of colonisation are usefully compared: "[i]s it possible to colonize a region of history, as it is to colonize a region of geography? There are many reasons to believe so" (Dagenais and Greer 2000:431). Tajiks and Uzbeks are colonising their joint history of the Central Asian bi-lingual settled populations known as *Sarts*.⁵⁰ Instead of a land grab, as the borders (now partially mined) between the two nations seem to be fixed and immutable, cultural achievements are divided into 'Tajik' or 'Uzbek'. The past is being parcelled out along ethnonational lines. This is clear, looking at UNESCO's Intangible Cultural Heritage lists which show how intertwined their cultural heritage is, a touchy subject for both nations (Adams 2013).⁵¹ This continues Soviet cultural practice, where each nation was encouraged to mine the past and understand its distinctive culture, but only within its national borders. Adams reminds us that "we cannot talk about the Soviet schema for culture separate from the Soviet schema for nationality. The way that the Soviet state institutionalized culture, and therefore the schemas of culture producers today" (Adams 2013:96). Gafurov's seminal work 'The Tajiks' covered the whole of Central Asia, however, claiming a much wider past for the Tajiks, which angered Uzbek and Russian academics (e.g. Yountchi 2011:223ff.).

Memorials: Memory, people and visitations

At the heart of this thesis are two memorials to Ismail Samanid and their reception in their own time and today. The monuments were created a thousand years apart and stand in different countries; his

⁴⁹ Meeting, Dushanbe 26th August 2011. I took these traditions to be both Islamic and cultural, although of course the two are often blended.

⁵⁰ See below for definition of the term.

⁵¹ See Chapter Five.

dynastic tomb⁵² in a park in Bukhara and the statue to the medieval king in the centre of Dushanbe. Both are state monuments, on some level the embodiment of the state or dynasty itself,⁵³ but both are outward reaching and designed to be a focus for people. It is through their function in the real world, by contributing to spectacles and embodying memories that they gain their power. Visual analysis of these monuments' effect and ideology are investigated. Together these are seen to have a "power over the subjects when they perform acts of looking, images can be seen at their most 'active', not only having a social life, but impacting on that of the people who interact with them" (Bal 2008:170). Post-structuralist visual theory can also be brought to bear on architecture, allowing us to include the viewer in the picture, in both the early Islamic and contemporary periods (cf. Fairchild Ruggles 1997). Thus, both these structures are powerful, designed to have an effect on people, although their visual languages are completely different. The Samanid Mausoleum (**Fig. 9**) connects past with the present, in a similar way to the modern Ismoil Somoni statue (**Fig. 10**), both tomb and statue remind people of the ruler and his deeds through the materiality of their construction, one legitimising his and his dynasty's power, and the other the power of the Tajik government today which is in the position to choose its own precursors, like Borges' author in the epigraph.

Today we look back and see the Samanid Mausoleum as a more contemplative, holy monument, a domed square potentially signifying the universe, compared to its counterpart, the modern bronze figure. Somoni in his modern guise is depicted under a golden victory arc, accompanied by lions and surmounted by a massive golden crown. This seems a much more secular statist depiction of power. The tomb, because it (supposedly) holds Ismail's body, and due to its specific form, creates around it a sacred space, Islamic in flavour, which is missing around the modern statue. Indeed, Ismail Samanid is one of the only secular rulers whose tombs are considered holy and worthy of *ziyarat* or pilgrimage. This is an important part of his mystique, based on both a popular perception of the ruler which continues to this day, as well as in contemporary historical sources (see below, Chapters Two and Five). While both tomb and statue might be the focus of visitation and family group photographs, only the tomb is the object of pilgrimage in a religious sense. Prayer would not happen in front of the modern statue, as it does in the Samanid Mausoleum, the statue being a locus of purely political rather than religious power. However, arguably the mausoleum started off in the same way, it was not designed as a religious monument, as it was not aligned to Mecca but was cardinally oriented, and in any case religious pilgrimage to tombs did not take place until 11th century (Khmelnitsky 1991:28-29).

⁵² Or his grandson Nasr's (see Chapter Two), however while scholars are divided as to the three occupants of the tomb, popular opinion is not. People's belief is firmly with Ismail being an incumbent and their practice reflects this (see Chapter Five).

⁵³ Arguably in early Islamic times the two are conflated.



Figure 9: Samanid Mausoleum, Bukhara, 2008

Thus, the Samanid Mausoleum and the Somoni statue can to a certain extent be seen to reflect collective memory and historical memory, respectively, in their audiences. Whereas the Samanid Mausoleum embodies collective memory of the dynasty for the time it was built. The Samanids are for Tajiks today only a historical memory. Halbwachs sees the latter as the representation of a lost past and its only recollection; this is a past which no longer exists as collective memory (Halbwachs 1992). All that remains are fragments in the form of artefacts. However, this binary is not quite true, as the Somoni monument does not just depict the past medieval king but represents contemporary Tajik independence and the end of civil war, two recent events that remain strongly in Tajikistanis' collective consciousness.

The Somoni statue, while a symbol of Tajikistan's independence is also a present image of the absent thing: the Samanid Mausoleum and lost homeland, representing both the fact that it is gone, and the fact of its 'having been', its past existence. Following Aristotle in his theory of memory, who differentiates between the recollection (*mneme*) from image in general (*eikon*) by the marker of the formerly (*proteron*) (in Ricoeur 2009:280). Both the Samanid Mausoleum and the Somoni statue are seen as *lieux de mémoires*, which are formed when there has been a particularly rapid slippage of the present into a vanishing historical past, and a "rupture of equilibrium" brought about through the "acceleration of history" (Nora 1989:7). We can see this in the swift changing of statues in this central place in contemporary Dushanbe, from Lenin via Firdowsi to Somoni.⁵⁴ Nora contrasts memory and history, and that when the first is gone, that is when history comes into play, as a reconstruction of what is no longer. These *lieux de mémoires* are a deliberate creation; "indeed it is this push and pull that creates [them] – moments of history torn away from the movement of history, then returned no longer quite life like, not yet death..." (Nora 1989:12). Thus, the Lenin statue, seen as a historical monument, built when the man was a living memory, the focus of organised and private rituals and spectacle can be compared with Somoni as a monument to historical memory. He is temporally further removed from people's everyday lives than the Lenin figure was. Somoni is part of the "exterior scaffolding and outward signs" that cover an absence of memory, not experienced from the inside (Nora 1989:13) at his monument. But conversely, where he is experienced from the inside, is at the Samanid Mausoleum, by those who visit to pray at the monument. Here we have something which is closer to collective memory, where Ismail Samanid's presence is perceived as more real and nearer to our present time, in the monument which is seen as intimately connected to Ismail dating to the Samanid period, and not a modern recreation.

⁵⁴ The Lenin statue was pulled down in a riot post-independence in 1992 and was temporarily replaced with a statue of Firdowsi. This statue was then moved to make way for the Somoni statue (see Chapter Six).

Material culture, such as architecture and currency can be seen as chronotopes (literally *time-space*, Bakhtin 1981), uniting time and space. Bakhtin uses this term in literary criticism⁵⁵ to show the intrinsic connectedness of the concepts: where (when)

spatial and temporal indicators are fused into one carefully thought-out concrete whole. Time as it were thickens, takes on flesh, becomes artistically visible, space becomes charged and responsive to the movements of time, plot and history. This intersection of axes and fusion of indicators characterises the artistic chronotope. (Bakhtin 1981:84)⁵⁶

Thus, in a quest for a unified national identity stretching back through time and secure in its territorial space, which speaks to multiple audiences, both states have employed material culture. Both Samanid Mausoleum and Somoni Statue are from a time of origins, which since Plato have been characterised as something which is special or holy, in *The Laws* Plato pointed out that the beginning is “half the whole deed... and no one has bestowed enough praise on the beginning that is noble” (1980: 754a). Thus, both Statue and Mausoleum are symbols of origin and the birth of new states, which need their accompanying myths. Eliade tells us that “every origin myth narrates and justifies a new situation, new in the sense it did not exist *from the beginning of the world*” (1998:21, original emphasis). While the situation is new, it wants to connect itself to more ancient pasts. Thus, just as lineages attached to the Samanids traced their ancestry back to Kayumars, the first king in Iranian mythology (Gardizi 2011:53), Tajikistan today traces its own origins back to the Samanids. And indeed, beyond the dynasty; Tajik identity, it is argued here, also sees its cosmogony as starting with Kayumars (see Chapter Six). Nothing else will do than the primogenitor and first ruler of the world, whose son Siamak fought absolute evil in the form of Ahriman.⁵⁷

Thus, this fundamental battle written about by Firdowsi between Iran and Turan, good and evil, today takes the form, in Tajik conception, of Tajikistan and Uzbekistan. For indeed the centrality of the Somoni statue, along with Dushanbe’s new capitol complex, constructed of massive buildings that the country can ill afford, is to make people forget the missing sacred centre of Bukhara. Bukhara and Samarqand’s location within the current Uzbek borders are seen as a result of Uzbek aggression, rather than Soviet empire building. There is a model of the Samanid Mausoleum and some sacred earth from Bukhara at the core of the Somoni complex, under the statue, in an area kept closed to the public.

⁵⁵ Although designed for literary criticism, the idea of a ‘chronotope’ has permeated many other bodies of knowledge including architecture (Whyte 2006:173ff.).

⁵⁶ See Chapter One.

⁵⁷ Most famously retold in Firdowsi’s *Shahnama* c.1010 CE. Kayumars gave the world law, religion and other important cultural elements.

This is how origins are fixed in the minds of people, through struggle and the perception of difference (cf. Barth 1969) that a group may coalesce around them and continue, not just to remember, but to exist as a group at all. Schwartz tells us that “commemoration lifts from an ordinary historical sequence those extraordinary events which embody our deepest and most fundamental values. Commemoration... is in this sense a register of sacred history” (1982:377). Without Tajikistan to remember them, not just through monuments, but in their research and collections, our ideas of the Samanid Empire would be different. Of course, the ceramics would still be studied and the Mausoleum included in Islamic art history surveys, but the dynasty as a whole might seem part of the past, with little real *meaning* to the present day and contemporary concerns.



Figure 10: Somoni Statue, Dushanbe, 2008⁵⁸

⁵⁸ Photograph taken before the construction of the Rudaki National Library.

Successful public monuments are multivocal, allowing people to approach them differently, depending on their viewpoint: including ethnicity, education, religion and gender. Thus, they exist between the personal and the collective, allowing a locus for reflection as to where the individual fits into the whole. They are a place where people come together for joint yet possibly unarticulated group rites, and where traditions can more easily be invented due to their connection with, in whatever sense that might mean, the symbolic. Monuments are state ideological narrations which set up a dialogue, where the stories and ideas they impart gain or lose credibility through the audience's reactions (cf. Suyarkulova 2013). Both monuments have had stories woven about them showing that they have evoked meanings in their audience. For if there was no audience for a monument, its meaning would be changed or curtailed. Olufsen tells us when two people in Bukhara quarrelled, they placed letters outlining their side of the issue in the same hole on one side of the *qabr* down into the grave in the Samanid Mausoleum (**Fig. 11**). Soon after the letter emerged out of the other hole of the man who was in the right "which was now furnished with the seal of the Pasha Ismail" (Olufsen 1911:413)⁵⁹. So, we see in the public imagination, Ismail continued being a just king after his death, with the ability to judge his subjects with perspicacity from beyond the grave. This story has stayed in the lore connected with the Mausoleum, as it was related to me by the *mutawallī*⁶⁰ when I visited in 2011.

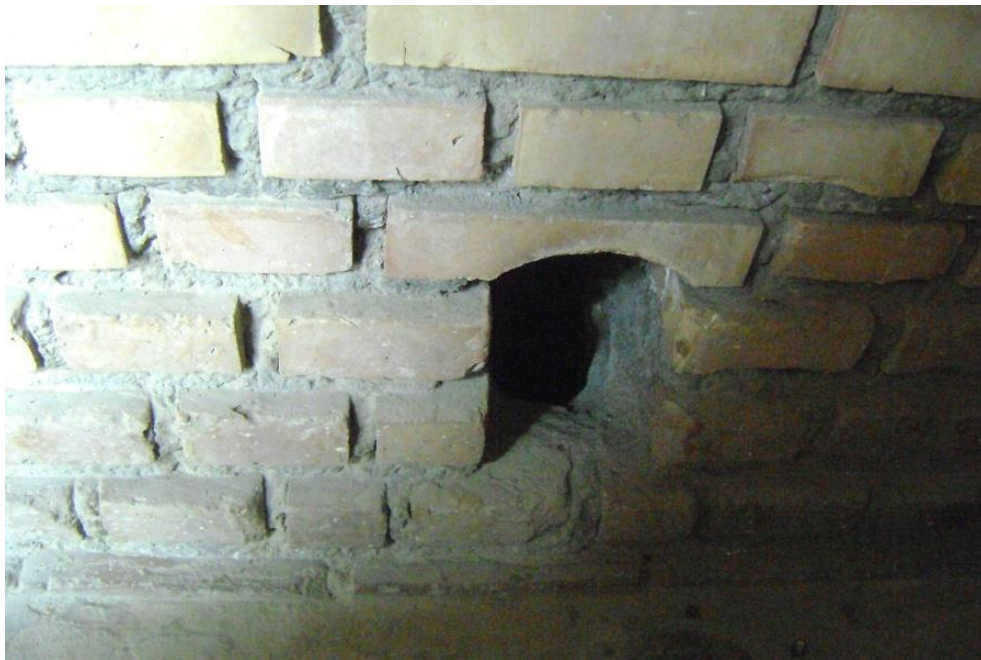


Figure 11: Hole in qabr in Samanid Mausoleum, 2011

⁵⁹ It would be fascinating to know what this seal looked like, or how it was imagined.

⁶⁰ The official who takes care of a religious shrine.

However, Somoni only makes visitations to the Somoni Statue in jokes,⁶¹ contrasting the medieval ruler with the current president, to the latter's disadvantage, Somoni certainly does not represent Rahmon here.

Both monuments do not only symbolise the beginning, in time, but they also shape space around them, as central sites. In the Samanid mausoleum its centrality is encompassed in its very form, cardinally aligned along quadripartite axes, presenting the same face to each of the four directions. While the site's location might have had special meaning to those who designed, commissioned and visited the building, this has not come down to us. The building itself through form and design is enough to create itself at the centre of its world. The Somoni statue on the other hand, gains in its centrality through collective memory, as it has been sited on a spot where Lenin, the Soviet progenitor once stood, the exact centre of Dushanbe, from where all the distances are measured. It has been noted that for a supposedly atheist state, the Soviet focus on Lenin, seen most clearly in his mausoleum on Red Square in Moscow, came very close to deifying him as a cult. However, now that the statue has been displaced, what happens to collective memory where the foundations on which it is based are torn down, when heroes that were set up in towns and cities are carried away again, when history dictates that their instructive usefulness is over? In Soviet times the Lenin statue in Dushanbe was a reminder of the true cult centre in Moscow where his embalmed body lay, a little piece of the centre at the periphery. Just like Somoni, there are folk tales of Lenin's continuing life after death, such as the *Clever Lenin* story, where he continues to care for his people (Tumarkin 1981). Thus, the Somoni statue resonates through its appropriated space, as well as its centrality at the heart of government buildings today.

Just as personal memory is based on a re-imagining rather than mere information retrieval, this is also true when talking about a nation's 'collective memory' which is seen to be the product of social groups and their ever-changing interests (Arnold-de Simine 2012:14). However collective historical memory in Schwartz's conception cannot be literally constructed by each new present need, only selectively exploited. And moreover, the exploitation of the past cannot be arbitrary, where events selected for commemoration must have some factual significance (Schwartz 1982:396). It is between these two ideas, 'constructed' and 'exploited' that the Tajik use of the Samanid past falls and which this thesis interrogates.

⁶¹ "A soldier who hears the voice of King Somon every midnight as he guards his monument. King Somon says: 'Soldier, bring me a horse'. The terrified soldier tells President Rahmon that King Somon is talking at midnight. The president gets curious and decides to stay with the soldier. As Rahmon and the soldier stand by the monument at midnight, the voice of King Somon comes. It says: 'Man, I asked for a horse. Why did you bring me an ass?'"(Quoted in Matveeva 2009:1106 Note 8).

Objects: Perceptions, genres, forms and meaning

The idea of *genre* bound up in Bakhtin's 'chronotope' also gives us a way of proceeding with these very different bodies of material, which may be understood through a series of transpositions, where an object or building's meaning changes according to contexts of time, space and viewer (see Whyte 2006:173ff.). This gives this thesis a useful tool with which to see Samanid culture, where architecture and objects are viewed firstly as they might have been in their own time, and what meanings they conveyed, and then again from a contemporary perspective where a different layer of meaning is added through a series of transpositions, just as there is a transposition in the use of Somoni/Samanid's name. The early Islamic and contemporary Tajikistani culture presented here could be seen as very different *genres* of objects. While the Samanid mausoleum and some Samanid ceramics are characterised as art historical masterpieces, included in every survey of Islamic art, in general modern Islamic art and architecture has been left out of the trajectory of 'Islamic art'. For example many general Islamic art books stop at 1800,⁶² so the Samanid art presented here, is both very much within the Islamic art canon, and the contemporary Tajik post-independent architecture is completely outside of it, seen as, in the main, 'dictator kitsch', if it is even 'Islamic' at all. There is an argument that Islamic art is produced whenever a country is predominantly Muslim, (e.g. Grabar 1983, Rabbat 2012) as is the case here in Tajikistan. Certainly, both state and non-state Islamic architecture (in the narrow sense, i.e. religious architecture) is being designed and built, including the government sponsored vast new mosque and the Ismaili Centre commissioned by the Aga Khan⁶³ (see below). Islamic motifs and forms can be seen on some new post-independent architecture, such as the dome of the monumental entrance to the Botanical Gardens in Dushanbe, or the mosaics on the Somoni statue complex in Khujand.⁶⁴ However one is hard pushed to find an Islamic reworking of traditional motifs and forms in the three largest, most important new public buildings, the Palace of Nations, the Rudaki Library and the National Museum of History,⁶⁵ which do not overtly reference the Samanid architectural heritage and are international in feeling, secular by design and with an emphasis on pre-Islamic heritage of Greater Iran, in the case of the National Museum.

However, the two types of architecture: Samanid and modern Tajik, for example might not be as different as we think, as Wilkinson notes with respect to Samanid architecture in Nishapur:

⁶² Contadini 1995 – see also Blair & Bloom 2003, Rabbat 2012 and other papers in the same volume of *Journal of Art Historiography* <http://arthistoriography.wordpress.com/number-6-june-2012-2/> (Accessed 25/08/2014).

⁶³ Aga Khan IV (b.1936) See http://www.akdn.org/about_agakhan.asp (Accessed 21/04/2015).

⁶⁴ Itself a more Soviet than a traditional Islamic media.

⁶⁵ In the way we might find in Dubai or the Arab states see e.g. Rabbat 2012.

"[b]ecause the pigment has disappeared from the few buildings of the period still standing, the part played by colour in Seljuq and pre-Seljuq architecture has been insufficiently stressed. The common use of pigment, usually rather thickly applied on the decorative brickwork found in Nishapur gives us every reason to think that colour was used on the carved decoration of those other monuments as well, even before the introduction of glazed insets" (Wilkinson 1986:107)

Thus, could other Samanid brickwork have been coloured? The effect would certainly have been very different, and to western historians' eyes, possibly more garish, like the famous examples of the classical statues whose marble was brightly painted when first created. Could Samanid architecture thus prefigure the Tajik architecture in certain respects? Whether or not this is the case it reminds us how we bring our own ideas of beauty and taste to objects and architecture, equally Samanid epigraphic ceramics are prized as they conform to Western ideals of beauty.

These visual forms are performing the same roles in both the Samanid time and today, the creation of new group identity, however that can be formulated. Thus, while traditional art historical practice is concerned with tracing a typology of forms and searching for origins, what is considered most important for our purposes is trying to understand these structures and objects vis-à-vis contemporary material culture as well as how they worked in the real world, at that socio-political moment. Grabar was able to argue that in the early Islamic period

the creation of an Islamic art was not the result of an artistic or aesthetic doctrine inspired by the new religion or even by social or other consequences of the prophetic message, but consisted in transforming previous traditions compatible with the yet as barely formulated identity of the Muslim community and at times trying to serve its needs or to proclaim its presence (as in the minaret and tiraz)" (Grabar 1980:209).

Thus, material culture in this formulation is connected to the necessity of inventing traditions in a fast-changing world, in order to keep up with present identity formulation. How can we use the historical and literary evidence to contextualise the extant material culture, based on an understanding of how the objects were viewed at the time? Both Necipoğlu and Shalem have suggested object-based ways of looking at Islamic art (Necipoğlu 2012, Shalem 2012). Medieval Islamic literary sources clearly demonstrate the great esteem in which artefacts were held. One of the best examples is the *Kitab al-Hadaya wa al-Tuhaf* ('Book of Gifts and Rarities'), a late eleventh-century treatise ascribed to the Qadi al-Rashid Ibn al-Zubayr, and an amazing source of information on the narratives of famous objects from the period immediately preceding Islam up until the Fatimid era.⁶⁶ In this text, the objects are treated by the author as living creatures, with

biographies which could be told as their personal histories. This approach suggests a totally different attitude towards the social meaning and function of objects in the world of Islam as

⁶⁶ Al-Qadi al-Rashid ibn al-Zubayr 1959 in Shalem 2012.

compared with the medieval sources that discuss objects in the Latin West. One might even say that the history of Muslim communities is told through the narratives of artifacts (Shalem 2012:8).⁶⁷

Of course, this text postdates the Samanids by a century, however it suggests perhaps another way in which objects were seen in earlier periods. Especially as Shalem believes that the ideas behind Muslim characterisation of objects as people are based in 9th century Abbasid *wasf* (description) literature, which made an object the central subject of a poem's description 'speaking' to its user/viewer through ekphrasis (Shalem 2012). In such poetry, the materials, shapes and colours of an object contain meaning, which did not exist simply in images. How does this change how we see iconography of Islamic objects today? We cannot forget the original context of the artefacts, as Necipoğlu reminds us:

(N)either architectural monuments, nor portable luxury goods produced in courtly or commercial urban workshops of the Islamic lands were meant for display in museums as self-referential objets d'art or masterpieces. Instead, they were often seen en masse and experienced in particular settings or rituals that framed their signification process. The functionality, materiality, and "thingness" of portable objects – often exchanged as gifts and commodities – meant that their semantic horizons were largely dependent on context. Their interaction in specific settings with the gendered bodies of users or viewers activated multiple narratives and meanings (Necipoğlu 2012:26).⁶⁸

This connects to Dudley's ideas of the materiality of objects in museums and trying to imagine things 'from the object's point of view' which also helps us confront their *thing-ness*. This subject-centred technique looks *outward* from within rather than the other way around (Holmes [1985] 2005 in Dudley 2012). If we lack a proper focus on objects' physicality and how far their form and materials influence the real world of everyday life, we cannot engage with them as closely and miss being able to attribute meanings and values (Dudley 2013:1). We may also miss how they work in the world, which is intrinsically connected to the space they occupy and form and colour they take.

Architecture: Authenticity, nostalgia and simulation

Both Samanid architecture and that of post-independence Tajikistan seeks to represent the past, which could be seen as a form of a mythical nostalgia⁶⁹ for another age of past glories, and an

⁶⁷ Page number relates to online version.

⁶⁸ Page number relates to online version.

⁶⁹ "The word "nostalgia" comes from two Greek roots: νόστος, *nóstos* ("return home") and ἄλγος, *álgos* ("longing"). I would define it as a longing for a home that no longer exists or has never existed. Nostalgia is a sentiment of loss and displacement, but it is also a romance with one's own phantasy." Boym in

attempt to reconstruct the lost homeland. “Every artefact is thus the relic of an absence: of an absent past which at the same time pre-figures our present, which in turn fulfils, completes or ‘*proves*’ *what we imagine the past imagines to be its future*” (Preziosi 2011:58, present author’s emphasis). This interplay and temporal dialogue between past and present through the medium of material culture is at the core of this thesis’ methodology; emphasising as it does how each feeds into each other as we write and rewrite our past, present and future.

However, where the Samanids might be seen to be nostalgic for a time that has passed, Tajikistan is both nostalgic for time(s) *and* a place, the lost homeland and a pre-Uzbek past, when Tajik speakers were rulers of Central Asia. “Creative rethinking of nostalgia was not merely an artistic device but a strategy for survival, a way of making sense of the impossibility of homecoming”. This is characterised as restorative nostalgia by Boym, where the longing emphasises the home, and attempts a transhistorical reconstruction of the lost home, which it paints as truth and tradition rather than nostalgia (Boym 2007:9). Thus, restorative nostalgia has two main stories, the return to origins and the conspiracy. In both of these Tajikistan emphasises its ethnohistory as Persians and against the ‘Other’, the Uzbeks who have seized their homeland. We can see this taken to its end point in the Bagh-i Poytakht theme park in Dushanbe which takes famous landmarks from Bukhara and Samarqand,⁷⁰ the Kalyan minaret and the Ulugh Beg Madrasa from Samarqand’s Registan and makes them more ‘alive’ and brightly coloured than the originals. “Whatever it restores, personal or collective nostalgia always amends, purifies, beautifies, renders more vivid what is longed for. So perhaps the problem is not the “faking” part, but the collective drive that restores. The problem of restorative nostalgia is its need to fill the gap, to close the circle around which it lives (Galli 2013:17).

Thus, architecture while seeking to be authentic, and harking back to a time of origin, through bringing the past back into the present, can be seen to be a simulation of history. “If architecture strives continually to make manifest an imagined past, then it succeeds in making manifest the absence of any such real past. Nostalgic architectural forms embody the loss of the past. This continued loss is continually re-presented” (Jensen 2008:157). This restorative nostalgia where the past is merely a symbol can be compared to the pasts evoked in the Samanid Mausoleum, the summer palace at Kyrk Kyz and the modern Ismaili Centre in Dushanbe, where although past structures and motifs are used, they are skilfully reworked into new forms and architectural arrangements which meet the needs, both practical and aesthetic of the present.

<http://monumenttotransformation.org/atlas-of-transformation/html/n/nostalgia/nostalgia-svetlana-boym.html> (accessed 21/08/2014). Equally *ostalgie* is a German term meaning nostalgia for the Communist period, specifically in East Germany. This nostalgia for the Communist past can also be seen in Tajikistan.

⁷⁰ Though not, it may be noted, the Samanid Mausoleum, some structures are beyond disneyfication.

Chapter summary

Under investigation in this thesis are two groups of material culture, created in Central Asia over a millennium apart. The next five chapters (Chapters Two – Six) each have a linked Appendix (A-E) which provides some context for the chapter.

Chapter Two: State and non-State sponsored material culture and identity looks at how the Samanids negotiated their own early Islamic era and formulated their identity, through looking at the production and consumption of the material culture left behind in the archaeological record. A discussion of their putative lineage, how they legitimised themselves, is followed by discussion of other identity axes in the Samanid period, Sogdians and the Turks within and without the empire, and religion. Then we turn to the Samanid coinage and the unique extant Mansur ibn Nuh medallion. Also interpreted is material culture exchange and display of power as evidenced by the St Josse shroud. The chapter finishes with a discussion of non-state sponsored ceramics. The thesis concentrates on this huge corpus of material rather than including other media here due to limits of space. **(Appendix A)**

Chapter Three: Samanid architecture from the dynastic centre presents the architecture of the Samanid capitol complex in Bukhara, as to how this may project identity and power. Due to the city still occupying the same site, the Samanid levels are usually not archaeologically retrievable. Thus, what we know from historical sources is discussed, such as Narshakhi who describes the location of palaces and mosques and detailed descriptions of their gardens, also written about by contemporary poets such as Rudaki and Daqiqi. These descriptions contextualise the Samanid Mausoleum. Also discussed in this chapter is other state-sponsored architecture which can shed light on Samanid capitol complex, such as the possible Samanid ‘summer palace’ at Kyrk Kyz near Termez, Uzbekistan and the stuccos of the Samanid ‘palace’ in Samarqand. Samanid attitudes to their pre-Islamic past and material culture are partially retrievable through the texts which mention spolia which remained in place throughout the period of their empire. Finally, the material evidence for legitimisation of kingship is compared to the textual sources. **(Appendix B)**

Chapter Four: Periphery: Zarafshan Valley, Ustrushana and Ferghana Valley presents the material culture from the ‘peripheral’ Upper Zarafshan Valley, including the outstanding woodcarving on columns and the Iskodar Mihrab as well as the three minarets in settlements along the valley. While their builders and the reasons for building them are unknown, it is possible they were symbols of power from the Samanid centre. This material, along with the Asht mihrab and Hazrati Shoh complex from the Ferghana Valley, are discussed here for two reasons. Firstly, because they represent an important regional perspective, from Ustrushana, on the Samanid Empire, reminding us of the heterogeneity of the Empire. Also, they represent a major and unusual corpus of material coming from within the present borders of Tajikistan. This is mostly contemporary with that discussed in Chapters Two and Three, which comes from Uzbekistan and elsewhere. The objects under view in

this chapter have for the most part remained in Tajikistan, either *in situ*, or in Tajik museums. This chapter thus leads on to how these objects are explicated in contemporary Tajikistan which is one of the topics of the next chapter. **(Appendix C)**

Chapter Five: Tajikistan: State and non-state material culture and identity takes a similar structure to Chapter Two and covers comparable artefacts. The Chapter starts with why the state has chosen the Samanid period as an identity axis, as a form of legitimisation. There are other candidates however, such as Zoroastrianism, regional identity and Islam, which are outlined here. This is followed by an examination of Tajik paper currency, symbols of state power designed to communicate a message to internal audiences. Also discussed is how Samanid material is displayed in Tajik museums. Finally, where do contemporary artists' concepts of identity fit in modern Tajikistan. **(Appendix D)**

Chapter Six: Post-independence Tajik architecture and memorial culture looks at post-independence architecture and memorials built by the Tajikistani state which reference the past. Also touched on are the new apartment blocks that have gone up in Dushanbe. The buildings and monuments under discussion include those built by the state, such as the Palace of Nations, The National Museum, the Rudaki Statue and Library, the statues to the medieval ruler Ismoil Somoni in Dushanbe and Khujand in the north of the country and the monumental entrance to the Presidential dacha in the capital. Also examined here are buildings built by non-state actors, such as the monumental entrance to the Botanical Gardens in Dushanbe, run by the Academy of Sciences as well as the Ismaili Centre and the Bagh-i Poytakht amusement park also in Dushanbe. These buildings are part of a general building boom in the capital, much of it for the twenty years of independence celebration in 2011, such as has given rise to the tallest flagpole and the largest tea house in the world. The chapter and thesis finish with a discussion of future projects, including the Rogun Dam. **(Appendix E)**

Chapter Seven: Conclusions

Appendices

Appendix A – historical outline of the Samanid period, list of mints and discussion of geographical sources, the Arab geographers, text about the visit of the Chinese embassy to the Samanid court.

Appendix B – Description of the Samanid Mausoleum and discussion of its antecedents along with a table of iconographical motifs found in the Samanid Mausoleum.

Appendix C – Antecedents of wooden architecture and woodworking in the Zarafshan valley as well as a Samanid period textual source on wooden architecture. Outline of coeval wooden mosque architecture from the region, including Iran and Pakistan.

Appendix D – Soviet ethnogenesis to Tajik civil war, brief outline of issues which contribute to Tajik identity formation today.

Appendix E – Soviet architecture in Dushanbe.

CHAPTER TWO – Samanids: State and non-state sponsored material culture and identity

Art is not the attribute of an object but the result of social and even political decisions about a national past

Grabar 2006:219

Bukhara under the Samanids was “the home of glory, the Ka’aba of sovereignty, the place of assembly of the eminent people of the age.”

Tha’alibi in Barthold 1968:9

How did the Samanids use material culture to further their aims regarding power and legitimisation and communicate this with different audiences? The Samanids⁷¹ operated a ‘divide and rule’ policy towards their subjects, in which they had considerable success. Their task was, at all times, to ensure that it suited enough people to support them (Treadwell 1991:281), thus it can be imagined that they employed material culture including coinage and the architecture (covered in Chapter Three) to enable them to display their power and speak to multiple audiences. Both architecture and ceremonies depend on audience and that is why this chapter includes a section on other identity axes under the Samanids who would have been audiences for their state symbolisation of power. The two main internal constituencies were the indigenous *dehqans* and Muslim Arabs, however there were other groups in their very heterogeneous population, other axes which contributed to personal and group identity are religion and regional association, the latter covered in Appendix B. Turks within and without the Empire have been looked at as comparison to how Uzbeks are viewed by Tajiks today. Indeed the whole of Chapter Five mirrors the layout of this chapter and the type of material covered. This chapter will then look at the dynasty’s coinage as a state sponsored material means of communicating power and identity. The uniformity and high silver content of the Islamic Ismaili dirhams - for which Samanids are well-known - communicated their messages across a vast area. This coinage will first be compared to the contemporary Bukhar Khudat figural coinage with its completely different aesthetic as well as to a more private donative medallion with a unique figural image of Mansur ibn Nuh (Treadwell 1999: 9-10, 2003 and 2012a). It is argued here that these

⁷¹ See Appendix A for a historical outline of the Samanids, a brief discussion of the geographical sources and a list of Samanid mints.

communicate different messages, the first to the widest possible audience, both internal and external to the empire, the Bukhar Khudats to the urban population of Bukhara and other cities, and the medallion to an elite courtly audience. It is seen that archaeological and numismatic sources emphasise the Samanids' Central Asian origin during the state's formative period (820-900 CE). Their "orientation as rulers was directed towards the steppe rather than the Iranian plateau and the shape and structure of the early Samanid polity in Transoxiana cast an enduring shadow over their history" (Treadwell 2012a:4).

Elite Samanid society would have used objects, symbols and clothes to proclaim their power and identity. These have often not survived in the material cultural record, but we have some idea of them from textual evidence. The notable exception is the so-called St Josse shroud made for a Turkish commander. This state sponsored material is compared to the ceramic output and metalwork which is an important non-courtly corpus of material. There have been efforts to link (e.g. Bulliet 1992) Samanid ceramics with different social or ethnic groups however the reality is more complex, and we probably cannot link the two (see below). First it is considered useful to discuss textual evidence of legitimacy claimed by the Samanids through their lineage, as this sheds light on how they wished to be portrayed.

Samanid sources of legitimacy

The Samanid family initially gained power and legitimacy through their Arab connections⁷² rather than their standing as *dehqans*, where they were of middling rank, or their putative lineage. Most contemporary writers state that Bahram Chubin⁷³ is the Samanids' ancestor.⁷⁴ Ibn Hawqal writes the "House of Saman... are among the descendants of Bahram Chubin, whose reputation among the Persians for strength and courage has endured" (quoted in Tor 2012:154), suggesting Bahram Chubin's fame amongst Persians was recognised by an Arab, even without the Samanid connection. Compared to the various dubious lineages assumed by contemporary north-east Iranian dynasties, the Samanid claims to Chubinid lineage was never questioned by contemporaries, Biruni, Narshakhi and Istakhri all unreservedly believe their claims (in Pourshariati 2010). Indeed, Pourshariati believes

⁷² Saman Khuda served one of the last Umayyad rulers of Khurasan, Asad b. 'Abd-Allah al Qasri, governor of Khurasan 723-27 CE (see Appendix A).

⁷³ Bahram Chubin led a revolt against the Sasanian Emperor Hormizd IV in 590, briefly occupying the throne himself as Bahram VI. His family of Mihran claimed descent from the Central Asian dynasty the Arsacids (Parthians), hence his bid for the throne and his displacement of the Sasanians.

⁷⁴ Only Muqaddasi states that Bahram Gur was the ancestor (1994).

that it was the Parthian heritage which was important to them and part of their claim to rule of the East, including Rayy (see below).

Scholars today are divided as to why Bahram Chubin was chosen and what this would have meant to a contemporary audience. Perhaps this was the point, he was complex enough to mean different things to different constituencies.⁷⁵ A famous fighter, he was connected to Iranshahr but not of it, having Central Asian links. This colourful and controversial figure was presumably a Samanid legitimising device chosen to unite their empire after a period of chaos.⁷⁶ Treadwell notes “the political function of these genealogies, which were no doubt seen by percipient observers to be legitimacy charters rather than statements of physical descent, was to provide the necessary credentials for rulers who operated in the Iranian cultural environment” (1991:69). However elsewhere he suggests that it might have been a “popular eastern Iranian tradition which was adopted by the Samanids as a concession to eastern Iranian patriotism” (1991:285 Note 66). It is possible that the dynasty wanted to draw parallels between both their ancestor and themselves fighting the Turks (Treadwell 1991), as well as their status as march lords *vis-à-vis* their superiors to the southwest. Gardizi tells us that Bahram Chubin fled to Ferghana, where he married a Turkish wife. This is the basis of the Samanid claim of descent from marriage of Bahram Chubin and a plausible link to Sasanian aristocracy without negating Central Asian roots (Gardizi 2011). The Samanids’ claim was widely accepted, no doubt because they fulfilled some of the common expectations of Iranian dynasts and because they were in fact of Iranian descent.

It is also possible that this choice of Bahram Chubin links to the Pahlavi inscribed medallion of Mansur ibn Nuh (see below), and the Samanids as Central Asians, as he was of Parthian descent. Parthian heritage is also referenced arguably in their architecture (see Chapter Three), such as quadripartite plan of Kyrk Kyz (**Figs. 40-42**), which was first seen at the Parthian Palace of Assur, and motifs on the façade have cosmogrammes seen on the Samanid Mausoleum (Michailidis 2007; **Fig. 36**). Peacock concludes that both the medallion and the link to Bahram Chubin were directed at the court circle and not for general public consumption (2007:48). However, I would argue that the fact that this genealogy was discussed in many other contemporary histories and Arab geographies suggests that it might not be just designed for the court. See Ibn Hawqal’s quotation above, for example, suggesting that Bahram Chubin’s fame and the connection between him and the Samanids was far more widely drawn than the court’s inner circle. It is odd then to find them credited with Turkish genealogy as well,

⁷⁵ The choice of Bahram Chubin was possibly linked to his Parthian family, coming from Mihranid capital of Rayy, and possibly was thus part of the Samanid counterclaim to the city against Buyid aggression.

⁷⁶ Just like the dynasty themselves will become in Tajikistan.

specifically the Oghuz.⁷⁷ Perhaps it is a forgotten fact of their origin from a province on the steppe borders inhabited by Turkish tribesmen (Treadwell 1991:69).⁷⁸ Frye notes that only one author claimed they were of Turkish origin, belonging to the Oghuz tribe, which is most unlikely, but conceivably may be a later attempt to link them to Turks or Hephthalites (Frye 1975a:136). Here we see the Samanids as engaging in the formation of myth, linking their assumed power through Arab connections to a deeper pre-Islamic legitimation and natural right to rule. It was possibly a subtle and successful intertwining of fact and fiction, or perhaps that the Samanids' noted good qualities legitimised their right to rule and their right to choose their ancestors.

Contemporary views of Ismail

Ismail Samanid, the 'Incisive Amir' (r. 892-907 CE) and the chosen foundation figure of contemporary Tajikistan (see Chapter Five), has been the subject of many stories illustrating his personal virtues since his own time, in contrast to later Samanid rulers, about whose personalities we know next to nothing. These anecdotes have obviously been subject to later authors' elaboration to an extent the narrative has not, but some are "at least are contemporaneous with Ismail and should be interpreted as a popular reflection of his reign" such as those in Sallami who died c.961 (Treadwell 1991:101). These stories show his justice, personal probity, mercy and deference before others. It was part of Ismail's appeal that he was chosen by the people rather than conquering Bukhara by force. Narshakhi tells us that "it was decided by the people of Bukhara that the amir Ismail should be amir of Bukhara and Husain ibn Muhammad al-Khwaraji his successor... Amir Ismail sent a diploma of successorship to Khawaraji with a banner and robe of honour. Khawaraji went through the city with the banner and robe, and the people rejoiced" (Narshakhi 1954:79). Here again we see the importance of objects, the robe, banner and diploma in sealing the contract between the two men (see below). However, none of these objects from the Samanid era have survived,⁷⁹ all we know is from the written evidence. According to Narshakhi, it was soon after Ismail entered political life that the positive stories began, as the people scattered coins over his head as he rode into Bukhara (Frye 1965:38).

Ismail is highly praised by contemporary writers: "Ismail was pale skinned, tall in stature and had a big beard. He loved scholars and was even-tempered and generous of nature. Every day he provided food for the jurists and scholars learned in the *hadith*, seating them at their tables, he carried a chair

⁷⁷ Muhammad Lari Persian Mss University of Istanbul F. 725 fol. 234a in Frye 1975a:136.

⁷⁸ Cf. Uzbek historian Kamoliddin's claims that the Samanids were of Turkic descent (2005, 2011).

⁷⁹ Apart from the St Josse shroud, see below (**Fig. 18**).

which he placed at one table after another, sitting down for a while and eating at each of them” (Ibn Zafir quoted in Treadwell 2005:253). Does the description of Ismail’s physical features link to the importance of the king’s body as signifying right to rule? Al-Farabi notes that “the chief ruler should be sound of body and limb, so as to be able to perform every function he chooses with great facility” (in Fakhry 2002:103). Conversely, in Ma’rufi Balkhi’s 10th century poem

*There came a terror-striking angry governor,
Wearing a rotten, ill looking, ugly beard* (Quoted in Ahrari 1999:211).

What comes through these texts is not only Ismail’s justice and leadership, a pre-requisite for an early Islamic ruler (Lambton 1962), but also his accessibility to his people, waiting in Bukhara’s central square, even in bad weather, so that anybody might present a petition to him (Nizam al-Mulk 1978:22).⁸⁰ Narshakhi describes Ismail as follows; “he was really a worthy ruler, meritorious, intelligent, just, kind and a man of vision and foresight. He always showed obedience to the caliphs, and he found it proper and necessary to submit to them” (Narshakhi 1954:77). Ismail is also described as “abundant in his campaigns, of fine humility, of weighty aspirations, a helpful promoter of external dimensions of the law, compassionate towards his subjects, intense in his fear (of God); he manifested the precepts of the religious community, sought justice, and proclaimed the truth, even though he was one of the sons of the world” (from the *Nasihah al-muluk* in Marlow 2007:184). It is significant that Ismail was first described as ‘abundant in his campaigns’, in that this was seen to be the most important attribute. Nizam al-Mulk tells us how he refused ‘Amr bin Laith’s treasure as ‘Amr had stolen it from his subjects, showing not only his high moral values but also shrewd political ability, as then the subjects would have transferred their anger to Ismail (Nizam al-Mulk 1978:21).

It is interesting to speculate whether the political, ethical and philosophical writings of al-Farabi (c.870-950), most famously in his *Virtuous City or Ideal State* (*al-Madina al-fadila*), have any bearing on Ismail Samanid and how he was depicted in contemporary and later histories. Farabi takes ideas from Plato’s *Republic*, which he links with the Islamic tradition in a single framework. The philosopher-king should conform to twelve attributes of ruling, including being of sound body, a lover of learning, with no interest in money but a lover of justice and honour. In the body of the philosopher king there is the solution to the realisation of the best regime. The virtuous city over which the chief ruler or imam should preside is represented as the political framework for the attainment of humankind’s ultimate goal of happiness (Fakhry 2002), which in the main conforms to how Ismail is portrayed.

⁸⁰ In the Aleppo citadel possibly rulers were no longer accessible to the general population for the important public audience event (*majlis al-‘amm*) as the people would have been barred from entering the citadel *en masse* (Tabbaa 2010:62). This might have been the case here (see Chapter Three).

“Ismail seems to have been the first Samanid for whom kingship was an aim and a necessity” (Paul 1994:27), by relying on troops personally loyal to him, rather than volunteer troops led by gentry commanders. In the new system the ruler has obligations as well as rights,⁸¹ however Ismail kept his promises and was the ideal patrimonial ruler (Narshakhi 1954: 77-80ff.). Near Eastern communities of this period yearned to be ruled (Mottahedeh 2001:51-78), just in the same way that Bukhara requested rulership by Ismail, as order under a strong ruler was better than chaos which came with political anarchy. This set up a contract between city and ruler, who needed to have a visual reminder of his person in order to symbolise this contract. Especially after a change of leadership, it was not a foregone conclusion that the empire should continue to owe loyalty to the dynasty, even though the Samanids took the *bai'ah* (oath of allegiance) not only to themselves but also to their heirs apparent, just like the caliphs (Mottahedeh 2001:51). Architecture and coinage, thus seen, might “encourage the population to believe the compact was in force and was still acting to the advantage of its beneficiaries (Mottahedeh 2001:66).⁸² We will first outline the various ‘beneficiaries’ of Samanid state power: the other identity axes.

Other identity axes under the Samanids

Frye believes that Samanid Bukhara was the “dome of Islam in the east, veritable second Baghdad. Bukhara was the meeting point of *three* cultures, west Iranian, the Arab-Muslim and the east Iranian....this is the main reason why it became the great centre it did in the tenth century....[This] provided the background for the rise of that civilisation which can be called the New Persian Renaissance when concentrating on language and literature, or the eastern Islamic culture when concerned with art and thought” (Frye 1965:191-192). Thus, the Samanids had multiple audiences with which they needed to communicate their legitimacy, this is arguably shown by their attitudes to other religions within their Empire, as well as to other ethnic groups such as the Turks (see below), who were to become increasingly important throughout the period of their rule. These groups together with the Sogdian east Iranian speakers, the Persian speakers from Fars and the Arab Muslims made up their constituencies, to whom their architecture and coinage were addressed. The three axes which formulated identity were language or ethnicity, religion and region or city, as they continued to be in Central Asia until the coming of the Soviets and are still important today. We deal with the first

⁸¹ Mottahedeh discussing the Buyid dynasty believed that “a general sense of mutual obligation would be maintained if loyalties to the multiple categories to which they belonged were maintained” (2001:175).

⁸² “It could be said in some respects both ruler and dynasty believed themselves to hold their position through a special compact, resembling a vow, which the ruler and the dynasty had contracted with God....Subjects were the... beneficiaries [although not party to the compact]” (Mottahedeh 2001:66).

two in this section, and an example of the third can be found in Appendix B as it forms the historical context in Ustrushana. As we shall see, identity, connected to city states, through city walls (Chapter Three) and other means was becoming less in evidence through the Samanid period, as the population homogenised under the Samanid rule. It is an incredibly complex subject, where ethnicities and identities were as fragmented in the early Islamic period as they are characterised today. For example, support for the majority of revolts in the 8th century was not based on ethnic divisions and cut across supposed 'national' lines, where Arabs as well as Iranians supported Abbasids and Iranians as well as Arabs remained loyal to the Umayyads (Daniel 1978:510ff.).

Language / ethnicity

Al-Masudi outlined all the areas in the mid-10th century including provinces of Khurasan with a predominantly Iranian speaking population, speaking Pahlavi, Dari and Azeri (in Kolesnikov 1997:17), where in many areas in the mashriq Persians and Arabs lived mixed together, such as in Nishapur, Merv and Herat. Muqaddasi also gives a well-known outline of the different Persian dialects (in Kolesnikov 1997:18ff.), showing he was well versed in the language. By the start of the Samanid period Persian had replaced Sogdian as the 'official spoken' language,⁸³ although Sogdian was still spoken at home and in rural areas, together with, increasingly, Persian. Arabic was the 'official written' language, until probably the time of Nasr I ibn Ahmad or Ismail Samanid, when it changed to Persian. The Samanid bureaucracy from the time of Ismail was based on Persian written in Arabic script as well as Arabic. The religious language was almost exclusively Arabic as most of the population had become Muslim (Frye 1975a:146). It is interesting in this case that it was the West Iranian language of Farsi that Samanids promoted as New Persian, rather than Sogdian. However, they used the new Arabic script of their conquerors, the script of Muslim revelation, rather than going back to the old Pahlavi one. This can be seen as similar to Tajikistan post-independence continuing to write using Cyrillic script,⁸⁴ given to them by the Soviets.

Thus, the main constituents living together under Samanid rule with the Sogdian population were Turkic tribespeople, Persian speakers from Fars as well as Arabs. At the start of the 10th century noble Sogdian *dehqan* culture was moribund (de La Vaissière 2005:289ff.), and by the end of the Samanid period, Sogdian language and culture had almost disappeared, at least in the metropolitan areas. Sogdian gave Persian language a reduced number of words, suggesting that Sogdian culture

⁸³ Tajik, like the Persian spoken in Iran today, is a west Iranian language, unlike medieval Sogdian which is an east Iranian language, as are the Pamiri languages spoken today.

⁸⁴ In spite of discussions of alternatives, e.g. returning to the Arabic script once used in Tajikistan and still used in Iran and Afghanistan, or like Uzbekistan taking on the Latin alphabet.

while it remained stronger in the rural areas,⁸⁵ was not so important in metropolitan Sogd. Throughout the Samanid period elite culture seemed to have turned to “shared east Iranian subjects (such as Alexander and Rustam) rather than those that are specifically Sogdian” (de La Vaissière 2005:290). Equally Muslim authors never referred to the Sogdians as a separate racial or linguistic group (Frye and Sayili 1943:201). Animal imagery on ceramics and metalware, such as deer, lion, and camels and so on could symbolise Sogdian gods, or to other people could just be representations of those animals. Thus, imagery was understood in context and also through attributes differently by different groups (see below, with respect to ceramics).

Other religions under the Samanids

Although the Samanids were characterised as *ghazi* warriors in the contemporary sources (see Chapter One), other religions were still allowed to be practiced, and thus Buddhist temples and idols and Zoroastrian fire temples continued to be a focus of group identity. Thus, here the Tajik characterisation of the Samanids ecuminality and tolerance is seen to be as close to ‘reality’ as some of the historical sources and modern historians’ views on the dynasty (however see below). Pre-Islamic sacred sites were also important in Samanid Bukhara, for example, the magians continued their annual rites at the Tomb of the legendary king Siyavush buried near the Gate of the Ghurian (Narshakhi 1954:23). Before the Arabic conquest, the Sogdian city states were famously syncretistic in religion, due to their position on the Silk Roads, combining Zoroastrian, Hindu, Buddhist and ancient Mesopotamian beliefs and gods. There were also Manichaeans and Nestorian Christians in the region.

As elsewhere, *mashriqi* Muslims were tolerant of the religions of the book, Jewish and Christian communities survived into the 10th century, and Jewish communities have survived till modern times in Bukhara. As late as the 10th century, a Manichaean monastery still existed in Samarqand (*khanagah-i Manaviyan*).⁸⁶ We know around 500 Manichaeans gathered there, having fled from Babylon, in fear of their lives. However the Samanid ruler would have killed them, but for a warning “from the king of China, but I think [says al-Nadim] from the lord of the Toghuzghuz” who told them that he would retaliate against the Muslims living in his country (Minorsky/Hudud al-‘Alam 1937:352, Note 13). Thus, while the Samanid amirs are usually praised in Tajikistan for their religious tolerance, however here this was only gained through Chinese or Turkish protection.

⁸⁵ Sogdian is the distant ancestor of Yaghnobi language spoken today by scattered populations in the Yaghnob valley in central Tajikistan, where the Sakan column was found (see Chapter Four, **Fig. 77**).

⁸⁶ Hudud al-‘Alam 1937:113, Sinor 1990.

During the Samanid period Zoroastrianism was still celebrated in fire temples in the capital of Bukhara, as well as in Ramush, a village outside Bukhara (Narshakhi 1954:17), showing that although central temples might have been taken over for mosques in the early years of the conquest, as happened in Nishapur (Wilkinson 1974), Muslims did not destroy all the other religions' places of worship, even 250 years after the conquest. In Bactria, Buddhism was practised well into Islamic times, while in Sogd, it appears to be tolerated. For example in the village of Ramitin near Bukhara there was a temple of idol worshippers, which was possibly even enlarged in 943 by construction of a new shrine (Barthold 1968). The Samanids also condoned the biannual fair in Makh-ruz bazaar of Bukhara in which idols, probably Buddhist figures, were sold openly (Treadwell 1991:53). It is interesting that both Buddhism and Zoroastrianism continued to flourish in villages close to the Samanid capital, perhaps underlining the dynasty's tolerance. Buddhist holy sites were often far from population centres,⁸⁷ thus finding spectacular buildings in out of the way places, of which the Arab Ata Mausoleum at Tim (Pugachenkova 1963) is only one example, might not be so unusual, when seen from this viewpoint. The area of Ustrushana was also particularly attached to Zoroastrianism (see Chapter Four and Appendix B).

There were Muslim sectarians such as Kharaji communities as well as Shi'i imamis (twelver Shi'is) and Ismaili Shi'is in the Samanid period. The latter are best known at Nasr II ibn Ahmad's court, where they made many conversions, and Nasr himself was inclined towards them. However, when threatened with revolution from orthodox elements, including the Turks and the ulama, Nasr abdicated in favour of his son Nuh, and Ismailis were massacred throughout the Samanid territories (Treadwell 1991:194). Thus, this period, and Nasr's reign in general, are difficult to promote by Tajikistan today as part of their identity formation, due to their sizeable Ismaili minority, in spite of the reign's great cultural achievements. This might be another reason why all the Samanid achievements are viewed as the output of one ruler, Ismoil Somoni.

Turks within and without the Samanid Empire

The Turks were key in fighting the Arabs during the conquest and did not retreat beyond the Jaxartes, only to return in the 11th century (Frye & Sayili 1943:195). These nomads "were not cultural savages", but had been in close contact with China, Byzantium and east and west Turkestan and "their experience with empire had led to a creation of elaborate imperial ideology" (Golden 1990:349). There

⁸⁷ Just as sacred sites are in Tajikistan today, see below.

were Turks both within⁸⁸ and without the Samanid Empire, ibn Khurdadhbih mentions Turkish cities within Nuh ibn Asad's territory who reigned from Samarqand in 819, and equally the *Fihrist* tells us of Turkish towns in Sogd. One possible reason for Ismail's success in empire-building was that he was able to lead large numbers of Turks from Isfiyab, Ferghana and 'Turkestan'. Treadwell believes that these were an independent force, not part of the governors' regular armies, suggesting "a workable alliance with the Turks" (1991:95). This also implies a more complex relationship with the Turks, in the dynasty's early years, rather than simply converting them or taking them as slaves. This is not what is emphasised by Tajik historians of course. They might do well to remember Balami who in his desire to bring about homogeneity of a disparate population passed over the fighting between Samanids and the Turks in his *Tarikhnama* (Peacock 2007:106ff.).⁸⁹ Isfiyab⁹⁰ province was governed by a powerful Turkish dynasty in the 10th century and enjoyed important privileges including exemption from taxation, indeed they were some of the most powerful provincial rulers, together with the rulers of Shaghanian and Khwarazm.

The use of the Turkish language and cultural influence during the Samanid period is often passed over by historians, (however see Golden 1990, Frye & Sayili 1943, Canfield 1991), and is completely ignored by Tajik scholars, who emphasise the break between the Samanid and later Turkic dynasties (Dodkhudoeva 2007a). There is not much precise evidence about how Turks were converted to Islam. Although al-Kalamati of Nishapur and al Usbanikathi are mentioned in Barthold, it is unclear whether either of them were Sufis or were proselytising the Turks. Equally for all the seemingly incessant Samanid-Qarakhanid border warfare there is a seeming lack of Muslim gains. The Islamisation of the Turks took place through many different means: including war, cultural interchange, trade and social connections (Tor 2009), thus it was not just through war or forced conversions.

Sogdian *dehqans* as well as Turks entered the army (Barthold 1968), showing that this was another important area where the two groups met. The Turko-Sogdian elite were the main influence at the early Abbasid court (de La Vaissière 2007:38ff.), suggesting a material cultural interplay between 'centre' and 'periphery', which quite possibly went in both directions. The Turks provided important support for revolts thought to be exclusively Iranian in character, such as Ustadhsis, Muqanna and Babak. "This fact enhances the thesis by Sayili and Frye regarding the early and active role of the Turks in the Irano-Islamic affairs and it indicates that the *ghulat* movements had deep roots among

⁸⁸ There were Khallukh Turks in the Tukharistan steppes, south of the Samanid Empire (Hudud al-'Alam 1937:108). K.njina Turks in the mountains between Khuttalan and Chaganiyan were "professional thieves and looters of caravans" (1937:120). Kath, capital of Khwarazm is also described as an emporium of the Turks and gate of Ghuz Turkestan (Hudud al Alam 1937:121).

⁸⁹ See Chapter Three.

⁹⁰ Today Isfiyab is known as Sayram (now in Kazakhstan).

the Turks as well as the Iranians” (Daniel 1978:515 see also Frye and Sayili 1943). Thus, the picture of nomadic Turks living on the steppes, outside the settled lands, is probably too simplistic.⁹¹ Frye and Sayili point to sources where Turks are shown living in cities in Transoxiana and Khurasan (1943:199ff.). The ‘St Josse shroud’ (**Fig. 18**) is the only artefact to my knowledge certainly connected to the Turkic population in the Samanid period, although the moon-shaped face occurs in paintings more frequently from 10th century when the Turkish dynasties were in the ascendant,⁹² they do occur exceptionally in the 9th century e.g. in Nishapur paintings (Wilkinson 1974). Having discussed the various audiences in this brief outline, to which this state sponsored material culture was addressed we next turn to the coinage itself.

Samanid coinage

Coins are documents of state and an important way in which rulers legitimise themselves, assuming both political and spiritual authority, communicating directly with their subjects through material culture. As such they can be seen as an Islamic ‘metalanguage’ documenting political changes, inclusions and omissions in coin designs. Elements such as the ruler’s name, caliph’s name and mint are the result of political decisions, equally religious formulas also contain political messages. Coins mark boundaries that were more psychological than geographical, however these coins do mark the territories in which they were minted as being part of the Islamic world⁹³ (Wasserstein 1993:308). Numismatic evidence shows that the four Samanid brothers in the early 9th century considered themselves as a dynasty rather than separate rulers.⁹⁴ From the start of their reign, the Samanids seemed to have sound fiscal sense, and this was in part the basis of their empire’s success. Thus, the Samanid coinage was in a very real way a visual symbol of the dynasty’s power, through its uniformity and high silver content, it was coinage which could be trusted.

⁹¹ As is most interaction of the desert and the sown, e.g. in early Mesopotamia.

⁹² Also, Turkish dress and accoutrements.

⁹³ In this way, Samanid coinage differs from Tajik currency (see Chapter Five), only used within Tajik borders. Samanid currency famously travelled and was hoarded across Eurasia, showing the power of their Empire as well as their silver coinage’s strength and purity.

⁹⁴ See Appendix A. In 819 CE the four brothers, grandsons of Saman khuda, were rewarded for their loyal service to caliph al-Ma’mun (r. 813–33) by being awarded lifelong control four governorships establishing the Samanid dynasty in Transoxania.: Samarqand (Nuh b. Asad), Ferghana (Ahmad b. Asad), Shash and Ustrushana (Yahya b. Asad), Herat (Ilyas b. Asad). Earliest Samanid coins were minted by Nuh. One coin minted at Binket in the state of Yahya, carried Nuh’s name rather than Yahya’s, one piece of evidence for dynastic unity. Also, Nasr’s uncle, Mohammad ibn Nuh, ruler of Chach accepted Nasr as head of the dynasty, minting copper coins in his name (Gafurov 2005).

During the late ninth and early tenth centuries, there was a marked change in the Central Asian monetary system. Dies for Central Asian use between 750-900 CE tended to be produced in the Abbasid mints of Iran and Iraq, thus it was the Abbasids who controlled the flow of coinage and its messages. The local mints, when they were able to produce money, tended to be of poorer quality and orthographic mistakes (Treadwell 2012c). However, the Samanids became the leading coinage producers of dirhams in the Islamic world, while the caliphal coin output first declined and then disappeared altogether (Noonan & Kovalev 2002). Starting at the end of the eighth century, Abbasid silver dirhams were often exported to Russia and the Baltic, however from 890s onwards, hundreds of thousands of Samanid coins were shipped to the same region. This enormous quantity of silver was exchanged with the Volga and Bulghar lands in return for fur and slaves. This shows a large-scale commercial policy, as well as the popularity of these items. The Samanids' monetary system was based on the Abbasid caliphate's⁹⁵ (except the Bukhar Khudat coins – see below), using Arabic script and language as the main communication means, as well as the main design element; there were no pictorial components on Ismaili dirhams. Thus, while the Samanids produced their own coinage, they remained part of the Islamic world, and in their public messages did not revert to pre-Islamic messages or iconography. The use of Arabic script on coins has been linked by Volov (Golombek 1966:108ff & 132) to script as a pre-eminent design element in Samanid ceramics (see below). The quality of design as well as the coin's shape and the purity of its material also communicated a message to the users (Wasserstein 1993:303). However users, no matter their historical time or place did not necessarily take notice of these messages and innovations, seen as banal nationalism (Billig 1995) coins were seen primarily a means of economic exchange (Bacharach 2010).⁹⁶ Samanid coinage, while more unified than some other Central Asian coinage, due to the centralised state (see below), still had many local variations due to economics, politics and local traditions. Coin finds can be compared with mentions of coinage use by early geographers such as ibn Hawqal and Istakhri as well as contemporary historians such as Narshakhi (Davidovich and Dani 2000:392ff.).

The earliest Samanid coins, made out of copper when the Samanids were Tahirid vassals, were issued in the 820s-873. During this period, Abbasid coinage still played an important role in the Central Asian monetary circulation. The second phase of Samanid numismatics, between 873 and 892 CE began with Nasr b. Ahmad who minted silver dirhams in the Samanids' name, following the Tahirid dynasty's collapse. The earliest silver dirham was minted by Nasr I in Samarqand in 274 AH/ 887 CE (Fedorov 2010a:287, quoting Yakubovski 1955). However, Fedorov adds that the Tahirid coinage still played a role in the money circulation in Central Asia at this time.

⁹⁵ These all-caliphate features meant that coins from North Africa, Spain and Afghanistan and Central Asia all had similar characteristics.

⁹⁶ This is equally true I would argue, for Tajikistan today (see below, Chapter Five).

Ismaili dirhams and Bukhar Khudats

The third phase is the regular production of dirhams (**Fig. 12**), which began in 279 AH/892 CE, the first year of Ismail ibn Ahmad's reign. Minting gold coins begun about the same time. Regular production of dirhams continued until the end of 999 CE. Minting gold dinars was the caliph's prerogative (Fedorov 2010a:287), so by minting their own gold coinage, the Samanids were giving an unequivocal signal of their independence to the caliph and to their people. Thus, the numismatic evidence supports what we know of Ismail from other sources, that he was the true dynastic founder. Independence was also symbolised by having their name read out at Friday prayers (*khutba*), which gave recognition of sovereignty and proof of their control, as well as through investiture ceremonies (see below). However, in Samanid Bukhara and Transoxiana, gold coins were a commodity used mainly for rewards and gifts, thus they were seen as treasure rather than every day domestic trade (Davidovich & Dani 2000:392). The early dirhams' high silver content fluctuated within the 89-96% range and average weight corresponds to the official standard of 2.97g. However characteristic of the later group is a lowering of the standard, coupled with a wider fluctuation range and more random deviations from those limits (Davidovich & Dani 2000:397). Thus, the coinage supports what we know of the political situation, where the empire was stronger at the start up to the end of Nasr's reign in the mid-tenth century.

Most Samanid dinars and dirhams were of conventional types, but there are some oversized dirhams struck in the Hindu Kush for local circulation (Mitchiner 1973, Miles 1975:374)⁹⁷ suggesting some expression of regional identity through numismatics. However, in general, the Samanids under Ismail struck regular and abundant quantities of Kufic coins which were known as *Ismaili* after the Samanid ruler, Ismail Samanid. Just as today, the currency in Tajikistan is called Somoni after the same person (see Chapter Five below). Looking at the Samanid numismatic output, it seems that their coinage showed remarkable uniformity over more than forty-seven mints across their empire (see Appendix A) while most mints were in Khurasan and Transoxiana, there are sporadic issues from cities in western Iran, such as Shiraz and Hamadan (Miles 1975:374). This might suggest that dies were centrally produced (as they probably were in the post-reform Umayyad period), one more way in which the Samanids exercised central control, through regulating what was inscribed on the coins, and how many were produced. This also gave the coinage a uniformity, unachievable otherwise. The Samanids seemed to have inaugurated their own coinage unilaterally in 892 CE, without the agreement with the increasingly powerless caliph (Treadwell 2012c). In addition, Fedorov (2010a) gives the main mints for the various rulers (see Appendix A), the list is interesting as it shows the

⁹⁷ These dirhams issued from Pamirs to Gharjistan from 320s – 390s AH (930s – 1000 CE) weighed four times as much as normal dirhams and with a diameter about twice as large (Mitchiner 1973).

Empire's extent, waxing to a high point during Nasr II b. Ahmad's long reign, and waning in the second half of the tenth century, until al-Muntasir (r.1000-1005) was only minting coins in his capital of Bukhara. In the early 10th century, Samanid coins were minted in Samarqand and Chach as well as in Balkh, Nishapur and Andaraba, a town in north-central Afghanistan near the rich Panjhir silver mine.⁹⁸ Because of this and its key location on one of the two main routes across the Hindu Kush to Kabul and India, Andaraba was an area important for the Samanids to control.

One coin from the David Collection minted in Samarqand under Ismail in 282 AH/ 894/895 CE, is a silver dirham of 4.08 grams and measuring 23.0 mm (C385).

⁹⁸ Tor gave an unpublished paper in 2003 called 'Action in Andaraba, c. 900; Or, What Coins from the Andaraba Mint Reveal about the Real State of the Samanid Polity,' where the coins reflect the power struggle between the Banijurids in Balkh the nominal overlord of Andaraba, also the Samanids and the distant Abbasids. <http://ansmagazine.com/Summer04/Islamic> (accessed 20/08/2014).



C 385

Figure 12: Silver dirham of Ismail Samanid (obverse and reverse), belonging to the David Collection Copenhagen C 385, photographer Pernille Klemp.⁹⁹

Obverse Field

la ilah illa / allah wahdahu / la sharik lahu / bakh - “no god but God, unique, He has no associate, excellent”

Margin

bism allah duriba hadha'l dirham bi-samarqand sana ahad wa thamanin wa mi'atayn - “in the name of God this dirham was struck in Samarqand the year one and eighty and two hundred.”

Reverse Field

lillah / muhammad / rasul allah / al-mu'tadid billah / isma'il - “for God Muhammad is the messenger of God, al-Mu'tadid billah, Isma'il”

⁹⁹ Many thanks to the David Collection, for providing me with this image and permission to reproduce it.

Reverse Margin

muhammad rasul allah arsalahu bi'l-huda wa din al-haqq li-yuzhirahu 'ala al-din kullihi wa law kariha al-mushrikun "Muhammad is the messenger of God who sent him with guidance and the religion of truth that he might make it supreme over all other religions, even though the polytheists may detest it." Sura 9 (*al-Tawba*), v. 33

Thus, this coin, known as the 'one-year type', struck only two years into his reign, shows Ismail's moderation. He only places his name under the caliph's name in the reverse field, showing his modest initial claims for the dynasty by omitting the name of his father and thus not underlining dynastic pretensions. Thus, even though the Samanids were independent, in these coins they acknowledged the caliph as their nominal overlord. The coins did not symbolically defy him in ways which would have been understood by their subjects and the caliphs themselves. Ismail also omits the triumphant Sura 30 (*al-Rum*), included by al-Ma'mun after the death of his brother al-Amin in 813/814.¹⁰⁰ Thus together with the high silver content, the inscription on this coin marks a quintessentially pious Islamic amir. We can set this against the creation of a dynastic mausoleum, if indeed the tomb was built by Ismail. Equally, Ismail begun minting gold coins or *dinars*, usually centrally minted by the caliph (following on from Byzantine imperial prerogative), thus proclaiming Samanid independence.

Naskhi script

Most text on Samanid coins is in Kufic but there are early cursive inscriptions of the ruler's name(s). One example is the Samanid dirham minted at Balkh 292/905 (**Fig. 13 left**), showing a cursive signature of Ahmad ibn Muhammad (American Numismatic Society 1927.179.69). There is also Samanid gold dinar minted at Nishapur 340/951 (**Fig. 13 right**) with a cursive signature of Nuh ibn Nasr (American Numismatic Society 1963.173.2). Tabbaa (1994:126 and Note 35) has noted that the earliest examples of the use of *naskhi* script as a public text are on Samanid and early Ghaznavid coins. This stands out as the rest of the inscription was in Kufic lettering, thus he believes it acted as the 'signature' of the ruler.

¹⁰⁰ <http://www.davidmus.dk/en/collections/islamic/dynasties/samanids/coins/c385?show=comment> (Accessed 20/04/2014).



Figure 13: Cursive naskhi script examples. Left: Dirham minted in Balkh 292/905, with cursive signature of Ahmad ibn Muhammad (ANS 1927.179.69). Right: Samanid dinar minted in Nishapur, 340/951. Cursive signature of Nuh ibn Nasr (ANS 1963.173.2). From Tabbaa 1994, Fig. 8.

However the first example (American Numismatic Society 1927.179.69) is slightly more problematic, given by Tabbaa as evidence of the cursive script used for a ruler's name, as it is a coin minted in Balkh by a joint Samanid/ Banijurid authority,¹⁰¹ and it was the Banijurid prince's name, Ahmad ibn Muhammad, which was in cursive script rather than Ismail ibn Ahmad's. Is this an example of a practice which started in a smaller mint, which was more likely to use local customs and non-orthodox dies and was later taken up and used more systematically by the Samanids? Or was the text part of the power struggle between the two dynasties, the Banijurids and their nominal overlords? On another ANS coin 1966.274.4, dated 909-910 both the Banijurid's name Ahmad b. Muhammad and Ahmad b. Ismail's names are in *naskhi* script. However, the practice was later used on a Samanid gold dinar from Nishapur, where just Nuh ibn Nasr's name is in cursive script, thus suggesting that on the most valuable coin material, the cursive script had acquired a new meaning for the Samanids.

This was highlighted as long ago as 1949, Krachkovskaia¹⁰² suggests that the name of Ahmad ibn Ismail the Samanid was written in cursive script on his coins "in order to emphasise the power of the Samanids and their limited dependence on the Caliph" (Krachkovskaia in Grabar 1957:556). Grabar did not know whether this belief could be upheld based on present knowledge, in any case the idea of Central Asia should be broadened to Herat, Ghazna and Rayy. However, it is suggested here that the use of an innovative script in the public realm might have had other messages, it would have highlighted the name of the ruler to the users, underlining his importance, visually, but within an

¹⁰¹ See Treadwell 2012c for a discussion of this.

¹⁰² Krachkovskaia *The evolution of Kufic in Central Asia* (III, 3-27) has surveyed epigraphical material on different media,(in Grabar 1957).

Islamic framework. This script was later to develop to be used on Mahmud of Ghazna's cenotaph dated 1030 CE (see Tabbaa 1994: fig 9), underlining its connection to royal power.¹⁰³

Bukhar Khudat coins

Together with these Kufic dirhams, there was also a quite different type circulating in the Samanid Empire, the Bukhar Khudat or black dirham (**Fig. 14**), based on the Sasanian king Bahram V's coins (420-438) (Treadwell 2007, Fedorov 2010b). On the obverse is the king's head in profile wearing a merloned crown, with globe above. On the reverse a fire altar has a crowned head in profile above it. Two sentinels holding spears usually stand either side of the altar. Fedorov believes that some earlier Bukhar Khudat coins showed individualised ruler's portraits¹⁰⁴ (Fedorov 2010b). Coeval caliphs are not mentioned on the black dirhams in the Samanid period as they are on the Ismaili dirhams. The omission of the caliph underlines the different functionality as well as these coins' distinct aesthetic.

IMAGE REMOVED FOR COPYRIGHT REASONS

Figure 14: Arabo-Sogdian drachms, prototypes of the Samanid Bukhar Khudat coins, From Fedorov 2010b, Figs. 8-9.

¹⁰³ Or can it be linked to Tokharistan/ Khurasan rather than Transoxiana?

¹⁰⁴ Bukhar khudat Kana in the time of Abu Bakr (632-634), this is also reported in Narshakhi that the Bukhar khudat Kana had ordered his image to be depicted on his coins (Fedorov 2010b:32, see also Fedorov 2007).

Contemporary written sources (Narshakhi, Gardizi, ibn Hawqal) distinguish three types of Bukhar khudat coins: Musayyabi, Muhammadi and Ghitrifi dirhams. This low denomination currency was produced in three mints; Bukhara, Samarqand and Chach, but circulation was mainly restricted to Bukhara¹⁰⁵ where the population had become so accustomed to it they did not want to give it up. Thus, we can see the use of this coinage as a kind of reflective nostalgia, where history is meditated upon and brought into the present (Boym 2007).

Bukhar Khudat coins were usually used as a money of account to fulfil written contracts (Treadwell 2007:33 and especially 34-35). It is noteworthy that this bilingual coinage had inscriptions in Sogdian and Kufic, showing one area where the Sogdian language continued to be displayed in the public realm, perhaps because of the conservative nature of these coins' designs? Transoxiana was the exception to the rest of Greater Iran,¹⁰⁶ which by end of 8th century had discontinued figural coinage, with caliphal coinage becoming ubiquitous. In Transoxiana figural coins continued to circulate alongside locally struck caliphal dirhams throughout the Samanid period well into the Qarakhanid (11-13th centuries), and it seems that their use in 9-10th century even increased.¹⁰⁷ This can possibly be compared to the possible resurgence of pre-Islamic ceramic designs and Iranian feeling (see below and Chapter Three).

Treadwell believes that this coinage in the 10th century was a low value denomination of restricted circulation whose monetary function resembled Samanid copper coinage more closely, rather than Samanid dirhams. As such he believes the Bukhar Khudat coins did not play a role in 10th century taxation, (Treadwell 2007:34), and thus after Ismail, it was Ismaili dirhams which were the most important Samanid coinage, throughout the 10th century. However, Fedorov believes conversely that it was Bukhar Khudat coins which were the main currency of domestic exchange, with Ismaili coins going north in foreign trade. He supports this with saying that hoards of Samanid dirhams are quite rare in the Samanid Empire's territory (Fedorov 2010b:38, see also Davidovich and Dani 2000:397). If this is true, the preference for debased local currency over caliphal silver coins in Transoxanian cities contributes to the idea that local culture, autonomy and geographical identification did not vanish after the Arab conquest but continued for several centuries. This tradition of debased local coinage was a continual of Sogdian traditions (e.g. de La Vaissière 2005:290ff.). This discussion is useful for our

¹⁰⁵ Possibly because the Bukhara mint only came into operation half a century after the first Samanid dirhams were struck? Different varieties of Bukhar Khudat coins circulated in different areas. In Bukharan Sogd ghitrifi coins circulated, Samarqandian Sogd – muhammadi coins, and in Ustrushana, Ferghana and the 'Turk towns of the Syr Darya' – musayyabi coins circulated (Fedorov 2010b:29ff.).

¹⁰⁶ I.e. Khwarazm, Sistan and Tabaristan retained pre-Islamic coinage in the 8th century, long after the rest of Iran had adopted the aniconic coinage of the Marwanid caliph 'Abd al-Malik b. Marwan (end 7th century) (Treadwell 2007:25).

¹⁰⁷ Like figural Danishmendid, Zendid and Artuqid copper coins (Wasserstein 1993:315).

purposes as it has a bearing on whether it was the pictorial coinage with the pre-Islamic iconography or the Islamic Kufic coinage which was used in the centre of the Samanid Empire, and whether this differed from that used at its periphery, or beyond the Empire's limits. Copper coins were secular objects of everyday use, exchanged between races and religions and were less likely to conform to conventional taboos and the Muslim expression of faith was more likely to be absent compared to silver and gold coinage which was the more political manifestation of rulers expressing their *ghazi* status (Wasserstein 1993:316).

We also know that idols continued to be sold in the market in Bukhara during the Samanid period, suggesting that the population of the Samanid Empire was not as strictly Muslim as its rulers (see above). Ismail had removed the Bukhar Khudat, Abu Muhammad and other influential members of Bukharan society, as a way of strengthening his power base, as well as assuming the Bukhar Khudat's lands at the start of 10th century (Barthold 1968, Kennedy 2010:80). Thus, perhaps Ismail was trying to claim legitimacy by means of these coins, by suggesting a continuation of rulership rather than any absolute break. Alternatively, by connecting the high silver content coins to his own name and having the Bukhar Khudat coins represent the low value denominations, perhaps Ismail was giving a subtle message of the respective places in the hierarchy of the coins as well as those they represented. However in the same way as Tajik currency today (see Chapter Five), it is the images and messages on the lower denominations which are more likely to be seen in everyday contexts, thus facilitating their communication to a wider audience than those messages on high denomination coins which might not circulate so widely. Use of the Bukhar Khudat's imagery on coins can perhaps be compared to the Samanid amir, Ahmad ibn Nuh dismantling the Bukhar Khudat's palace at Varakhsha and taking the wood to Bukhara as spolia to build a palace outside the citadel gates (see Chapter Three), thereby showing the Samanid power over the material goods of the old pre-Islamic rulers, reusing the old material culture in a way that suited them.

A bronze weight with a certificate of accuracy by Ismail (Gafurov 2011: Vol. 2: 67),¹⁰⁸ links to the story about Ismail's justice in regulation of weights, for example he sent an official to Rayy to investigate charges of use of illegal weights in the city's markets (**Fig. 15**). The weights were used to measure out precious materials for the city's taxes, however Ismail discovered that they were too heavy, and thus taxpayers were paying more than they should. He rectified this, thereby demonstrating his justice (Mirkhwand in Frye 1975a:140).

¹⁰⁸ Originally published by Dyakonov 1940, I could not find this reference or information about the weight's current whereabouts.



Figure 15: Bronze weight with the name of Ismail Samanid.

Medallion of Mansur ibn Nuh (961-976 CE)

The silver medallion (**Figs. 16 and 17**) produced in Bukhara for the Samanid amir Mansur b. Nuh and dated 968-969 CE (Treadwell 1999, 2003) is a major find,¹⁰⁹ although purchased on the art market. It shows a contemporary portrait of a Samanid king, thus shedding light on how this ruler depicted himself.¹¹⁰ It was probably a donative coin, intended for distribution during the Nowruz festivities (Treadwell 2012a:6). It is suggested that this coin was purely for the eyes of his inner circle, part of

¹⁰⁹ Apart from the weight above, the medallion is the only object directly ascribed to a Samanid ruler, although see Ghouhani 1998, for a small gold jug supposedly made for the Samanid ruler Abu 'l-zafar Nuh b. Nasr (942-954), now in the Reza Abbasi Museum, Teheran. It is considered here that this is a fake, and so is not discussed further due to limits of space.

¹¹⁰ The cast silver coin is 10 g in weight approx., is pierced and shows some signs of wear, however all the inscriptions are legible (Treadwell 1999).



Figure 16: Medallion of Mansur ibn Nuh, 968-69 CE (obverse), reproduced with permission of the Visitors of the Ashmolean Museum¹¹¹

the tradition of praising the ruler by comparing them to ancient Iranian figures versified in poems by Rudaki and Daqiqi.¹¹² It must be seen in relation to the vast Samanid numismatic output, which never includes pre-Islamic iconography or titulature, and always refers to the amirs in traditional Islamic terms (Treadwell 1999). This medallion does not change Peacock's view of the Samanids as Islamic rather than Iranian rulers as far as they were seen by the world beyond the court (Peacock

¹¹¹ With thanks to Dr Luke Treadwell for providing me with this image. The Ashmolean medallion is correctly published in Treadwell 1999. However, the captions to Treadwell 2003 figs 15.1 & 15.2 are mixed up, where Rukn al-dawla medallion is shown in 15.1, Fig 15.2 shows Mansur ibn Nuh medallion (top) and the two obverse sides of the Bukhara dirham of 336 (bottom).

¹¹² E.g. Arberry 1954, Lazard 1964, Lazard 1975, Safa et al 1964 and Williams Jackson 1920.

2007:48ff.). It was only in the 10th century, when the caliphate was in decline and smaller dynasties seized power that figural coinage became more common, and Treadwell believes that this portrait must be interpreted together with similar Buyid portrait medallions (Treadwell 1999, 2003 and pers comm.). The obverse of the Mansur ibn Nuh medallion shows a bust in profile of an imposing royal figure facing to the right, with his shoulders in full face.¹¹³ His distinctive physiognomy includes long hair falling to the neck and a forward-facing curl in front of the ear. The inscription includes the title *xwarrah afzut / shahanshah* or 'King of Kings' is used, inscribed in Pahlavi script to the right of the king's bust as well as a standard Arabic inscription on the reverse citing the Muslim profession of faith as well as Mansur's title *al-Malik al-Muzaffar* (the King to whom victory is given) (Treadwell 1999 Fig 1). One inscription on the reverse encircles the edge of the coin, while the other forms a square in the centre, possibly alluding to the square holes in Sogdian/ Chinese coins (Kamoliddin 2006).

¹¹³ Like the Bukhar Khudat coins, (see above).



Figure 17: Medallion of Mansur ibn Nuh, 968-69 CE (reverse), reproduced with permission of the Visitors of the Ashmolean Museum¹¹⁴

The royal figure on Mansur's medallion displays a marked resemblance to silver coins struck by the Hephthalite rulers of Bactria in the 6th and 7th centuries CE. The wings above the crown, and particularly the profile bust with its arresting facial features, prominent nose, heavy lidded eye, receding chin, are shared by both iconographic types. These correspondences suggest that the designer of the Bukharan medallion modelled it on a Hephthalite coin of the Nizak Malik type

¹¹⁴ With thanks to Luke Treadwell for providing me with this image. Please see Footnote 112 above.

(Treadwell 2012a:6). Did the Samanid amir who commissioned the piece mean to acknowledge connection with the Hephthalite¹¹⁵ royal line with which his ancestors were affiliated? The Nizak Malik iconography has a buffalo¹¹⁶ head above the winged crown as its most prominent feature as well as 'sun-wheels' above the heads of attendants on the reverse. A Pahlavi legend also appears on the obverse (Vondrovec 2010:169), meaning that there was some precedence for this iconography appearing with a Pahlavi script. However, while the Mansur ibn Nuh's crown might have wings above it, I cannot make out any buffalo head, which would incontrovertibly link the medallion with the Nizak Malik coinage. In this respect, the Bukharan medallion of Mansur ibn Nuh represents, in Treadwell's view, "a suggestive yet enigmatic, perspective on the way that the Samanid monarchs chose to display themselves. For even though the Samanid family also claimed to have inherited the Iranian dynastic legacy, the bust on this medallion derives not from an Iranian but an 'eastern' (Turkic?) tradition of portraiture. This suggests that Mansur was appealing to an audience of different cultural and perhaps ethnic orientation than that which Rukn al-Dawla was addressing." (Treadwell 1999:10).

The iconography of this medallion is quite dissimilar, both in physical features and regalia, to the Sasanian royal iconography shown in a Buyid medallion of Rukn al-Dawla. However, both the Samanid medallion and the Buyid medallion of Rukn al-Dawla cast six years previously in 351/962 have the title '*shahanshah*' in Pahlavi as well as an Arabic inscription. Treadwell believes that through an analysis of the lettering and the medallion's material, that the same craftsman was used for both medallions (Treadwell 1999). It is fascinating, if true, that both dynasties would use the same craftsman for their coinage, who have produced very different designs. Thus, it would show the power of the ruler to commission his image as he desired, rather than the craftsman's cultural or ethnic affiliation affecting his designs. It is suggested that the use of the same craftsman would also underline the Samanid-Buyid power struggle.

Mansur ibn Nuh adopted this Sasanian title in 358 AH/ 968 CE probably in response to the challenge represented by Rukn al-Dawla's medallion, a rival Mansur considered his inferior due to the annual tribute Rukn al-Dawla paid to Bukhara through much of his reign. However, unlike the latter, Mansur restricted this title's use to his courtly circle. "While the Buyids showed little hesitation in casting themselves as kings and emperors, the Samanid's reluctance to do likewise must have arisen, at

¹¹⁵ See Treadwell 2012a:6 for his hypothesis that the Samanids might be Hephthalites, partly based on his interpretation of the medallion and his belief that the Samanid homeland was in Balkh, possibly near the castle of the last Hephthalite ruler, Tarkhan Nizak. In the present author's opinion, this needs further supporting evidence. In the Khulbuk wall paintings the figures have Hephthalite dress. (Maitdinova 1999). Rustam, the hero of the *Shahnama* was a Hephthalite; in the Penjikent wall paintings (c.740), he is shown completely differently from the prevailing ideals of Sogdian art, having a narrow skull, 'V shaped' eyebrows, hooked nose and heavy jaw, which closely resembles the Khingila's portraits (c.460-490) (Grenet 2002b).

¹¹⁶ The ribbed horns mean the animal was a buffalo rather than bull or Zebu (Vondrovec 2010:169).

least in part from their longstanding record as pious *ghazi* warriors, upon whose shoulders the mantle of kingship, a concept regarded with deep suspicion in the early Muslim world, never sat comfortably” (Treadwell 2003:330).

Treadwell has interpreted the inscriptions on two Samanid coins, the medallion of Mansur ibn Nuh and a coin of his father Samanid amir Nuh ibn Nasr (943-954 CE), known as the ‘Bukhara dirham of 336’¹¹⁷ as displaying the rulers’ desire for legitimisation (Treadwell 2003:325). Nuh only called himself ‘*malik*’ or king in the same year that he was usurped by a pretender supported by the Abbasid caliph. Treadwell believes that his adoption of the title “was clearly a tactic designed to underline his claim to the throne, when to all intents and purposes, he was no longer ruler” (Treadwell 2003:330). However, Nuh’s successors made only intermittent use of this title on their coinage.

This hypothesis has been taken up by the Uzbek historian Shamsiddin Kamoliddin who believes the portrait’s iconography has close parallels with portraits of Turkic governors of Tokharistan, Kabul and Gandhara of the 7th – 8th centuries CE. “But almost full similarity with the medallion of Mansur ibn Nuh are... two memorable medallions issued by the Turkic Qaghans in the first quarter of the VII century AD.”¹¹⁸ Thus this medallion’s interpretation has become part of the politicisation of history between Tajikistan and Uzbekistan (see Chapter Five), as this Uzbek historian interprets the Samanids having Turkic ancestors from the Turkic Yabghu of Tokharistan¹¹⁹ on the basis of this medallion.

Thus, it seems that the Samanids were endeavouring to reach multiple audiences with this medallion, with texts and image an ‘ethnic mismatch’. Equally, Mansur depicted himself as both *malik* and *shahanshah*. Alternatively, it can be seen as a symbol of a more syncretistic society than the Ismaili caliphal dirhams would suggest? This fusion of cultures was common, at least in the preceding period, with the Hephthalites also using different scripts in different areas. When the Arabs first conquered Iran, and started to mint their own dirhams, they also rendered their names in the Pahlavi script, but always added on the outer margin of the obverse a pious legend in Kufic (Miles 1975:364). Thus, right from the beginning, these two languages were used, showing their different functionality, religious and secular.

¹¹⁷ This coin is interesting as it has one of the earliest instances of the public adoption of the term *al-malik* (king) by an Islamic ruler (Treadwell 2003:324).

¹¹⁸ For the paper abstract http://www.naheer-osten.uni-muenchen.de/isap/isap_conference_2014/abstracts/index.html (accessed 21/07/2014). Kamoliddin has also made the unsubstantiated claim that modern Uzbeks are descended from sedentarised proto-Turks, the indigenous population of Central Asia before the Indo-Europeans’ arrival (Kamoliddin 2006, Laruelle 2010). See Chapter Five.

¹¹⁹ This dynasty was founded by Tardu-Shad, the son of the Turkic *qaghan* Tun Yabghu.

Material cultural exchange and display of power

Similar to donative medals, which linked the ruler with members of his court, clothing and textiles used in domestic and courtly settings were a form of capital and could represent considerable wealth as well as a highly visual way of displaying identity (e.g. Golombek 1988:28ff., Marsham 2009:83, 139-141). As other minor dynasties, the Samanids' relations with the caliph were also marked by exchange of material culture, of symbolic and real monetary value: investiture documents¹²⁰ and robes of honour from the caliph,¹²¹ and gifts from the Samanids.¹²² From 910 CE, they were also able to offer the caliphs quantities of furs from their trade to the north-west, which also must have been a symbol of conspicuous consumption.

Like the Iranian *Shahanshah*, al-Mutasim and later caliphs gave senior commanders and courtiers crowns and belts. This shows us that the ritual's forms "appear to reflect the continued importance of Iranian heritage in Abbasid political culture...[this was necessary] "to integrate the Turkish and Transoxanian 'outsiders' into the imperial elite and the tendency of the caliphs to assert their power through elaborate ceremonial as their military and political power declined" (Marsham 2009:257). Thus here we have a merging of the Islamic and Iranian rituals of power: ritual ideas do not just emanate from the Islamic centre,¹²³ due to the powerful provincial holders of Iranian heritage such as the Samanids in Khurasan and Transoxiana as well as members of those populations living and operating at the caliphal centres of Baghdad and Samarra. Only when the Abbasid caliphs moved to Samarra did the practice of presenting robes of honour take place as described by the chroniclers, such as the robing of the Afshin (Sourdel 2001:137 and Appendix C).

Since Mauss (1923 [1967]), anthropologists have understood the socio-political importance behind these reciprocal exchanges. More recently Appadurai has discussed the social life of things (see also Chapter One), where "[v]alue is embodied in commodities that are exchanged. Focussing on the

¹²⁰ The Samanid state received recognition in 875 when the caliph al-Mu'tamid sent the investiture for all of Transoxiana to Nasr b. Ahmad in opposition to Ya'qub b. Layth's claims (Frye 1975a:137).

¹²¹ When Tahir ibn al-Hussain became amir, he confirmed districts on the Samanids and gave a robe of honour to Nuh ibn Asad (Narshakhi 1954). When Ismail was victorious over the Husain ibn Tahir, he captured seventy men, on their release he gave them cotton garments, presumably a sign of his magnanimity (Narshakhi 1954:89). Nizam al Mulk writing in 1092 describes how clothing and fabric were used to indicate rank in the Samanid court (quoted in Baker 1986:63).

¹²² For example, by Ismail sending extravagant gifts to the caliph to mark his successful *jihad* against the Turks in 893 CE (Tor 2009: Note 16). The Samanids also sent annual gifts for the poor of Mecca and Medina (Nizam al-Din 1929 in Treadwell 1991:286: Note 69).

¹²³ Since the Umayyad period, caliphal symbols of power were the signet ring, sceptre or rod and the cloak, the former which date back ultimately to ancient Near Eastern symbols of rulership 'the ring and rod' (Marsham 2009:109ff. & 314).

things that are exchanged rather than simply on the forms or functions of exchange, makes it possible to argue that what creates the link between exchange and value is *politics*, construed broadly” (1986:3 original emphasis). Thus, value is not inherent in objects, it is a judgement by subjects as to how much they are desired. Economic objects exist in the space between pure desire and immediate enjoyment and this desire is overcome by economic exchange. And it is this exchange which is the source of value, “setting the parameters of utility and scarcity” (Simmel 1907 in Appadurai 1986:3). Donative textiles fulfil many roles displaying conspicuous consumption, and favour which money could not (always) buy; thus, making the objects even more desirable.

Gift exchange was part of ritual communication acts that recognised both caliph and Samanid ruler as rightful, divinely favoured and blessed by God. They proclaimed, together with the caliph’s name on coinage and read out at Friday prayers, that the independent Samanid ruler was still part of the Islamic *oecumene*. The investiture documents were usually post-facto recognition of reality on the ground, (or wishful thinking)¹²⁴ written in Arabic language and script. From late Umayyad times literacy grew in the articulation of caliphal power,¹²⁵ just as the ruler’s name and other information was on the coinage, where the Arabic script was the medium inscribing the power of the message. Robes of honour were originally worn by the ruler, and given to another, the Arabic word is *khil’a*, which literally means ‘cast-off’.¹²⁶ There is also a reference in Tabari to a crown given by the Caliph al-Mu’tadid to Ismail ibn Ahmad in 288/901 (Tabari III, p 2204), however Madelung does not think that this is significant, as in that period, caliphs even honoured generals with crowns (1969: Note 3). However, for the ritual to have value, it must mean that it was uncommon, otherwise the caliph himself would be lessened by it. Whoever the crown was given to, it must have been a special circumstance.

¹²⁴ The Caliph sent an investiture for Khurasan from the pass of Hulwan, not only covering Khurasa but also the regions of Transoxiana, Turkestan, Sind, Hind and Gurgan (Narshakhi 1954), however the reality is that the Muslims did not control Sind, let alone Hind.

¹²⁵ Literacy was part of effective apparatus of empire, where Arab tribal custom developed into a fully imperial ceremonial (Marshall 2009:11).

¹²⁶ By the 10th century, these robes were rarely cast-offs. However, use of the term continued, suggesting the symbolic idea that the regional ruler derived power and identity from an item once worn by the caliph (Sanders 2006).

Description of the Chinese Embassy¹²⁷

The colourful description below (see Appendix A) comes from the *Kitab adh-dhakha'ir wa t-tuhaf* of Qadi Abu I-Husain Ahmad b. az-Zubair on the Emperor of China's embassy to the Samanid Amir Nasr b. Ahmad in the year 939 CE (Hamidullah 1959 in Bosworth 1977, XXII: 2-5). It tells us how the Samanid Amir Nasr b. Ahmad at the highpoint of Samanid influence demonstrated his own power to the neighbouring Chinese Emperor's envoy, thus rejecting Chinese overlordship.¹²⁸ The description helps us flesh out the historical sources and if true, enriches our understanding of how material culture displayed power in Samanid times. The presence of the lions was designed to strike fear and confusion in the hearts of the Chinese envoys (see Shalem 2006:223ff.), and their position next to the king who had no fear of them demonstrated very clearly his power, as master of the animals. I have quoted this account at length in Appendix A as it is interesting for a number of reasons, firstly because it suggests not just how the Samanid amirs used their armies to demonstrate power, but also their use of wild animals, as a true 'master of the animals' of ancient heritage. The text also shows the richness of their material culture, which has only survived in written texts and how that was used to demonstrate power and show allegiance and identity. The decoration of audience halls were made to be seen, and were probably part of the overall image programme of the ruler. The audience hall consists of the architecture, floors and walls as well as the 'soft architecture' of textiles and furniture and other material objects, such as ceramics.

*The Amir himself was seated on a gilded throne, encrusted with jewels and wearing his crown. He had over him a quilted coverlet (duwwaj) made from the plumes of pheasants, which had an exterior covering of black silk stiffened with gold thread. From beneath this quilt, two of the wild beasts, in crouching positions, peeped out.*¹²⁹

The pre-Islamic Sogdians are well known for their textiles (e.g. Compareti 2006, Kagayama 2006), and cloth was very important for the Bukhara economy. In the Islamic period Zandaniji cloths from Zandana village¹³⁰ were very famous and fine and were exported as far afield as India and Iraq. Bukhara's tiraz factory even supplied hazel coloured robes for the use of the caliph himself. "There was not a king, amir, chieftain or functionary who did not wear cloths of this material [*zandaniji*], made

¹²⁷ See Appendix A for the text.

¹²⁸ It is believed that this unique manuscript (c.1070) was authored by a Shii from Buyid Iraq. Bosworth suggests that as the geographical and topographical account is accurate, possibly that of the Samanids' military forces and ceremonial might be true or partially true (Bosworth 1977).

¹²⁹ See Appendix A for whole quotation.

¹³⁰ Contrary to a widely held opinion Zandaji silks were seemingly not of pre-Islamic Sogdian origin (Marshak 2006 in <http://www.iranicaonline.org/articles/sogdiana-vi-sogdian-art> (accessed 20/08/2014).

in red, white and green colours” (Narshakhi 1954:20).¹³¹ We also know that taxes were paid in cloths (Frye 1965:31). Thus, we can imagine that textiles, along with other material objects, were an important part of the Samanid court and their projection of power. These cloths have not survived, however due to its being kept in a French church, the textile known as the St Josse shroud has come down to us.

St Josse shroud¹³²

The so-called “shroud of Saint-Josse” in the Louvre (**Fig. 18**) is a fragmentary silk showing confronted and richly caparisoned elephants, Bactrian camels and cockerels in the corners. It has an inscription in Arabic in Kufic script invoking glory and prosperity on the Turkish commander, Abu Mansur Bukhtekin, the Khurasan governor under the Samanid ruler Abd al-malik ibn Nuh (r. 954-961).

IMAGE REMOVED FOR COPYRIGHT REASONS

Figure 18: St Josse shroud, Musée du Louvre, Paris © Louvre

He was arrested and executed by the Samanid ruler in 961 CE, which we know from ibn al-Athir (Edition Tornberg, VIII in Migeon 1922), giving a *terminus ante quem*. Blair believes that elephants in the 10th century were a symbol of royal power,¹³³ and thus “both the image and the inscription suggest the textile represents a usurpation of power and declaration of independence” (Blair 1992:112) by the Turkish governor whose name incidentally means ‘camel’ ‘prince’. It was probably one of many

¹³¹ Red, white and green are also the colours of the Tajik and Iranian flags and are seen as Aryan colours.

¹³² <http://www.louvre.fr/oeuvre-notices/suaire-de-saint-josse-0> (accessed 20/08/2014).

¹³³ But they rarely appear elsewhere in Samanid iconography, e.g. ceramics (see below) although they appeared in Sogdian wall paintings, e.g. in Varakhsha see Shishkin 1963 Plates 6-10.

identical pieces which have not survived, made as a saddlecloth for the commander's troops. It was extremely time-consuming to set up a drawloom to weave this complicated design in seven colours, but multiple copies would have spread cost more evenly (Esposito 2000:225). Bloom imagines "that Abu Mansur Bukhtekin showed his power by having all his troops decked out with matching saddle cloths proclaiming his name and titles" (Bloom 2012:108). Could this textile be material evidence of the growing power of the Turks (see above), and suggesting why he was killed? However beautiful and interesting, pieces like St Josse textile are unique, the largest corpus of extant material is the ceramics, which is an exceptional record, wide-ranging in both styles and quality, of how non-courtly people in the Samanid era possibly conceived and displayed their identity.

Ceramics: non-courtly Samanid material culture

Slip-painted¹³⁴ ceramics¹³⁵ from Khurasan and Transoxiana during 9-10th centuries are known as 'Samanid' in the literature as their distribution matches their empire's geographical area and rough timespan.¹³⁶ They are justly famous, including some of the finest Islamic ceramics from any period, highlights of worldwide museum collections, including those in Uzbekistan and Iran. They are also found in Tajik museums, but these do not rank among the 'finest' examples, assessed art historically (see Chapter Five below). The assured 9th century ceramics styles were a sudden development from the preceding era which did not focus on glazed ceramic production. However, there was no feeling of hesitation.¹³⁷ Many of these motifs were innovations of the period and show a remarkable inventiveness and novelty, not linked either to pre-Islamic forms or motifs found on contemporary metalware (Grabar 1992b:12ff., Grabar 1983: 11-12). Most famous are the epigraphic plates with wide rims, but the most common shape is the straight steep-sided bowl (**Fig. 19**).

¹³⁴ Slip-painted ware used diluted clay solutions coloured with various mineral pigments ranging from black to brown, red and white. The advantage of underglazing meant colours were less likely to run when fired under a clear lead glaze. The vessels, without exception, were made of buff or red earthenware. Samanid potters well understood the properties of different pigments used to colour slip (Pancaroglu 2007). Slip painting was an innovation of the Samanid period.

¹³⁵ See Bulliet 1992, Daneshvari 2005, Grube 1994, Morgan 1994, Fehérvári 1973, 2000, Grabar 1972, Pancaroglu 2006, 2007 and 2013, Raby 1986, Sokolovskaia & Rougeulle 1992, Vishnevskaya 1998, Volov (Golombek) 1966, Watson 2004, Wilkinson 1974, Williamson 1987.

¹³⁶ Just as the architecture there is no absolute break however between the Samanid and subsequent Qarakhanid/ Ghaznavid periods.

¹³⁷ Hillenbrand believes "this immediate maturity is puzzling" (1999:50) but argues that this could be because sculpture and monumental painting were curtailed, so artists and patrons turned to a form of artistic expression which was Islamically 'safer' (1999). In the Sogdian period, wall paintings were commissioned by a broad section of population in Penjikent (Marshak 2002a). Thus, the aesthetic of pictorial decoration was important across society and not the preserve of the rich, which would translate well, arguably, to ceramic decoration.

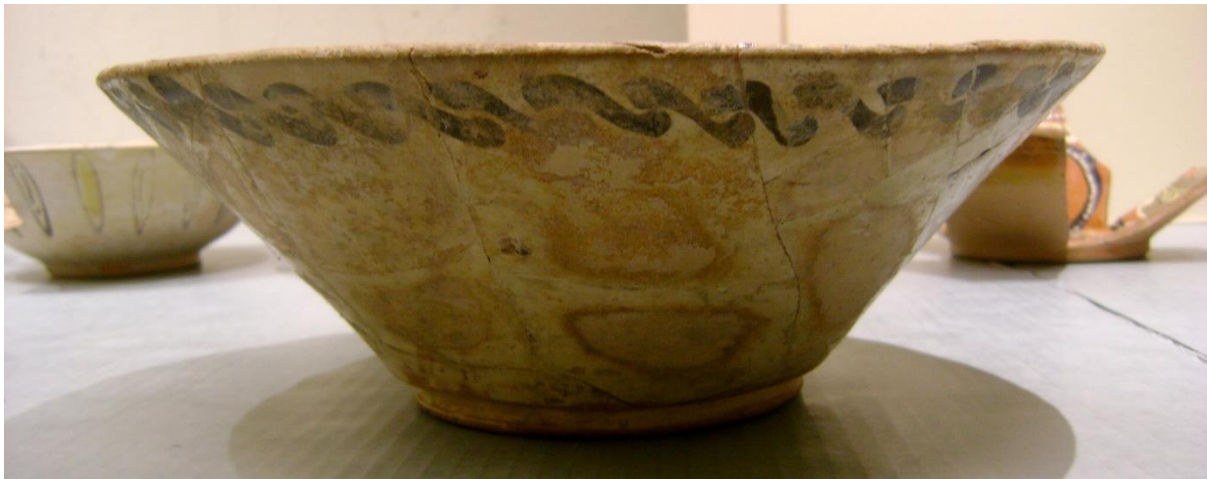


Figure 19: Straight steep sided bowl with black wave shapes on rim, Nishapur, Metropolitan Museum of Arts, 68.223.2, 10th century

The decoration is finest on the bowls' interiors, whereas the exterior of all types is either blank or cursorily decorated, like the bowl above, thus designs would be covered when the plate was full, gradually revealing themselves as the plate emptied and food was shared. Jugs and jars are also found but are not common. Various influences were at work on Samanid ceramics, such as the lusterware of Abbasid Iraq¹³⁸ (**Fig. 20**) and the green splashed Samarra ware¹³⁹ as well as polychrome figural depictions of pre-Islamic Sasanian royal themes and animals (**Fig. 21**), with a painting style which can be linked to Sogdian wall painting, with dark outlines to figures.¹⁴⁰ Chinese splashware was thought to be another influence on Samanid ceramics, however this is now contested in the literature.¹⁴¹ If there was any influence from Chinese porcelain styles, then this was probably via Iraq.

¹³⁸ We know Abbasid lusterware was imported as it was found at Nishapur, e.g. Metropolitan Museum 40.170.27. However, the skilled Samanid potters could not reproduce monochrome lusterware, producing non-lustrous imitations in slip decoration. E.g. B60P1859 Asian Art Museum San Francisco [http://searchcollection.asianart.org/view/objects/asitem/search\\$0040/0/title-asc/designation-asc?t:state:flow=bb9018a3-64e7-4765-867b-1c3c6f00497a](http://searchcollection.asianart.org/view/objects/asitem/search$0040/0/title-asc/designation-asc?t:state:flow=bb9018a3-64e7-4765-867b-1c3c6f00497a) (accessed 20/10/2012).

¹³⁹ For example, Metropolitan Museum 39.40.10, found in Nishapur, (9-10th century CE).

¹⁴⁰ Wall paintings from Penjikent also influenced Samarran wall painting, where the treatment of drapery, including double spiral folds and cape are similar (Azarpay 1981: Fig 34).

¹⁴¹ E.g. David Collection Inv. no. 2/1965.

<http://www.davidmus.dk/en/collections/islamic/dynasties/samanids/art/21965> (Accessed 20/10/2012). The museum catalogue suggests that influence came via Abbasid Iraq rather than directly from China. It is questioned whether the predominantly funerary T'ang splashwares influenced Samanid ceramics, also as they fell from use in mid-8th century, whereas splashed ware designs were common throughout 10th century Iran.

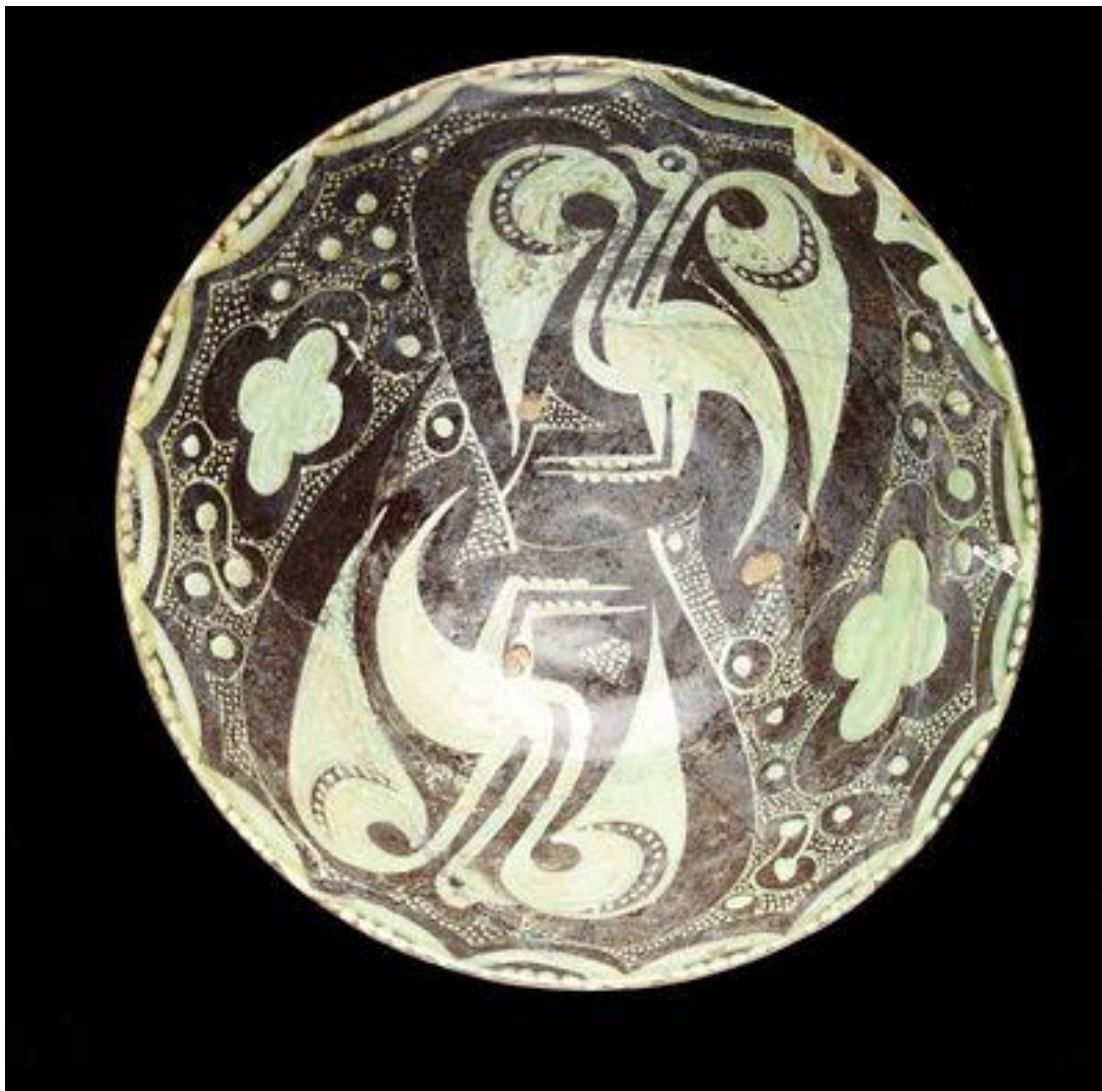


Figure 20: Imitation Abbasid lusterware, VAM C.199-1956, Eastern Iran, probably Nishapur, 9-10th century © Victoria and Albert Museum

<http://www.iranicaonline.org/articles/art-in-iran-vii-islamic-pre-safavid> (accessed 12/02/2013). See also Watson 2004:199 for an outline of the current state of research: he believes the influences are still inconclusive.



Figure 21: 'Nishapur polychrome ware' Nishapur, 10th century, Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, Rogers Fund, 1938, Accession Number 38.40.290 © Metropolitan Museum of Art

There were also innovations, most famously the epigraphic style with expressions of good wishes or aphorisms in Arabic language and Arabic Kufic script¹⁴² usually inscribed around the rim of the dish

¹⁴² Many inscriptions are blessings and prosperity on the owner. Aphorisms on generosity are also common e.g. 'The valorous one gives not only in prosperity, but in adversity and prosperity alike'. Also, other types of virtuous conduct are discussed e.g. 'He who is patient will prevail', 'The thankful eater is comparable to the patient faster',

(Fig. 22), a style linked to Samarqand and Nishapur, these are usually brownish or purplish black slip on white, sometimes with the addition of tomato red. The white slip-painted ware,¹⁴³ often undecorated apart from the script, has no *horror vacui*, or fear of the empty space, so common in Islamic art, (Ettinghausen 1979). Thus, there is a completely different aesthetic from the buffware and Abbasid ceramics, the bevelled style seen on various media or the *hazar baf* brick style of the Samanid Mausoleum. The epigraphic style shows the potters' creative range, as they produced bold and rhythmic designs on the surface of pots. At least one type, the plaited Kufic has been analysed in detail (Golombek [Volov] 1966). Calligraphy was the most prestigious artform in Islamic culture and its use relates directly back to the Qur'an itself.¹⁴⁴ In spite of most of the population being illiterate, the script linked Khurasan and Transoxiana to the wider Islamic world, and mirrored script being used on the coins already in circulation as well as on architecture, which was also beginning to have Islamic inscriptions in Arabic script as a form of 'Islamic' identity.

However, the text on ceramics is not specifically Islamic in nature, unlike architecture, which often references a Quranic verse or hadith. The choice of Arabic script on the black and white ware could be an aesthetic rather than a religious choice, possibly linked with the pre-eminence of Arabic script on coinage (Golombek [Volov] 1966:108ff and 132).

which we can imagine on a dining receptacle, also '*Knowledge is bitter to taste at first, but in the end it is sweeter than hone'y*'. Serving food was a fundamental act of generosity conceptualised as ethical conduct and linked to *adab* authors such as al-Ghazali (d.1111). Sharing food was made more meaningful by the proverbs, and vice versa, the proverbs' messages were intensified by the action of eating together. Possibly the meanings on the bowls fits with them being used in *majlis* or *soirées* (Pancaroğlu 2006).

¹⁴³ Al Jahiz compares whiteness with the moon (Pancaroğlu 2007).

¹⁴⁴ Scholars are divided as to whether Samanid epigraphic pottery is linked to Abbasid epigraphic pottery (9-10th century)? Pancaroğlu believes this rather casual script does not compare to the Samanid ceramics which were truly calligraphic. The ceramic forms are also different, with the Abbasid blue-on-white forms imitating Chinese styles, but Samanid ceramics resemble metalware (Pancaroğlu 2006).



Figure 22: Samanid epigraphic ware, Metropolitan Museum, New York Rogers Fund 1965, Accession Number 65.106.2, Nishapur, 10th century¹⁴⁵ © Metropolitan Museum of Art

¹⁴⁵ Around the inner rim in Arabic in "new-style" script:

التدبير قبل العمل يؤمنك من الندم اليمن والسلامه

Planning before work protects you from regret; good luck and well-being.

<https://www.metmuseum.org/art/collection/search/451802> (Accessed 21/10/2014)

Much of the literature has contrasted the epigraphic ware's austere and harmonious elegance with the seemingly folksy, hastily executed, but also vigorous and flamboyant designs of the buffware.¹⁴⁶ However "[t]here are numerous different aesthetics at work in these slipwares. The major groupings blend and blur into one another, rendering exact classifications difficult" (Watson 2004:48). Equally buffware examples with animals and birds (**Fig. 23**) often reflect local folk culture, signifying blessings and wellbeing in the same way that the epigraphic texts do (Grabar 1987:174), with the most common inscription being *baraka* or blessings. Thus, both types of objects, however different they looked, were performing similar functions. Birds of different types are some of the most popular designs, occurring singly or together in the buffware.¹⁴⁷ They also appear in a more abstracting form at the centre of black on white ware dishes.¹⁴⁸ While Islamic art historians are used to looking at the best examples of the epigraphic ware, there are many simpler calligraphic wares, with less well-planned and sophisticated script or a pseudo-script, drawn onto a hastily made pot.

¹⁴⁶ Although Nishapur is the primary centre for buffware, or 'Nishapur polychrome', it was also produced elsewhere e.g. Merv (Wilkinson 1974, Fehérvári 2000, Pancaroğlu 2007). Wilkinson sees this as a rebirth of an older Khurasani tradition (Wilkinson 1974). As well as figurative designs showing humans; animals especially birds are common, as are palmettes, vegetal and geometric designs. This polychrome ware was the most colourful yet produced in the Islamic world. Pancaroğlu links the figures' stylisation to Abbasid lusterware designs, and their slip-painted Iranian counterparts, however the clothing and hairstyle on the buffwares are distinct (Pancaroğlu 2007).

¹⁴⁷ Birds are also found on the columns in the Zarafshan Valley, see below Chapter Four.

¹⁴⁸ E.g. Metropolitan Museum of Art 36.20.62, from Nishapur (9-10th century).



Figure 23: Bird with vine like palmettes attached seamlessly to the head as central motif, Metropolitan Museum of Art 36.20.62, 9th or 10th century, probably Nishapur. © Metropolitan Museum of Arts¹⁴⁹

Many scholars have investigated how these various ceramic styles relate to their users' identity and beliefs in the heterogeneous Samanid Empire and whether any links can be drawn between the two. Grabar believes that forms might have been autonomous and disassociated from meaning, which would allow for a greater freedom of creative expression, seen in the explosion of styles and motifs

¹⁴⁹ The text of the inscription repeats the Arabic word "baraka," which translates to "blessing." <https://www.metmuseum.org/art/collection/search/449093> (Accessed 21/10/2014)

during the period. Because most of the forms are unique and do not repeat motifs by rote it is possible that artisans and users “were conscious of what was depicted on these ceramics, even if we do not know which categories of visual perception – iconographic, formal, or expressive – affected them most” (Grabar 1992b:16). What makes this doubly difficult is the main excavated sites Samarqand¹⁵⁰ and Nishapur were excavated when objects were purely seen for their formal value, and taken to fill museums and private collections, rather than understanding their archaeological context. Thus, a large amount of data has been lost.

It has also been suggested that the mostly finer epigraphic ware and sometimes simpler figurative and non-figurative buffware were made for use by different social groups in Nishapur with different ideological outlooks, mirroring the chronology of conversion to Islam and the emergence of politico-religious factions in the city (Buliet 1992:76ff.), while this is a fascinating theory by a scholar who has thoroughly researched Nishapur society, however we have no evidence of this and the unreliability of the archaeological data calls these conclusions into question.¹⁵¹ Watson still believes that there were probably differentiated markets which caused the multiplicity of designs (Watson 2004:48). However this thesis agrees with Michailidis’ suggestion that the two wares demonstrate a complexity of identity typical of the period and were not made for specific groups of different patrons (see below).¹⁵² Equally there seems to be no connection between ‘Abbasid style pottery’ and polychrome buffware as being used or commissioned by the two main constituencies outlined in the historical record, immigrant Arabs and the indigenous Persian speaking population, as well as West Iranian speakers from Fars. The reality seems more complex, and it is difficult from the archaeological record to differentiate users of ceramic types in this way.

The many ceramic varieties which have survived do not appear to have anything to do with power or royal patronage (Bloom 2012), but no artefacts have been found from unequivocal Samanid courtly

¹⁵⁰ In Samarqand, especially, there are very few excavation reports.

¹⁵¹ In Wilkinson 1974, pot location was marked e.g. “Tepe Madrasah” but little stratigraphy given. He only sporadically divides pottery as pre- and post-1000 CE. Thus, an archaeological assessment is impossible. However, Buliet has suggested a chronology where the oldest site is Qanat Tepe, then Sabz Pushan and the most recent Tepe Madrasah. The polychrome buffware occurs in small quantities in Qanat Tepe (8%) and Sabz Pushan (16%) and in the last site Tepe Madrasah this has climbed to 56% (Buliet 1992:80). This suggests that these designs were a conscious revival of older iconographic forms rather than a continuation, linking to Tor’s characterisation of the symbolism of pre-Islamic kingship in early Islamic times as a revival (2012). Polychrome wares might have been used by former *dehqans*, who according to Buliet might have been the latest to convert, having the most to lose by changing their faith. However, it is certain there was a simultaneity of styles (Buliet 1992:76ff.). In Rante & Collinet’s (2013) discussion of stratigraphy and ceramics of the Qohandiz, no artefacts were found able to absolutely date the levels, but thermoluminescence dating was carried out on samples (Rante & Collinet 2013).

¹⁵² Abstract of *Ceramics and identity in Samanid Nishapur* <http://dhi.ucdavis.edu/?p=2914> (Accessed 20/10/2013). The paper remains unpublished to my knowledge following Michailidis’ tragic early death.

contexts,¹⁵³ thus it is impossible to know for certain what these would have looked like.¹⁵⁴ We know of a plate from Samarqand with a benediction for the amir, which is unusual. It also seems possible that the pieces were gifts and were used to decorate interiors, thus they were symbols of conspicuous consumption and exchange (Mirzaaxmedov 2008). However it is clear that the close political relationship between Samarqand, Nishapur and Bukhara as well as cities as far apart as Merv and Khulbuk under the Samanids is reflected in the ceramic output (Wilkinson 1961).¹⁵⁵ In spite of the creative diversity across ceramic output, art historians have had difficulty differentiating epigraphic pottery from Samarqand and Nishapur (for example), over 1000 km away. We can compare this to a certain extent, with the uniformity of the numismatic output from Samanid mints (see above). Unlike the mints' output however, it seems Samanid ceramics were not made for export, they had a large but purely internal market,¹⁵⁶ so use of these ceramics, as diverse as their styles might be, might have been one of the visual definitions of the empire. Ceramics from the territory of Tajikistan also show uniformity as well as regional differences with styles from the metropolitan heartlands. Styles from the regional centre of Khulbuk (in modern southern Tajikistan) can be equated with those from south of the Amu Darya (see Chapter Five).¹⁵⁷

Amongst the Nishapur polychrome ware, designs recall ancient Sasanian investiture scenes with a seated figure, which Fehervari interprets as a ruler, placed between two standing attendants.¹⁵⁸ A ruler with a cup and branch is also depicted in another scene which also seems to represent investiture (Daneshvari 2005).¹⁵⁹ Because this buffware ceramic type has not been found in the Samanid centre, and due to the somewhat rougher nature of the potting (though this is usually better than the non-figural buffware) it seems unlikely that these scenes represented Samanid rulers,

¹⁵³ Khulbuk is a Samanid era provincial courtly context in southern Tajikistan, see Khojaev 2010, Simeon 2008, 2012 and **Figs.127-129**.

¹⁵⁴ Equally we have very few examples of Samanid silverware, see Michailidis 2013 for some possible examples.

¹⁵⁵ Samarqand has been defined as having the more stately style, versus the more rapid less refined style from Nishapur (Ettinghausen et al 2001).

¹⁵⁶ Significant numbers of Samanid ceramics have not been found by archaeological investigation outside their Empire's limits.

¹⁵⁷ Bloom and Blair 2009.

¹⁵⁸ E.g. Bowl No 41 (CER57TSR) in Fehérvári 2000:50, where the black forms are interpreted as cloaks, double-stranded scarves or tresses (Pancaroglu 2013), tresses are seen in Sogdian paintings, for example the famous mourning scene with the domed structure (Azarpay 1981:127 Fig 56). The male or female central figure has flowers or a crown above the head. Compare Dewastwich's investiture scene from his palace where he is depicted with winged crown and crescent (Marshak 2002).

¹⁵⁹ The cup identifies the ruler with the sun and the branch with wealth, prosperity and earthly paradise (Daneshvari 2005).



Figure 24: "Razm" bowl with horseman, so called 'buffware', Victoria and Albert Museum, C.294-1987, probably Nishapur (?), 10th century © Victoria and Albert Museum.

however as discussed we have not accessed much of the Samanid levels archaeologically at Bukhara, but what has been found does not conform to this type.¹⁶⁰ Other scenes show men on horses fighting as well as feasting with cupbearers and musicians, equating to the '*razm* and *bazm*' (Fig. 24) of the Iranian literary epics (Pancaroğlu 2007, 2013) and Sogdian painting (Azarpay 1981).¹⁶¹



Figure 25: Epigraphic dish with swastika, Metropolitan Museum of Arts 40.170.25, Nishapur or Samarqand, 10th century¹⁶² © Metropolitan Museum of Arts.

Pancaroğlu believes that these various festivals depicted in the buffware would have had different meanings dependant on their audience, who might or might not have imbued these images with ritual meaning, where the bull mask on a dancer might have signified Mihragan to a Zoroastrian, a Muslim

¹⁶⁰ Certainly, the Samanid ceramics from the Bukhara's Arg museum are not courtly examples.

¹⁶¹ Many elements of Near Eastern courtly scenes date back to the Sumero-Akkadian period in Mesopotamia.

¹⁶² The Arabic inscription says, "He who multiplies his words, multiplies his worthlessness", or literally and more humorously, "he who talks a lot, spills a lot", reminding us of the purpose of this bowl, used at table (Metropolitan Museum website www.metmuseum.org).

or Christian would have seen this as part of Iranian festive traditions devoid of religious Zoroastrian meaning (Pancaroğlu 2013:11).¹⁶³ In the same way Nowruz is celebrated by Muslims across the region today, not necessarily as a Zoroastrian festival, but as a secular holiday which is part of their traditional culture, reaching back deep into the past. Arguably it was from the time of the Samanid period onward that Persian Zoroastrian traditions developed from religious into purely cultural beliefs and practices. It seems certain that “Nishapur polychrome ware should therefore be seen as part of a complex series of artistic achievements and, judging by the recurrence of its unusual figural imagery, as a testament to an equally complex cultural heritage in eastern Iran” (Pancaroğlu 2013:3). Swastikas¹⁶⁴ and other similar shapes are also known, occurring on both epigraphic (**Fig. 25**) as well as buffware (**Fig. 26**), which is another similarity between these two ostensibly different styles. Swastikas also compare to those found on contemporary architecture, including Arab-Ata at Tim,¹⁶⁵ Mir Said Bahrom (Khmelnitsky 1992:169ff.) and the monumental gateway of Khulbuk (see below), also relating to Persian heritage.

¹⁶³ The exception are ceramics with a cross, or cross and peacock which were probably used by Nestorian Christians (Pancaroğlu 2013). However, other faiths might resemanticise this Christian iconography with their own meanings, peacocks are also found in Islamic contexts (Daneshvari 1986).

¹⁶⁴ E.g. Fig 20, (Wilkinson 1974:173), a buffware example and Fig 19 (1974:117) which is black on white epigraphic ware.

¹⁶⁵ See Appendix B for brief discussion on Arab Ata.



Figure 26: Dish with swastika, Metropolitan Museum of Art, 38.40.128, Nishapur or Central Asia, 9th century © Metropolitan Museum of Art.

If Bulliet is correct and these date to the later Samanid period, coinciding with the ascendancy of New Persian language in Arabic script, where the scenes show a Persian vision,¹⁶⁶ and also that of the Iranian *dehqans* (Bulliet 1972, 1992). It is interesting that this polychrome ware was not found in Transoxiana and thus cannot be seen as a visual depiction of royal Samanid events or their courtly poetry. This could be seen to be supporting Peacock's emphasis on the Islamic nature of Samanid society rather than Tor's more Iranophile hypothesis (see above). However, contra that is the fact that

¹⁶⁶ For other examples see 25/1968 David Collection, Copenhagen showing a mounted rider hunting with a falcon. <http://www.davidmus.dk/en/collections/islamic/dynasties/samanids/art/251968> (accessed 20/02/2013).

these Arabic aphorisms were not Quranic, or even religious,¹⁶⁷ but seen to desire a society generous and right acting. It seems that in spite of the wealth of interpretations given on this ceramic material who it was made for and why remains obscure. Other motifs in the centre of the black on white ware such as the yin yang known from Chinese Buddhist art¹⁶⁸ are also in evidence here, suggesting a wider cultural outlook than a focus on the script would suggest.

I would argue that the ceramics are one of the means in which disparate sections of Samanid society were drawn into a more unified whole, not by flattening differences but by celebrating them, by being able to imbue a design with different meanings depending on audience (see above - Pancaroğlu 2013) and potentially using a variety of different styles in one household. There is no definite evidence as such to support these claims, but the fact that motifs such as birds and swastikas crossed between different styles, and Persian motifs were found with Arabic script might be seen to suggest this.¹⁶⁹ Seen in another way: “just as Arabic and Persian played complementary roles in the cultural context of the Samanid and other medieval Islamic dynasties, so the epigraphic and figural modes of decoration can be seen as analogous rather than contrary expressions”, where riders on horseback as depicting similar ideals such as generosity and virtuous conduct as those expressed in the epigraphic ceramics (Pancaroğlu 2006:66). We see the visual equivalent of the ideas expressed by Kennedy below,¹⁷⁰ how one could be a good Muslim but not relinquish one’s Persian identity. Just as today that both Somoni and Zoroastrianism can be part of Tajikistan’s identity.

Chapter Two: Summary and conclusions - three cultures weaved into one cultural pattern

The Samanids chose Bahram Chubin as their ancestor in their official lineage. This was a supremely successful invented tradition, as their connection was never doubted by contemporary commentators. Their possible emphasis of their East Iranian, specifically Parthian roots can be seen to be born out in the material culture record, in the medallion of Mansur ibn Nuh as well as in architecture (see Chapter Three). Thus, how is the Samanids’ new successful kingship model and the rulers’ personal contract with their subjects symbolised in the material culture record?

¹⁶⁷ Possibly it would have been thought irreligious to eat off verses of the Qur’an?

¹⁶⁸ E.g. Makariou 2012a:109 from the Louvre.

¹⁶⁹ This was a conclusion come to by Michailidis, as reported by one of the attendees of the lecture (N. Nabas – dead link), see also Pancaroğlu 2006.

¹⁷⁰ See Kennedy 2009:14.

Thus, the Samanids are credited with weaving diverse influences and heritage into one cultural pattern; by the end of their reign the population was predominantly Muslim, whatever their ethnicity or region. Peacock emphasises the Islamic nature of Samanid Transoxanian society, which he argues by the middle of the 10th century had more in common with Islamic society in the central Islamic lands of Iraq, Syria and Iran than it did with ancient pre-Islamic local traditions (Peacock 2007:21).

Treadwell has underscored the superficial nature of the new converts' beliefs, however (1991:50-51). One of the means in which this homogeneity was brought about was by the Islamic currency, which proclaimed Allah and Muhammad to every corner of the empire. The uniformity of coinage was a visual symbol of power, materially uniting diverse populations. Social homogeneity was also conducted through objects like weights, where these were guaranteed by the ruler as accurate, and thus to be trusted. This created a society based on an economy which could be trusted, under a ruler who was seen as just, thus further bringing disparate populations together. This can be compared to Tajikistan today, where corruption and cronyism mark modern Tajik politics (see Chapter Five).

It seems that later Samanid rulers took up what might have been a Banijurid practice to write the ruler's name in *naskhi* script. Kingship was a necessity to Ismail, but in public he continued to recognise the caliph and called himself *amir*, or governor, never *malik* or king. It seems that other symbols were not necessary or have not survived in a way that historians or archaeologists recognise them. He was too busy getting on with the business of ruling and maintaining the old ways as a way of legitimising his rule, rather than focusing on new symbols of power. An exception to this is the Samanid Mausoleum which we turn to in the next chapter.

Citizens of Bukhara and other cities would most likely have used the Ismaili dirhams as well as the Bukhar Khudat coins with their completely different visual aesthetic, showing that different visual motifs from past and present were acceptable. This age-old custom has been recreated as an invented tradition (cf. Hobsbawm 1983), with the use of the coins increasing in the 9-10th centuries, as the population became increasingly Muslim. While Ismail was destroying the power of the Bukhar Khudats and other *dehqan* families (Paul 1994:11ff. & 25ff.), he was increasing use of this coinage, drawing legitimation from continuity with the past while actually making far-reaching political changes. In maintaining Bukhar Khudat coins in compliance with his subjects' wishes, Ismail was arguably able to feed their nostalgia, without lessening his own power. These coins, following Boym (2007) can be seen as a kind of reflective postcolonial nostalgia where the irrevocable and unrecoverable past is evoked, as a reflection on finitude or meditation on history, rather than actually trying to restore some past time.

Possibly the omission of the caliph's name on the Bukhar Khudat coins means that the Samanids were claiming more power internally. However, the caliphate's visual aesthetic would have been disturbed by inclusion of the caliph's name on these pictorial coins; which underlined the fact that these coins were beyond and parallel to the caliph's jurisdiction and visual universe. This is similar to what was happening in the architecture, where both the Samanid Mausoleum and Kyrk Kyz (see

Chapter Three below) were based on the exterior form of the kushk, the pre-Islamic Sogdian castle. This illustrates changing relationship between signifier and signified as discussed by Barthes – ‘signifieds pass away, signifiers persist’ (in Alami 2011:12).¹⁷¹

In private however, as seen in the medallion of Mansur ibn Nuh, a more hybrid heritage is shown than the silver dirhams with their Islamic inscriptions, with both *shahanshah* in Pahlavi script and an east Iranian or Hephthalite iconography. Does this medallion suggest that the Samanids might have had a more mixed heritage, and not just have had Persian ancestors (indeed we know that Bahram Chubin took a Turkish wife)? This idea is taken up with alacrity by Uzbek historians, keen to show that the dynasty was really Turkish all along (e.g. Kamoliddin 2011).¹⁷² However it is seen here that the iconography on this medallion could be a particular response to a particular set of circumstances (Treadwell 1999, 2003, 2012), and we should not extrapolate too much to the whole dynasty until we have further evidence. Thus, while this may be seen as nostalgia, it is directed at specific present concerns and future needs.

Power and identity are also shown in material culture which has mostly not survived, such as textiles, banners and investiture clothing. However, we do have textual evidence of this rich material as well as how it was used, where exchange of commodities was part of the ritual communication which marked one’s place in the hierarchy. It is interesting that the giving of robes was introduced in the Abbasid period, possibly along Central Asian lines. One survival is the so-called St Josse shroud, made for a Turkish commander at the Samanid court, Abu Mansur Bukhtekin. This could be a document to the rising power of the Turks.

Certainly, in the Samanid ceramic output there is no homogeneity of forms, and it is still unclear, (Grabar 1992b:12ff.), how much these can be connected to meaning. It seems certain that forms meant different things to different people, and while birds might be good luck to one person, they would be nothing but decoration to others. Nishapur polychrome ware was used across society, who would have brought their own changing meanings to these motifs and forms. Perhaps we can compare the diverse influences and forms seen on the Iskodar mihrab, Zarafshan columns and other contemporary woodwork which show pre-Islamic iconography together with the bevelled style made famous in the Samarra stuccos (Chapter Four). In the Samanid era, however, *perhaps only* because of the lacunary nature of the evidence, we are reminded of Grabar’s thesis which could not identify a main Samanid style made up of an exclusive body of forms (1975:360, 2012), for example the structure of every mausoleum was different (Ainy 1980). However, perhaps this suggests that we are

¹⁷¹ Alami (2011) does not give the reference.

¹⁷² Elsewhere Kamoliddin states that the Samanids were Buddhist <http://www.transoxiana.org/11/kamoliddin-samanids.html> (accessed 20/03/2013).

not asking the right questions? The uniformity was in the numismatic rather than their ceramic (or architectural) output.

Next we will turn to the architecture of the Samanid centre, Bukhara's capitol complex to see how it reflected and displayed the dynasty's identity as early Islamic rulers. The most important (and only) building to survive from Samanid Bukhara and an architectural masterpiece which symbolised Samanid legitimisation and right to rule, is the dynastic tomb, the Samanid Mausoleum.

CHAPTER THREE - Samanid architecture from the dynastic 'centre'

The Samanid dawla resembled that of the Sasanians in terms of longevity and the small number of capable men (who ruled it). It resembled nothing so much as the sky which God raised up without a prop."

Ibn Zafir in Treadwell 2005

May God show mercy on [Ismail Samanid], for in his time Bukhara became the seat of government. After him all the amirs of the house of Saman held court in Bukhara. None of the amirs of Khurasan had lived in Bukhara. He considered his residence in Bukhara as fortunate, and he did not find satisfaction in any district apart from Bukhara.

Narshakhi 1954

This chapter analyses architecture directly ascribed to the Samanids, most importantly the Samanid Mausoleum, placing it in the context of Bukhara's capitol complex.¹⁷³ Due to the fact that their capital, Bukhara has been continuously occupied on the same site for over a millennium,¹⁷⁴ we simply do not have an archaeological impression of the Samanid levels,¹⁷⁵ and only know it from textual evidence, (discussed below). While the dynastic mausoleum appears in every Islamic art survey, it is rarely viewed in what we know of its urban context or with other forms of visual state messages such as the coinage (see Chapter Two) as a way of interpreting Samanid identity. As outlined in Chapter One, monumental architecture and coinage have been the focus of state communication of power and legitimacy right up to our own times. Tajikistan today also uses these visual media (see Chapter Five), together with stamps and paper posters.¹⁷⁶

¹⁷³ While we have some idea of Bukhara's capitol complex from historical and geographical sources, these are used with caution, as palace descriptions are subject to hyperbole and are in any case often unclear (Hillenbrand 1994:377).

¹⁷⁴ We do not know Bukhara's age, in spite of Uzbek festivals celebrating 2600 years of the city. The first settlement probably dates to 1st century CE, but not until the 5th century did Bukhara become the oasis' central settlement (Frye 1998:13ff.).

¹⁷⁵ The present old city centre obliterates most of the archaeological layers. Where archaeology can be conducted, the citadel has occupation depths of 20 metres and the shahristan, 16-18 metres (LoMuzio 2009). Russian archaeological results have not been well published (Nekrasova 1999, Gangler et al 2004:42).

¹⁷⁶ The Samanids probably would have used cloth banners to display power and identity, however none of these, known from historical texts, have survived in the archaeological record. E.g. Gardizi talks about the caliph

Historical sources on Bukhara's capitol complex inform us about the location and placement of the palaces, other state structures such as *diwans* and religious structures such as mosques which were built by the dynasty. They also tell us about the presence or absence of fortifications. Thus, we are able to gain some idea of what inspired Samanid decisions about how their capital should be oriented. Especially when we compare the layout of these structures with what we know about the positioning of other early Islamic palaces in the caliphal centre, allowing us to understand where Samanid palaces might fit in early Islamic palatial paradigms (Necipoğlu 1993a). Together with these sources we have looked at some of the stuccowork which survived from the possible Samanid 'palace' of Samarqand (some of it no longer extant but known from photographs). This shows the bevelled style made famous by Samarra, as well as a niche, interpreted by the excavators as a mihrab with a naturalistic acanthus vine. The monumental structure of Kyrk Kyz and the Samanid mosque in Samarqand have also been discussed as they might have a bearing on our understanding of the dynasty's visual programme; and suggest how Samanid Bukhara may have looked. The use of ribats during the Samanid period have also been outlined, as some were linked to the dynasty and may display their power at the periphery.

Bukhara's capitol complex

Bukhara's citadel had legends woven into its very structure: Narshakhi, Ibn Hawqal and Istakhri say that no ruler of Bukhara ever died in the citadel, and "no banner which goes out is ever lowered in defeat" (Istakhri p 315 in Narshakhi 1954:24 and Note 113). Its construction was credited to the mythical hero Siyavush by Narshakhi (see below), made famous by Firdowsi's *Shahnama*. We have some indication of the city from contemporary geographers, "Bukhara is a district not very extensive, nonetheless well developed and pleasant. A wall surrounds five of its towns. Its dimensions each way are 12 *farsakhs*,¹⁷⁷ it has no untilld land, no village left fallow" (Hudud al-'Alam 1937:240). Of the three Arab geographers, the information from Istakhri and ibn Hawqal is the same, so we can take it together, and Muqaddasi never visited, and so is less important for descriptions of this city (Gaube 1999:20).

Like other Samanid cities, Bukhara was a pre-Islamic site. It is remarkable that, unlike in the caliphal heartland, no new cities such as Samarra and Baghdad were founded in early Islamic Central Asia, all had pre-Islamic roots (Khmelnitsky 1992). This is possibly another sign of continuity between the two

sending Ismail a banner, which would have probably been used as a rallying point on the battlefield (Gardizi See Chapter Two above).

¹⁷⁷ *Farsakh* is Iranian measurement equivalent to six km.

periods. Thus, *Mashriqi* Arab Muslims lost or did not want the chance to lay out new urban areas to their own ideas and ground plans, which in itself is a symbol of power to an occupied population, as well as a sign of the population's changing needs. Arabs seemingly lived side by side with the indigenous inhabitants and got on with trading, worshipping and studying in a more open environment than they had found in Fars. Bukhara¹⁷⁸ probably only rose to prominence with the Arab invasions, due in part to the city's trading prowess¹⁷⁹ as well as its policy of Arab Muslims living among the indigenous population (Frye 1998:15). It is also likely that Bukhara was chosen by the Samanids as the closest Transoxanian city to Khurasan, thus they were well located for governing both regions. By the end of the Samanid period, the city was the highest density urban area in Khurasan and Transoxiana,¹⁸⁰ a holy city, permeated with scholarship and learning, second only to Baghdad. Before the Samanids, the Bukhar Khudats had had their palace at the nearby site of Varakhsha¹⁸¹ rather than in Bukhara itself. It was the Samanid dynasty who gave importance to the city, by making it so splendid that they were also able to bask in its glory. A city is much more than the sum of its buildings, it is well understood today that that a city's importance is also due to it being a locus of rituals, ceremonies and parades (e.g. Wheatley 1969), such as the Samanid display of power to the Chinese envoy (see Chapter Two and Appendix A). We are reminded of Vale's quotation in Chapter One, that capitol complexes in a new state are designed to have multiple simultaneous frames of reference (Vale 1992:48) as well as being iconographic bridges between past and future. While it is difficult to grasp many buildings' details from the extant historical sources, certainly the Samanid Mausoleum can be characterised as exhibiting both of Vale's qualities.

¹⁷⁸ Bolshakov collected data from Arabic sources including Narshakhi about Samanid Bukhara, making a plan of the shahristan and identifying the city gates' location (in Yakubov 2007).

¹⁷⁹ Bukhara was on the 'fur route' to the north-west which gained in importance in Samanid times, thus capital and trade were intrinsically linked. No doubt this trade provided the wealth for its scholarship as well as the court.

¹⁸⁰ According to Ibn Hawqal and Istakhri. See Gaube 1999:20ff., for a clear *précis* of the city's 10th century plan, with streets, gates and walls.

¹⁸¹ For Varakhsha, see Shishkin 1963, the palace is a day's march from Bukhara.

The Samanid Mausoleum, Bukhara¹⁸²

This dynastic mausoleum (**Figs. 27-33 and 35-36**) is the only surviving building directly connected to the Samanid dynasty, designed to project their power and identity in their capital, Bukhara. Thus, in a discussion of Samanid identity through architecture, it seems sensible to start with this building, especially as it is the earliest (semi) securely dated building under discussion. It is important to remember that there was no dynastic memorial architecture in Islamic Central Asia before this.

The Samanid Mausoleum is not the first of its type in Central Asia (see Appendix B for a discussion of its antecedents), although it is the first extant monumental mausoleum. What is noteworthy is that some early mausolea, possible precursors of the Samanid Mausoleum come from Tajikistan. They are dated on stylistic grounds as there are no inscriptions. The domed square mausoleum of Khoja Mashhad (9th century CE) has diamond patterned brickwork which anticipates the far richer decoration of the Samanid Mausoleum. Tilla Halaji (9-10th century CE) in southern Tajikistan is in the shape of a *chahar taq*. *Chahar taqs* are also found in the pre-Islamic site of Khulbuk,¹⁸³ and at Khaja Bulhak (9-10th century CE) near Isfara in northern Tajikistan.¹⁸⁴

It is seen here that the early Islamic mausolea fuse cultic structures found in secular buildings (*kushk*), with funerary structures such as the Sogdian Zoroastrian *naus*. Mingled with these are Buddhist ideas, such as cardinality and the upper gallery which have also been incorporated in the early Islamic funerary buildings. These ideas together with those of dynastic mausolea from the Abbasid centre were taken by the Samanids to represent their new form of power to disparate populations. As one of the first extant Islamic centrally domed mausolea,¹⁸⁵ the Samanid Mausoleum is, in the words of Robert Hillenbrand, “possibly the most epoch-making building in Iranian Islamic architecture” (1994:289) which looks backwards as well as forwards (Fig. 27). Creswell calls the architect who designed and built it “a genius” (1932:369). Schroeder describes the mausoleum as a “building of vivid energy, rotund and solid as a Chou bronze; its surface sparkles with caprice and genius and its bricks are ‘stones of fire’ (1939:946). Since this mausoleum was first published by

¹⁸² The Samanid Mausoleum is found in the Samonids Recreation Park in western Bukhara, it is described in Appendix B.

¹⁸³ Baimatowa lecture *Calligraphic Ornaments in the Architecture of North Khurasan*. http://agakhan.fas.harvard.edu/icb/icb.do?keyword=k69205&pageid=icb.page410717&pageContentId=icb.pagecontent900912&view=watch.do&viewParam_entry=46791#a_icb_pagecontent900912 (accessed 20/04/2013).

¹⁸⁴ Tilla Halaji is in south west Tajikistan near the Afghan border; Khaja Bulhak is in the Ferghana Valley.

¹⁸⁵ However, not the first, through stylistic dating. See Appendix B, however this is the first extant monumental mausoleum.

Olufsen in 1911 who ascribed it to Ismail,¹⁸⁶ it has been fêted in many general books of art and architecture. However relatively little has been done to contextualise it within the Samanid worldview. It is also noteworthy that the Samanid Mausoleum remains unique, no extant later mausoleums have modelled themselves on this dynastic monument. During its 1000 years of existence, no major reworking has taken place, except the Mausoleum's upper part which has suffered losses to its decoration and structure.¹⁸⁷ It is considered that the fullest discussion of the building in English is still by Rempel (1936). The building has also been substantially published in the Russian literature by Bulatov whose 1976 monograph remains the most comprehensive treatise on the building, however it is also discussed in Pugachenkova's 1963 monograph on Arab-Ata as well as in Khmel'nitsky (1992). There are also three papers summarising the Russian scholarship (Stock 1989, 1990, 1991). The building is also extensively covered in Michailidis' thesis (2007).

The three graves in the Samanid Mausoleum indicate it was a dynastic tomb, not just built to project the power and legitimacy of an individual ruler but the permanency of a dynasty's rule. Some of the ways in which this might have been projected to a largely illiterate population would have been through the building itself, perhaps by using some of the motifs outlined below and in Appendix B.

¹⁸⁶ Olufsen 1911.

¹⁸⁷ The four smaller domes had been altered in 11-12th century and the main dome was rebuilt in 1922-23 (Zasipkin 1959 in Michailidis 2007).



Figure 27: Samanid Mausoleum, Bukhara (dated before 943 CE)

Islamic tombs are found across the Islamic world, where domes often provide shade for the deceased, indeed canopies of cloth were legitimised by the Qur'an as a blessing of paradise. Mausolea were acceptable on Islamic religious grounds,¹⁸⁸ and there were a few dynastic mausolea at the caliphal centre. Central Asian mausolea appeared early in this trajectory, where they have a special significance as the focus of pilgrimage or *ziyarat*. Holy men and women in the *mashriq* had mausolea built for them after death as public monuments and expressions of faith.¹⁸⁹ This suggests that this was an efficacious incorporation of disparate pre-Islamic forms and ideas into structures which could symbolise the new religion.¹⁹⁰

Both the domed square structure as well as the idea of the *naus*¹⁹¹ had deep roots in local and west Iranian culture. However, the mausoleum was an innovation of the Islamic period, and a useful way for the Samanids to display their claims to the Empire they had created, portrayed differently to that of the old Sogdian city states' rulers (see Appendix B on the Samanid Mausoleum's antecedents). The Samanids could do this while remaining good Islamic rulers, however it was important for them to root their ideas in architecture which was familiar to their audiences. Thus, the building is speaking to these groups as much as possible in their own visual languages. Arguably the structure even relates to the funerary kurgans of the Turks (cf. Hillenbrand 1994:276ff.), thus it might not have seemed strange to them either.

It is argued here that the idea for a *dynastic* mausoleum might well have come from Iraq, as there are no exact Sogdian precedents, just as the dynasty's coinage placed it firmly within the Islamic world. However, it seems that *nauses* could have been used for families, and might have been domed square buildings, thus the Samanids were building on ideas that already had some purchase among the local population. Grabar believes that the early Central Asian domes linked the buildings to royal palaces and courtly architecture, such as that of the Romans and Sasanians. Thus, an "abstract significance of prestige rather than a specific funerary meaning" might explain their adoption in mausoleums (Grabar 1963:197). It is also worth remembering that in the close-packed architecture in early metropolises a domed building would have stood out from far away denoting the building as

¹⁸⁸ This is in spite of a built tomb being frowned upon by early hadith, as against Islamic tenets. However, Leisten notes that structures over tombs were simply *makruh* (objectionable, disapproved of) rather than *haram* (forbidden) by the other three schools and thus funerary structures were a minor infraction. Abu Hanifa saw the building of such structures as legal and not objectionable. Any objection to funerary structures was difficult to uphold as the Prophet himself was buried in a house (Leisten 1990).

¹⁸⁹ E.g. Khoja Mashhad, Tilla Hallaji and Khoja Bulkhak (Khmelnitsky 1992:143-156).

¹⁹⁰ Two theories, tombs of ghazi warriors and Shi'i shrines, however, hardly hold up in Central Asia as Michailidis has ably shown in her doctoral thesis. She argues that the tombs were found not just in borderland areas near the locus of jihad against pagan Turks, nor is the area connected to widespread Shiism (2007).

¹⁹¹ A *naus* (word comes from Arab sources) is a Zoroastrian family mausoleum. It is a mud brick, vaulted and above-ground structure for bones of the dead (Grenet 2013).

different and special, enclosing sacred space: a different sort of space within its walls compared to the mundane and every day. The only other tomb for a member of the Samanid dynasty is in Turkmenistan, known as mausoleum of Alamberdar. This may be al Muntasir's tomb¹⁹² who was the last Samanid ruler (d.1005). However, its attribution remains uncertain, and the tomb has been pulled down and rebuilt in modern materials (Hillenbrand 2003:11 Note 44).¹⁹³

Samanid Mausoleum: Dating

The mausoleum's construction date is still subject to debate, while popular tradition refers to it as the tomb of Ismail, it could have also been constructed by his grandson Nasr.¹⁹⁴ There seems to be no doubt, however, that it is a Samanid royal tomb. Three bodies were found buried under the building, it is usually taken that these are Ismail I (r. 892-907), his father Ahmad (d.864) and his grandson Nasr II (914-943 CE). Thus, the building is commonly dated to before 943 CE, the date of Nasr's death, or late 9th – early 10th century, with many scholars preferring not to attribute the building to a specific patron. The building's link to Nasr is due to an inscription in foliated Kufic lettering¹⁹⁵ carved in relief on the wooden lintel above the eastern doorway, published by Bulatov 1976 Pl 9, Figs. 6-7 (**Fig. 28**).

¹⁹² Its attribution is accepted in passing by Hillenbrand 1994:294 who calls it the tomb of Muntasir at Astana Baba. It was first given this attribution by Pugachenkova, but it is not universally accepted (Pugachenkova 1958 in Michailidis 2007), and it seems to be circumstantial. Grabar 1966:31 calls it an anonymous mausoleum.

¹⁹³ And thus, it has no longer "any evidential value at all" (Hillenbrand 2003:11 Note 44). Because of this and matters of space, the tomb has not been dealt with here.

¹⁹⁴ Grabar 1966:15, Treadwell 1991:49ff.

¹⁹⁵ The script is written in foliated Kufic script on a flat baseline, the mim is a round circle bisecting the baseline and several letters like *nun* and *wa'* descend with large rounded tails. At least one tooth has a notched bifurcated terminal and the letters on the left end in bilobed finials (Blair 1992:25). It is noteworthy that the cursive script seen on some Samanid coinage to write the ruler's name is not used here.

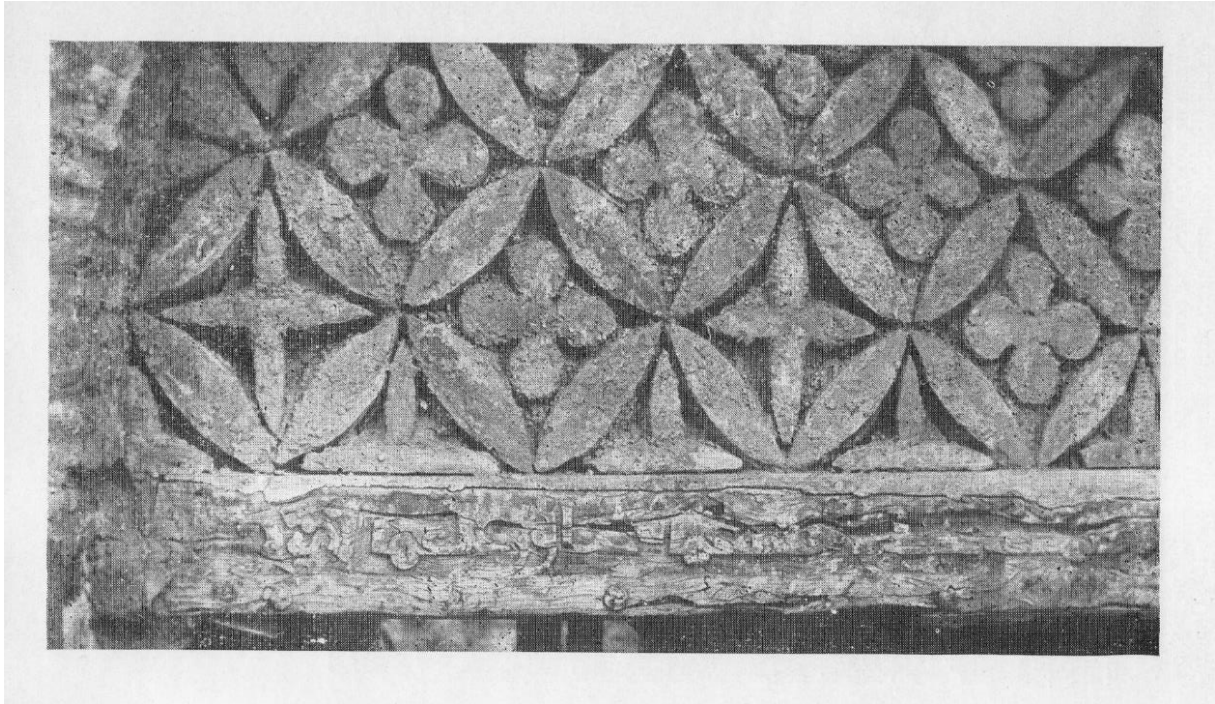


Figure 28: Samanid Mausoleum inscription from Bulatov 1976 Pl 9 © Literaturi I Iskusstva im Gafura Gulyama, Tashkent



Figure 29: Samanid Mausoleum inscription, 2008

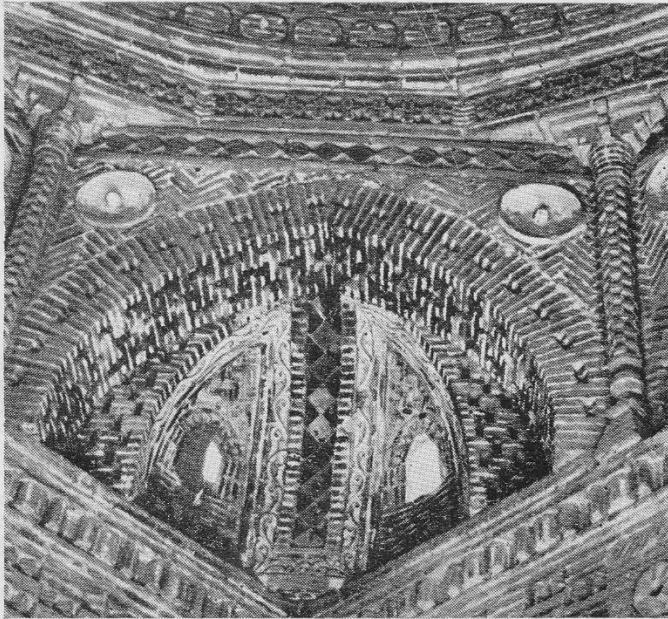
The inscription, discovered in 1937, was read by the Arabist V.I. Belyaev as *Nasr b. Ahmad b. Ismail*. It is likely that the wooden inscription has degraded since it was read and Blair has been unable to decipher it apart from the Bismallah (**Fig. 29**).¹⁹⁶ However she dates it to the same era, late 9th or

¹⁹⁶ Comparison with Deniké's 1939 photograph shows the doorway substantially rebuilt, although the inscription remains. Belyaev's reading seems wishful thinking in its present condition. Letters across the top possibly spell

early 10th century through a stylistic comparison of the floriated lettering with securely dated Samanid coins and tiraz inscriptions. There are some reservations as the medium is different, and the latter's script tends to be more conservative (Blair 1992:26).¹⁹⁷ Blair concludes that the building is definitely Samanid and believes a later date is more likely (Blair 1992:28-29). Grabar also believes that the *waqf* documents (see Appendix B), which might only refer to a *turbah* (cemetery plot) rather than a *qubba* (dome), do not conclusively prove the monument's date. He feels that it is safer from a purely methodological viewpoint to go with the earliest available archaeological document (the inscription on the building itself) and thus dating the mausoleum to Nasr's reign (914-943 CE). However, he does not preclude Pugachenkova's early date, to before Ismail's death (1961:203 in Grabar 1966:17).

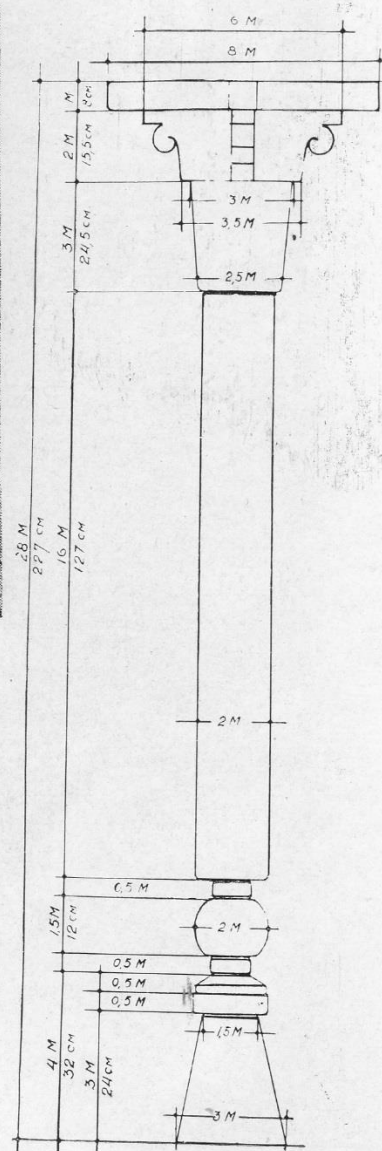
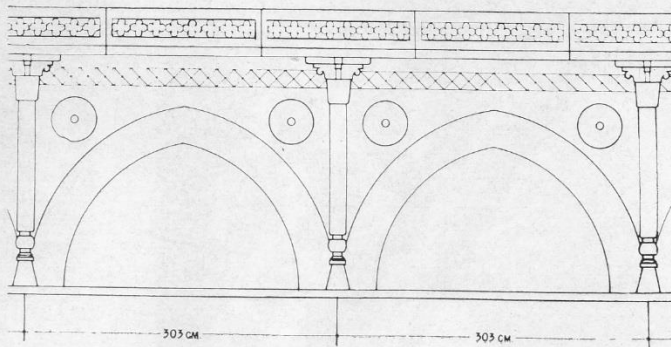
al-rahman al-rahim, part of the *Basmalla*, and thus impossible to fit with Belyaev's reading *Nasr b. Ahmad b. Ismail*. Three letters on the left seem to form another line reading downward, suggesting there may have been a similar band leading upward on the right. Thus, possibly the inscription originally consisted of three wooden slabs forming a rectangular doorframe (Blair 1992:25). If correct, this could be a precursor to the monumental inscription on Arab-Ata's *pishtaq* at Tim.

¹⁹⁷ Equally, I would argue a royal mausoleum's inscription is also more likely to be conservative.



22. Угловой парус.

23. Развертка восьмерика.



24. Колонна яруса парусов.

Figure 30: Bulatov 1976 Figs. 22-24 © Literaturi I Iskusstva im Gafura Gulyama, Tashkent.

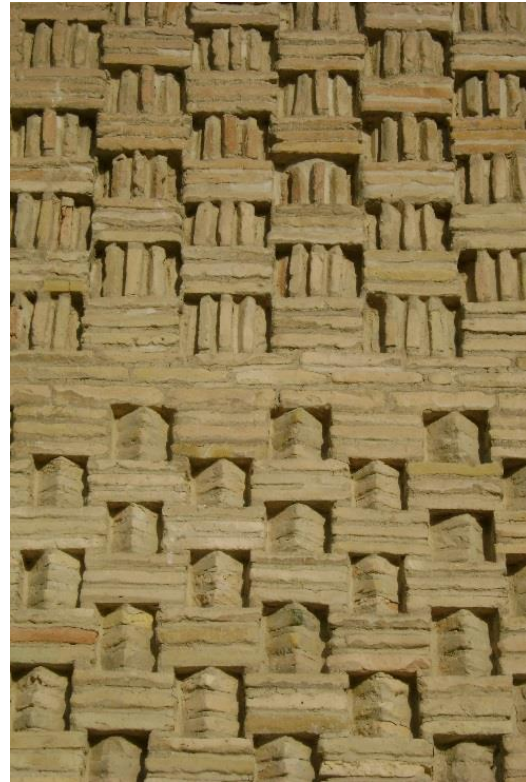
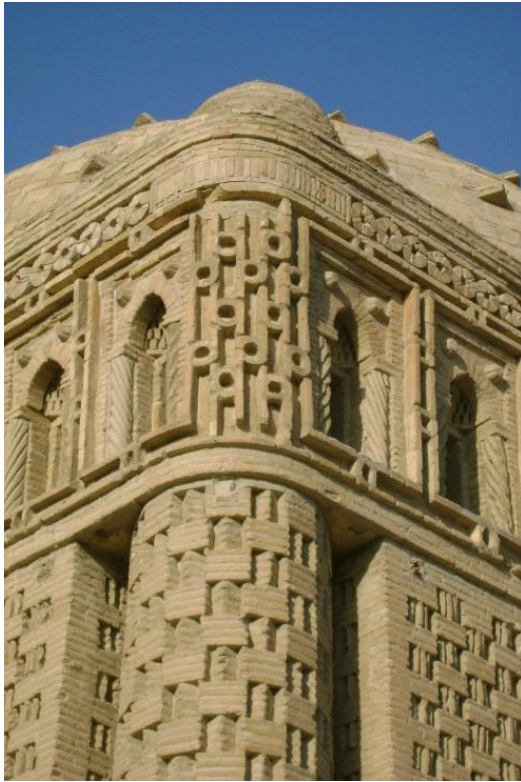


Figure 31: Samanid Mausoleum, details of exterior, 2011.

Other scholars, e.g. Rempel (1936)¹⁹⁸ and Pugachenkova (1999), believe the Mausoleum was built during the reign of Nasr's grandfather, the outstanding king Ismail I. Pugachenkova believes that the three tombs in the Mausoleum are that of Ismail, his father Ahmed b. Asad and Ismail's grandson Nasr,¹⁹⁹ who also added his name to the inscription. I would argue that the inscription could easily have been added at a later date, such as when Nasr's body was also interred with his grandfather and great grandfather, as it does not seem integral to the architectural design (see below) of the building which is almost entirely in baked brick, with only minimal stucco and wood.²⁰⁰ We know of

¹⁹⁸ Rempel's late 9th century date ascribes the building to Ismail however he was writing before the inscription's discovery by the Viatkin excavation (1937).

¹⁹⁹ According to Stock, Viatkin's excavations from 1926 to 1928 discovered three graves and Ismail's lay to the side by the entrance, which Stock suggests was because the centre was already occupied. However, no excavation report has been published allowing us to know how these graves were identified in the first place (Bulatov 1976 in Stock 1989).

²⁰⁰ The Mausoleum of Ahmad (Khmelnitsky 1992 p 124), dated to the second half of the 10th century through stylistic comparison with the Samanid Mausoleum inscription (Blair 1992:75), has a baked brick inscription integral to the building, whereas in the dynastic Samanid Mausoleum, the inscription seems more of an afterthought. Which might also argue for the fact that the Samanid Mausoleum is earlier as it does not include an inscription either integral to its design, unlike Mausoleum of Ahmed or monumental in the case of Arab Ata at Tim dating to 966-67?

Ismail's love for the city of Bukhara, and I would argue that it was Ismail who constructed this mausoleum as part of his legitimising strategy to reflect, display and strengthen the new power his dynasty held, thus leaving visual evidence of his personal contract with his people (see below). Thus, the tomb holds Ismail I, his father Ahmad and his grandson Nasr II. In popular belief the tomb is undoubtedly ascribed to Ismail, intrinsically linking him with the building. This thesis explicates this popular belief (below), as this is the basis of the Mausoleum's importance to people in Bukhara and Tajikistan today. However, it seems impossible to know with certainty, based on the present state of research, either the exact date of the building or the identity of its original incumbents.

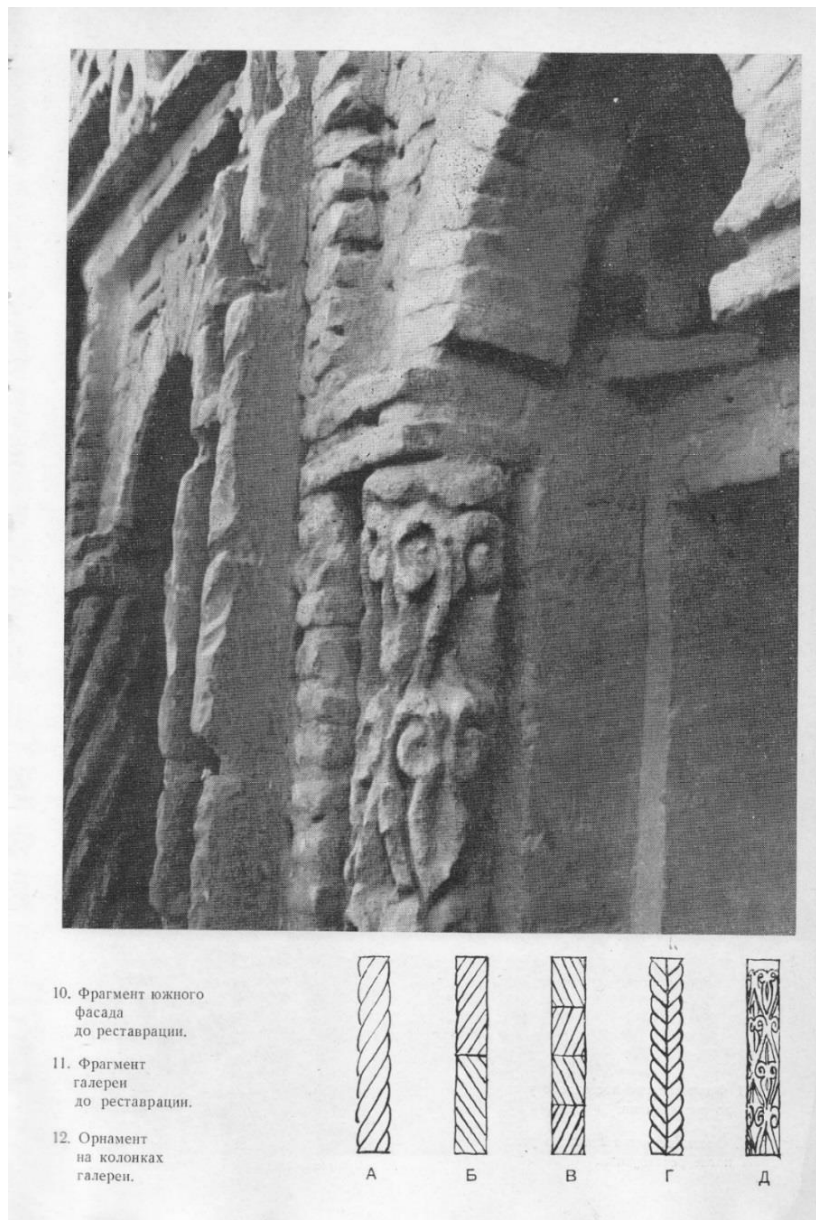


Figure 32: Bulatov 1976:35 Figs 10-12 © *Literaturi I Iskusstva im Gafura Gulyama, Tashkent.*



Figure 33: Samanid Mausoleum, detail of blind arcade with original (central arch left column) and reconstructed decoration in Samarra C style (central arch right column).

Meaning of the Samanid Mausoleum

It is argued here that the architect of the Samanid Mausoleum blended a wide range of influences into a harmonious whole, in the same way that the Samanid dynasty were endeavouring to do with society. The cardinaly oriented, quadripartite building is almost a perfect cube, topped with a hemispherical dome with a corner cupola above a three-quarter round pier in each corner. These motifs were echoes of other buildings that the population of the Samanid Empire might have known but woven in a new way. Similarly, the Tajik government today is endeavouring to incorporate other architectural elements into its post-independent monumental architecture (see Chapter Six below). Thus, it is argued here that the form of the Samanid mausoleum can be placed between a Sogdian *kushk* (as seen on the Anikovo Plate, see **Fig. 34**) and a garden pavilion (as depicted on the Berlin Salver, see **Fig. 38**), with elements of both these royal and secular structures (Khmel'nitsky 1992:125-140),²⁰¹ which might suggest the building's antecedents (see Appendix B). Where familiar motifs were

²⁰¹ See Appendix B.

used, such as the pearl band seen on textiles and wall paintings in Sasanian Iran and Sogdia, then these are used in a new way. This is the first time a baked brick pearl band is used on a building. “The aesthetic effect depends primarily on the maintenance of scale. This is controlled by the size of the bricks which serve as the inevitable unit of measure. The proportions of the building have been determined however, not arithmetically but geometrically” (Rempel 1936:201, Fig 11). Hillenbrand has noted that the irrational number, the square root of two is used to set up the design of this building (1994:14).²⁰² This number cannot be expressed arithmetically, as a fraction. This is arguably one of the symbols of the new Islamic aesthetic feeling.

We discussed in Chapter Two how there was a contract between Samanid rulers and their subjects, which started with Ismail, he personally demanded loyalty, which was offered to him. It is argued here that the Samanid dynastic tomb was a visualisation of this contract, left by Ismail to bind his successors to him in people’s minds, as a way of ensuring the continuity of their loyalty to the House of Saman. The “duty of the ruler was seen largely to be the preservation of a due equipoise which was to be achieved by keeping each individual in his proper place” (Lambton 1962:97), it is argued that the domed mausoleum was the visual realisation of this, where the dome represented the ruler supported by the rest of the structure, like the quotation at the start of the chapter.

Just as Farabi wrote about politics and ethics, he also wrote about music and geometrical forms,²⁰³ which might give us an insight into how early Islamic cities and their buildings were not just constructed but conceived. “Al-Farabi thus recognised a basic structural affinity among those crafts using modular units of composition in products which emphasised harmonious patterns” (Necipoğlu 1995:209), which he compared to the warp and weft in textiles and bricks in architectural construction. However, the viewer has a paramount role in the success of these images in their own imagination. Their success is measured in feelings of awe, wonder and pleasure (Kemal 2003:3 and 155-189), linking to poststructuralist ideas where the viewer’s gaze is an important element in the whole design. Thus, the citizen of the *Virtuous City* might appreciate the harmony and balance of the individual elements, where beauty is seen as divine. Among the divine names al-Farabi lists in his *Virtuous City* are the visual terms 'beauty' (*al-jamal*), 'brilliance' (*al-baha*) and 'splendour' (*al-zina*).²⁰⁴ Thus the

²⁰² Similar to the Mustansiriya madrasa, Baghdad (13th century) and the Amir Kilani tomb, Jerusalem (14th century) (Hillenbrand 1994:14). If you have a square with 1 unit to the sides, the square root of two (1.4142135623730950...) is the diagonal of the square. This is a mathematically irrational number, which cannot be written as a ratio of two other numbers, thus it is more easily expressed geometrically.

²⁰³ Al-Farabi wrote the *Spiritual Crafts and Natural Secrets in the Details of Geometrical Figures*, however Necipoğlu notes that the relevance of Islamic philosophical texts to aesthetics and architecture has not been sufficiently explored (1995).

²⁰⁴ Black, <http://www.muslimphilosophy.com/ip/rep/H020> (accessed 14/08/2014).

political order manifest in his Virtuous City can be shown visually, and the creation of awe and wonder in royal works is one of the ways in which this is done. Arguably, this building, because of its links to Samanid state formation, was not just designed to be understood by a very few. For example, the encyclopaedia of al-Khwarazmi shows that the Samanids desired to spread Aristotelian logic and metaphysics to a wider audience “which allowed them greater access to knowledge by placing at their disposal fundamental terms and concepts of all the sciences, both those of the Arabic language and those of Greek philosophy” (Heck 2002:42), Heck believes that they did this to bolster their dual dispensation (Central Asian and Islamic) as well as reaching out to multiple audiences of their subjects.²⁰⁵

²⁰⁵ The bookshops in Bukhara were famous, Ibn Sina found a copy of Al-Farabi there which helped him to understand Aristotle.



Figure 34: Plate with Castle's Siege (Jericho) (Anikovo Plate). 9th-10th century. Silver, gold; chasing, gilding. Inv.no. S-46.n © State Hermitage Museum, St Petersburg

Thus, in the *Virtuous City*, the city is a model of the cosmos, where all of the members know their place in the hierarchy and are ordered under the ruler according to rank, in a way to best achieve their happiness, so each class can attain the perfection to which it is capable and serve the one above it. We could argue is the structure of the Samanid Mausoleum is similarly conceived, where the bricks make up the warp and weft of the design and decorative elements. The cardinally oriented domed square may symbolise the cosmos, and the cosmic contract that the citizens may expect from a ruler in the *Virtuous City*. The political community of the virtuous city is made up of philosophers (the few) as well as those who do not have the time or inclination for philosophy and for whom the ruler must

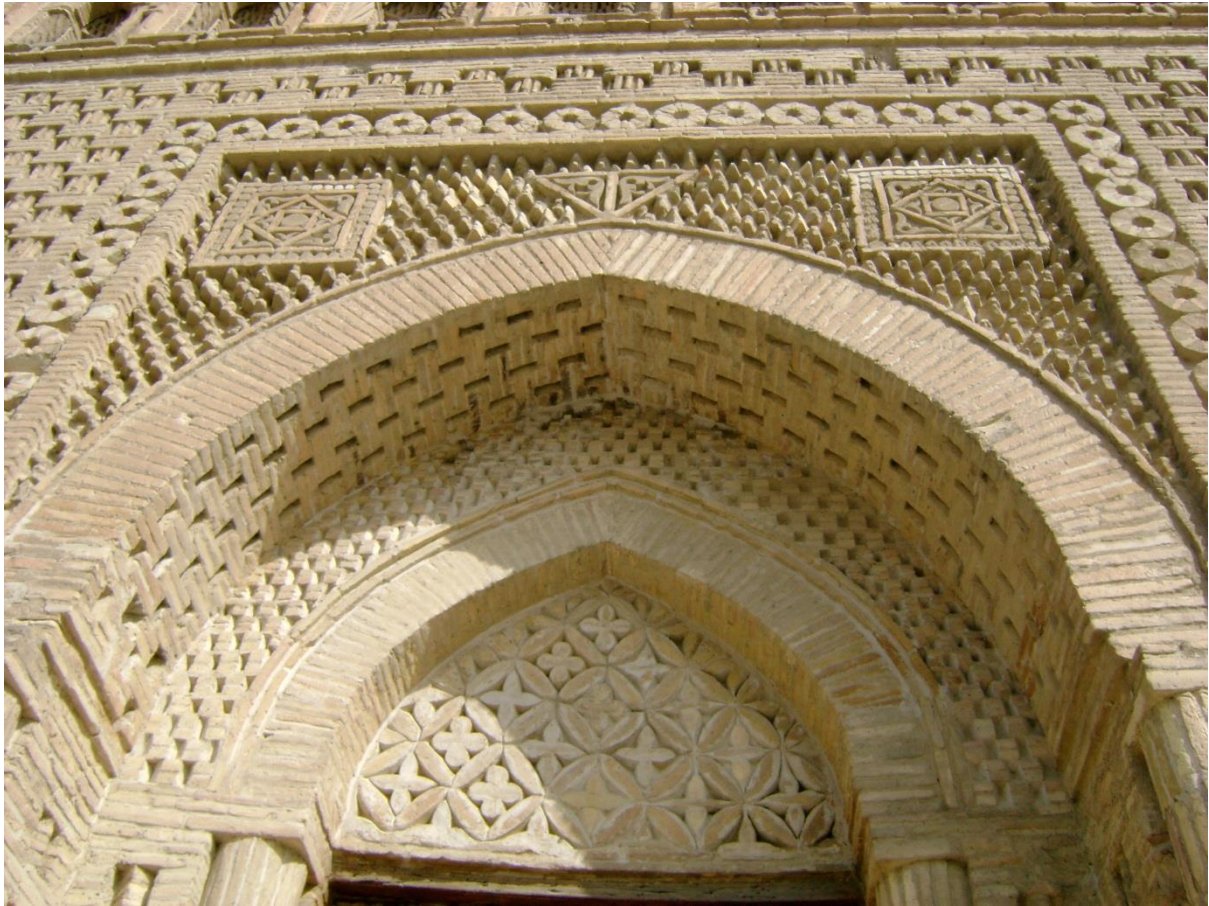


Figure 35: Samanid Mausoleum, entrance looking up.

persuade by similitudes and symbols.²⁰⁶ Arguably the Samanid Mausoleum was one of these persuasive symbols which enabled the dynasty to continue their rule. The first mausoleums in Central Asia were built as public sites and not religious edifices, which is why they were cardinally oriented, rather than aligned like mosques, to the south-west along the qibla.²⁰⁷ Not until 11th century, after the spread of Sufism in Central Asia did mazars²⁰⁸ become the focus of religious pilgrimage (Khmelnitsky 1991:28-29), thus it can be argued that the Samanid Mausoleum was designed as a focus of political or social gathering. The main door with its inscription faces an approximation of the qibla, west, but if we see this as a later addition, perhaps an attempt to give a more spiritual purpose to the tomb which was purely built for the secular world as a ceremonial complex? Can we see the Samanid Mausoleum as an *axis mundi*, a tower pierced with windows, “[w]here power generated in the axis mundi flowed

²⁰⁶ Mahdi n.d. <http://www.iranicaonline.org/articles/farabi-vi> (accessed 14/08/2014).

²⁰⁷ This is true of Khoja Mashhad, Tilla Khaladji and Khoja Bulhak, thus it is interesting that these were seen as public rather than religious sites (Khmelnitsky 1992:143-156).

²⁰⁸ A *mazar* is an Islamic mausoleum, shrine or sacred place.

out from the confines of the ceremonial complex towards the cardinal points of the compass” (Wheatley 1969:10)? However, where the cardinal orientation might have symbolised the sacred in other locations and times, in Islamic architecture the sacred could only mean one orientation, to Mecca, in whatever direction that might be, which trumped all other orientations. For example, where other round cities had cardinally orientated gates, Baghdad oriented one of its gates to Mecca, with the others arranged at intervals from there.

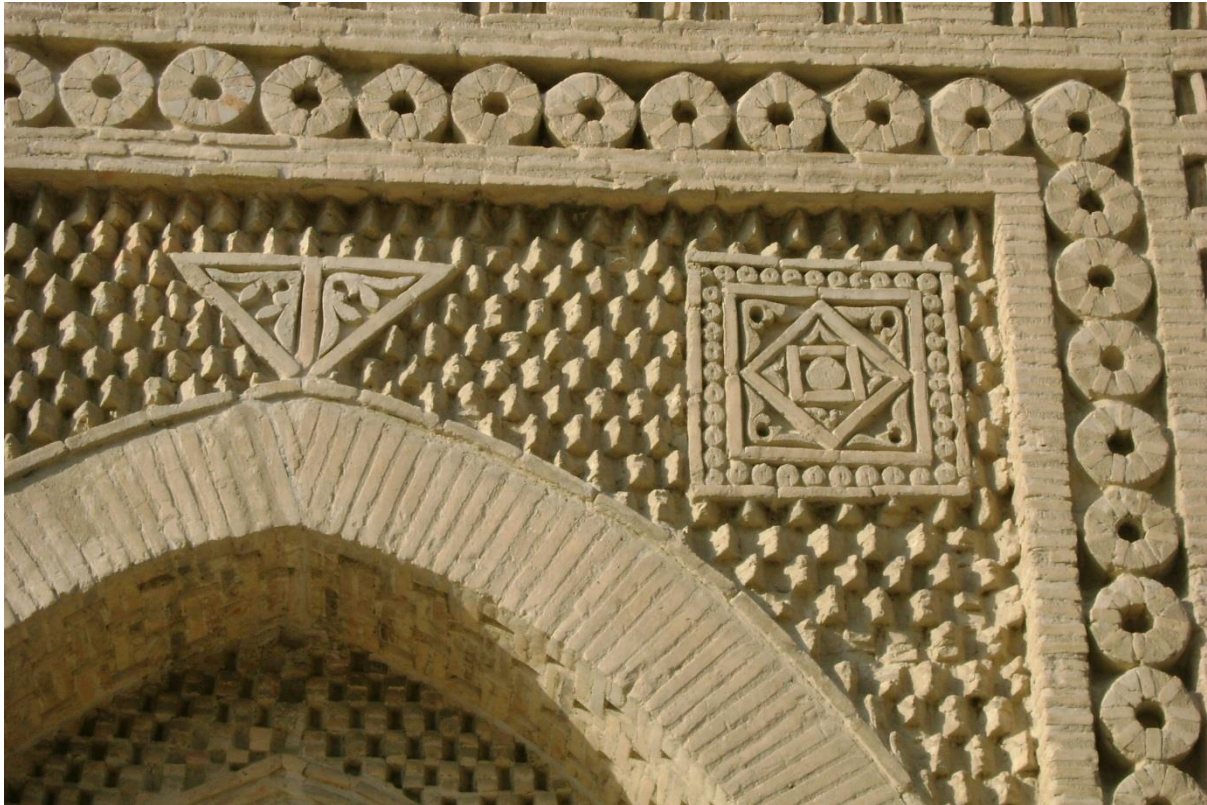


Figure 36: Samanid Mausoleum, detail of 'cosmogramme' in spandrel and 'wings' over doorway

There is a connection with domes to 'the dome of heaven' (Bloom 1993b:136, see also Coburn Soper 1947), together with a square which represents the world, they are seen to mean the universe. They can also be seen as representations of the Buddhist mandala. The circle and square motifs are seen on Sogdian coins adopted from Chinese originals (Compareti 2006:157) as well as on the cosmogrammes on the spandrels either side of the doorways (**Figs. 35-36**). These are a two-dimensional symbol of the whole structure that also reminds viewers of its centrality, through their repetition on the cardinal axes looking out over the city. The circle and square are used in China to express the world and rule over it (Wheatley 1971, Brentjes 1984:3). This symbol has also been found on the façade of the Parthian palace at Ashur (Michailidis 2007, **Fig. 37**), thus could there be a specific Parthian heritage which is being underlined in this structure? The Samanids' summer palace of Kyrk Kyz, is also on a Parthian plan (see below). This may be connected to the Samanids claiming Parthian heritage (Pourshariati 2008, 2010)?



© Staatliche Museen zu Berlin - Vorderasiatisches Museum, Foto: Olaf M. Teßmer

Figure 37: Façade of the Palace of Ashur, 1st century BC, detail, © Staatliche Museen zu Berlin – Vorderasiatisches Museum, Foto: Olaf M. Teßmer²⁰⁹

The building's form has been linked by scholars to the Sogdian *kushk*, the Buddhist stupa, the Persian *chahar taq*, and the Abbasid dynastic mausolea (see Appendix B). Thus, it is possible that this was a symbol, like the use of the seven stars in the Tajik flag (see Chapter Five below) which was working hard, able to be read in different ways by different groups, or just different people. While scholars have been divided as to the meaning of the motif over the door (**Figs. 35-36**), believing it to be either wings (Shokoohy 1994, Khazâie 1997) or just triangles, (Bloom pers. comm.) it is argued here that if other buildings either real or imagined experienced by the Samanid Mausoleum's viewers had wings over the door, such as the Berlin Salver, then these abstract designs might have meant something to them, possibly suggesting wings, in much the same way that the ceramics would have various messages depending on the viewer. We know that wings still connoted royalty in the early Islamic period, such as in the medallions of the Buyid princes Adud al-Dawla (Bahrami 1952: Figs 2a

²⁰⁹ See also Jakob-Rost et al. 1992 Pl. 136. The motif appears as a stucco border on the monumental façade above the first and second levels of arches. Swastikas and other quadripartite motifs also decorate the palace façade.

& 2b) and Rukn al-Dawla (Treadwell 2003:324). However the wings (if that is what they are), are not as obvious as on the Asht mihrab for example, due also to their rendering in terracotta rather than stucco, possibly suggesting that there was an element of subtlety and dissimulation in their representation of power, where they were both simultaneously assuming and rejecting their pre-Islamic heritage, depending on the viewer.

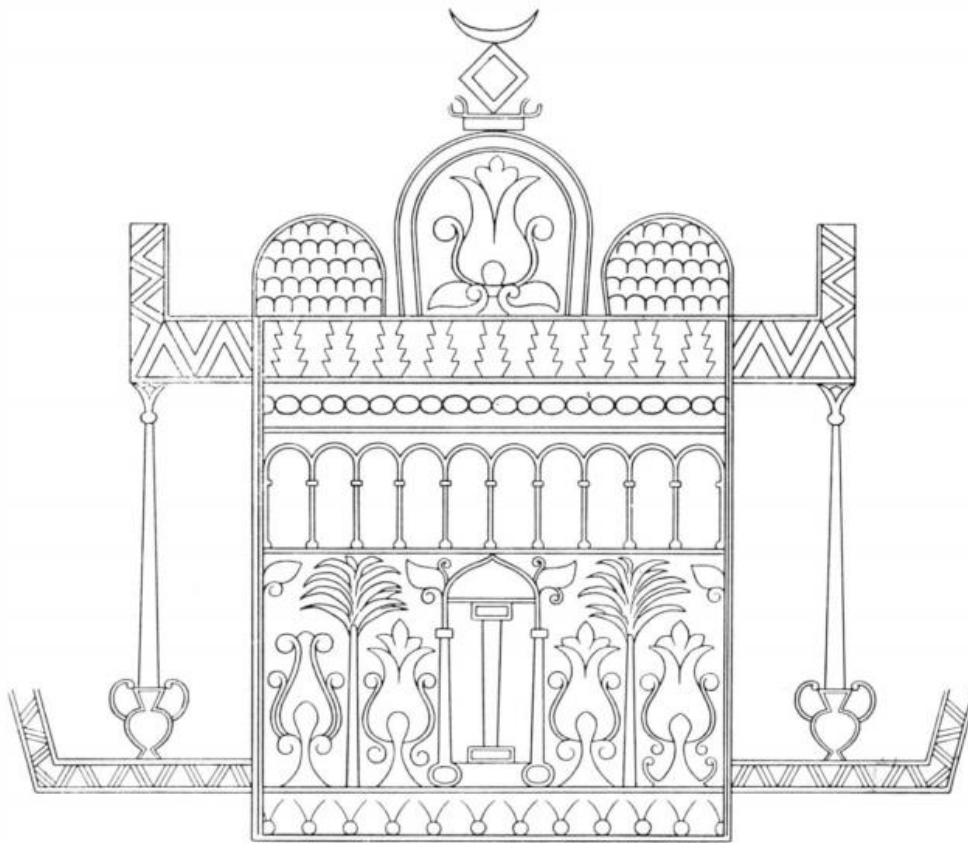


Figure 38: 'Berlin Salver', illustration of central panel, garden pavilion, Upham Pope 1933 Fig. 2 © College Art Association.

Narshakhi talks of Isma'il's final illness in 907, where he died in a garden in the village of Zarman sitting under a large tree. The corpse was carried to Bukhara and buried, where it became a place of pilgrimage for the people of the city (Narshakhi 1954:93ff.).²¹⁰ Thus from the beginning, Ismail's death

²¹⁰ This is interesting, as it suggests from the time of Ismail's death, his burial place was a focus of pilgrimage, as it is still today, however this could well be a later addition. I saw people praying at the Samanid Mausoleum, who spoke about Ismail, and few seemed to remember the other probable incumbents, Ismail's father, Ahmad, or grandson Nasr ibn Ahmad.

is connected with a garden. Later tombs, like the one built for Sultan Sanjar²¹¹ in Merv, which in some ways are similar to the Samanid Mausoleum are possibly placed in a *chahar bagh* (Fairchild Ruggles 2008:40ff. and see below) and the structure on the Berlin salver (**Fig. 38**), whose form heralds the Samanid Mausoleum, is probably a garden pavilion, shown by the vegetation emanating from the centre.

It is interesting to reflect whether the Samanid Mausoleum with its axial design was a similar type of mausoleum, designed to be placed in a garden, in a similar way to a centrally sited royal pavilion in a *chahar bagh*? In this way it might have had paths leading towards its four cardinaly orientated entrances, similar to the *chahar bagh* in the Bukhara palace? However, this is speculation, we do not have enough evidence, and the Russian archaeological results which might have contributed to our understanding of the building have not been well published. Nevertheless Cekovich's waqf document quoted by Stock clearly mentions four borders to the ground of the Mausoleum.²¹² Decoration such as quatrefoils which decorate the Mausoleum above the exterior entrance arches and around the base of the interior of the dome could relate to earthly flowers, also continue the quadripartite design in microcosm, however these are also seen on *kushk* castle depictions like the Anikov dish (see above).

Bourdieu's ideas on symbolic capital also have something to offer us here, where the full explanation for artistic works is to be found in the history or the structure of the field itself and the relationship of that field to the field of power (e.g. 1993). "To change the world, one has to change the ways of world making" (Bourdieu 1989:23), where symbolic power enables you to create groups or imagine new groups. By possessing symbolic capital, you may impose on other people your vision due to your own social authority. But this 'symbolic efficacy' (Bourdieu 1989:23) must be grounded in reality. This is arguably what Ismail Samanid was doing: because of his very real power on the battlefield and ability to command armies, as well as the important apocryphal stories about his justice and being an Islamic ruler par excellence, he was able to impress unity on his people. Through his military power,

²¹¹ Sultan Sanjar's mausoleum is the largest extant domed square mausoleum in the Iranian world also with a blind arch gallery (12th century). It is on a colossal scale, 36 metres high and 27 metres per side. This later building was set in a courtyard and had a complex attached including minaret, hammam and a possible library (Gye and Hillenbrand 2001, Creswell 1915).

²¹² The description of the four borders of the mazar in the waqf documentation are clear to all sides: Stock gives this German translation of Record No 2:
Die Beschreibung der vier Grenzen des gekennzeichneten hervorragenden Mazars des hochheiligen, hochgestellten, geehrten, von Allah entschuldigten Herrschers, Amir Ahmad Samani, Sohn seiner Hoheit Amir Asad Samani, welches ausserhalb der alten Festung Bukhara in der Strasse der vier Kuppeln [Chor Gunbad] am westlichen Rand der obergenannten Stadt gelegen ist. Nach Osten grenzt es an den allgemeinen Weg neben den obergenannten Mazar und teilweise an der muslimischen Friedhof, der einen erhöhten Platz einnimmt, und die übrigen drei Seiten grenzen an den muslimischen Friedhof der einen erhöhten Platz einnimmt. Die Grenzen sind nach allen Seiten klar (Cekovic 1950 quoted in Stock 1989:269).

power, legitimacy and material cultural creations, such as coinage and architecture he imagined and built a new empire, with new and expanded territorial limits (see above). It is this which is arguably embodied in the Samanid Mausoleum.

Palatial paradigms

No Samanid palaces have been found in Bukhara, their capital, thus what we know is from textual evidence. Narshakhi tells us that the Samanid amirs resided in the citadel (or Arg, see **Fig. 39**), whose construction he attributes to the legendary hero Siyavush. “The fortress was the place of residence of rulers, amirs and generals. It was also a prison and a chancellery; the castle [i.e. *qala* or the fortress in the citadel]²¹³ was the residence of the rulers” (Narshakhi 1954:25). We know from Ibn Hawqal:

[t]he citadel is outside the town but joined to it. It is equal to a small town in size. In it is a castle, the home of the governor of Khurasan of the house of Saman. It has wide and long walls. There is a grand mosque at the gate of the citadel in the city, and the prison is in the citadel. There is no other city in Khurasan so strongly fortified (Ibn Hawqal in Narshakhi 1954 Note 115).

The quotation above shows they also have religion at the heart of their capitol complex, symbolising that they are ‘rightly guided’ and have God on their side. They also have the means of earthly corporal and capital punishment. Thus the Arg, rising vertically above the city, acts as a type of panopticon, viewing the citizens below, threatening punishment of those who do not obey government dictates (see Foucault 1991:195ff.).²¹⁴ The Samanid treasury is also in the *quhandiz*, next to the prison (Muqaddasi 1994:249). We are reminded that throughout history palaces have derived their symbolic power from their very real functions (Necipoğlu 1993a:4, Winter 1993:27ff), such as hoarding wealth to pay for wars and gifts, the opportunity to deprive people of their freedom and to torture their bodies. This also links to Foucault’s distinction between ‘power to’, and ‘power over’, where power can have both positive and negative effects (Foucault 1980). It is interesting to reflect whether the Samanids derived any symbolic power or legitimacy from the connection with Siyavush.²¹⁵ Hoffman reminds us

²¹³ Explains Gaube 1999, noting that this description might belong to post-Samanid period.

²¹⁴ See also Tabbaa 1993:182ff, discussing the minaret on the citadel of Aleppo, which could have been a locus of observation and surveillance (see below, for the Zarafshan minarets).

²¹⁵ It seems that the majority of the pre-Islamic Bukharan population followed the local cult centring on the epic figure of Siyavush, dirges about Siyavush were well-known and there were sacrifices performed over his grave near Bukhara (Frye 1965:27). Narshakhi reports that every year before the rising of the sun on New Year’s Day every person brings a cock there and kills it in memory of him (Narshakhi 1954:23).

that it is the continuum between past and present as well as East and West, mythological and historical which is important (Hoffman 2008). She is discussing the Dar al-Khalifa of the Abbasid caliphs, but the same might well equally hold true of the *malik-i Mashriq*, the Samanid dynasty. “Rulers expressed their relationship to the past through the insertion of the royal image within the continuum of princely rule and through the visual representation of the continuum itself”, this was part of the legitimising process and the synthesis cannot simply be broken down into its constituent parts (Hoffman 2008:124-127).

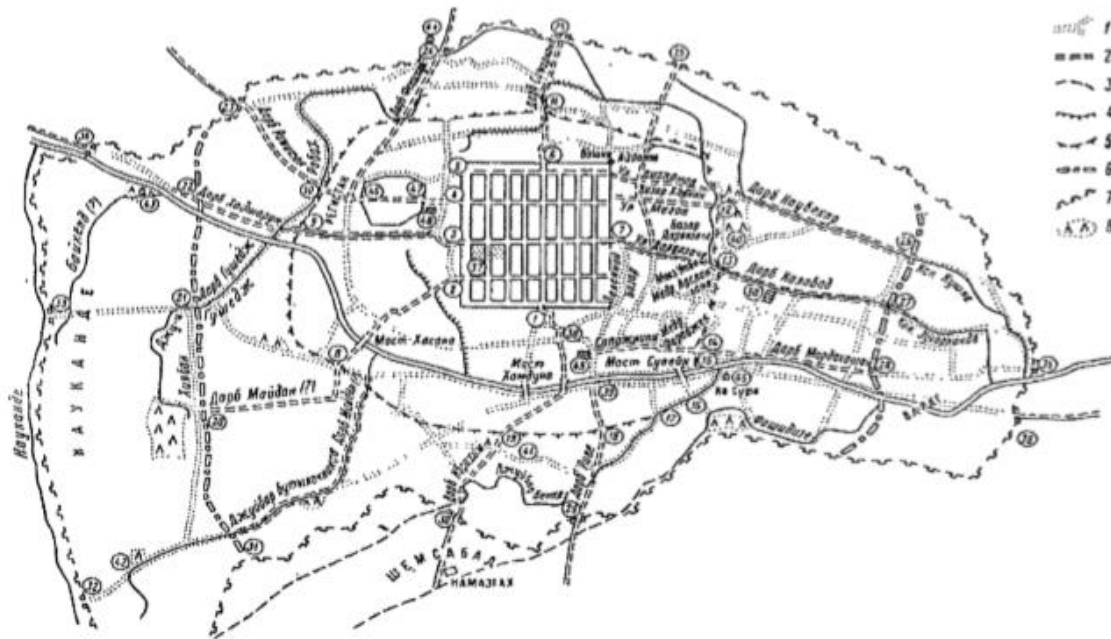


Figure 39: Plan of Bukhara's shahristan (proposed) by Bulshakov from Naymark 1999:41²¹⁶

Samanid rulers later moved out of the citadel to live in garden palaces in the rabats, outside the city walls,²¹⁷ such as Juy-i Muliyan,²¹⁸ this reinforces the fact that inhabitants of Mawarannahr felt secure outside the citadel walls (Naymark 1999:49ff. especially p 51). It also gave Samanids space to design

²¹⁶ Key 1 – streets of the 19th century, 2 – medieval streets, 3 – proposed direction of canals, 4 – Underground canal of the 10th century, 5 walls of the inner Rabad, 6 – walls of the outer Rabad, 7 – city walls in the 17-19th centuries, 8 – Cemeteries. For full key see Naymark 1999. There is a better version of this map in Yuri Bregels. An Historical Atlas of Central Asia (HbO, Brill), map 40.

²¹⁷ And outside the shahristan, also Karak-i Alawiyan was in the rabat.

²¹⁸ Also, in Samarqand where in second half of the 10th century, the Samanids lived in country estates rather than their citadel, and the *dar al-imara* was abandoned, and seems to have been a rubbish dump. In Samarqand the Samanid government buildings (*dur al-imara*) were also located in the medina at a place called Asfizar (Karev 2013).

their own palaces. We can compare the two types of palace Narshakhi describes with two contemporary palatial paradigms created in the Islamic centre (Bacharach 1991, Necipoğlu 1993a). In the Umayyad and early Abbasid palaces the *dar al-Imara* (palace of government) was juxtaposed to the congregational mosque forming a single unit, where rulers led the congregation and were accessible to their people, reflecting their dual role as monarchs and religious leaders. In the early years across the Islamic world placing palace and mosque together made sense, as it served the needs of the Muslim elite: administration and the military, who were often in the minority, symbolising Muslim power and presence to a sometimes hostile population. It was common in the Islamic heartland for the *dar al-Imara* to be set on the qibla side of the mosque (see below), we do not know whether this was the case here. The Samanids were unusual in the Islamic world in using a pre-Islamic citadel for their seat of government in the 9-10th centuries, this only began to be common practice in the 12th century elsewhere in the Islamic world.²¹⁹ In that period, control of the citadel offered a very real legitimacy of power (Bacharach 1991:112ff.), which is possibly true here as well, even though the Samanids had not seized Bukhara by military force.

In the 9-10th century the later Abbasid palaces, the *dar al-khilafa* (palace of the caliphate), became enormous extra-urban palatine complexes used as administrative and political centres. These were no longer attached to congregational mosques and were separated from existing Muslim urban centres.²²⁰ How to lead an Islamic way of life, guided by the *ulama* rather than political rulers, was much clearer in this later period, thus there was less need to combine the mosque and palace as a way of instructing the people. It does not seem that there was a single architectural model in this period, new palace complexes were on the existing horizontal plane of the urban centre, rather than in a citadel which physically and vertically dominated the city (Bacharach 1991:125ff.). In Samarqand the earliest mosque and *dar al-Imara* were both in the *quhandiz*, whereas in the Samanid period, the *dar al-Imara* stood in the *medina* (Kennedy 2006:31-32). Muqqadasi describes the “residence of the king is on the plain [Juy-i Muliyan?], the back of the house being towards the qibla (Muqqadasi 1994:281), thus presumably the palace was aligned to the *qibla*.²²¹ This spatial linking of two discrete

²¹⁹ Tabbaa has suggested that later 12th century Islamic citadels might be modelled on the east Iranian tripartite division of a city into *quhandiz*, *shahristan* and *rabat*, possibly brought by the Seljuqs (2010:59). In any case Bukhara is one of the earliest models of this type.

²²⁰ Bacharach 1991:123ff. This palatial architecture was also adopted in Fatimid Egypt and Umayyad Spain. Necipoğlu believes that increasing separation between palace and mosque, beginning in 9th century Samarra, shows the increasing seclusion of the Abbasid caliph from their subjects (Necipoğlu 1993a), which is not necessarily the case for the Samanids, note the many tales which show Ismail's accessibility. Possibly this was due to the continuing east Iranian Sogdian traditions characterising the king as the ‘first among equals’, as well as more provincial traditions than those of the caliphs.

²²¹ It is possible that this was to reinforce the idea that when Muslims faced the qibla or Mecca to pray, they were also facing the immediate seat of political power, underlining the congruence between the two (Bacharach 1991:113ff.).

architectural elements appeared frequently during the early Islamic period, and suggested perhaps the dual responsibilities of rulers, both secular and religious, (Bacharach 1991:113) and that the Samanids were rightly guided.

However, Nasr's return to the urban location of the Registan for his palace, seems to go against this paradigm, equally Mansur ibn Nuh's palace at Karak-i 'Alawiyan, built in 967, was near the New Gate of the city (Narshakhi 1954:25-29, also Minorsky 1938), thus also presumably more urban than the Abbasid *dar al-khalifa*? Between the west gate of the citadel and Ma'bad gate, in the area that was (and still is called the Registan) Nasr ibn Ahmad (913-943) built a court and buildings for the *diwans* (see below). The ruins of Kyrk Kyz, (see below) a possible Samanid summer palace near Termez, and the Domed Hall and stucco work from Samarqand which is also possibly a Samanid palace, though this is disputed in the literature, due to the room size (see below) may also help elucidate Samanid palaces in Bukhara.

Kyrk Kyz, Termez (9-10th century)

We may also gain some idea of the Samanid architecture of power through looking at Kyrk Kyz²²² in the south of modern Uzbekistan, another cardinaly orientated, quadripartite structure (**Figs. 40-42**), just like the Samanid Mausoleum. The wonderful and complex vaulting techniques used throughout the building and its dazzling use of brick also connects the two buildings. Kyrk Kyz is located near Termez, in a suburb called shahr-i Saman, or city of Saman,²²³ further suggesting a link with the dynasty. There are different interpretations as to its function, and is either seen as luxury caravanseraï or palace,²²⁴ a monumental expression of the dar al-Imara type. It has an eight domed room, which is a possible mosque,²²⁵ so the structure is unlikely to have a military function. However, it is inward facing rather than outward looking, presenting an almost blank exterior wall, only alleviated by small

²²² Also spelt Kir Kyz, Qir Qyz, and Kir Kyz. A square 54x55m building of kushk type, with corner towers, with four room complexes separated by four vaulted corridors around a small central area, 11.5 m square. Four iwans open from the central area and each iwan leads to a double-vaulted vestibule leading to one of the four entrances. There are also vaulted rooms on two storeys.

²²³ The *Nasabname* tells us the village of Saman was a settlement near Termez, and this was corroborated by the French scholar, Guillaume Capus who visited a settlement north of Termez in the 1880s called Shahr-i Saman (Treadwell 1991:66 Note 8). According to Khmel'nitsky (1992), all scholars date Kyrk Kyz to 9-10th century apart from Voronina who dates it 11-12th centuries.

²²⁴ According to Brentjes, it is the best surviving early Islamic Central Asian palace (1979). Hillenbrand also believes a connection with the Samanids is plausible, both architecturally and historically (1994:409-411). There is also the palace of Khulbuk, a governor's palace in southern Tajikistan (see Chapter Five).

²²⁵ Hillenbrand comes to this conclusion by comparison with the nine domed mosques of Haji Piyadi/ No Gunbad, (Hillenbrand 1994:409-411) which is possible, however these had nine domes and were independent structures rather than part of a larger complex. Brentjes says the hall has six domes; but calls it a "Saalmoschee" (1979). Khmel'nitsky also marks six domes on his plan (1992:223).

window slits. Because of the private seeming nature of its exterior it was probably a seasonal retreat for a ruler, rather than the permanent residence of government (Hillenbrand 1994:409-411).



Figure 40: Kyrk Kyz, Termez, Uzbekistan, 2011.

What is interesting for our purposes is the four *ivan*²²⁶ plan (**Fig. 41**) which links the building to the palace of Abu Muslim in Merv²²⁷ as well as to the tomb and madrassa complex of Khoja Mashhad and the Buddhist site of Ajina Tepe. It seems that there is no evidence of a dome over the central area.²²⁸ The quadripartite palatial plan is first found at the Parthian palace of Assur (1st-3rd centuries CE), with

²²⁶ The plan of the four *ivan* court began in Iran, it is attested in the Parthian palace of Assur (2nd C BCE) (Colledge 1977 Fig. 21), and in the Sasanian palace of Firuzabad (3rd C CE). It is also seen in Ajina Tepe, an example of the layout which was adopted in Bactria in the Sasanian period (Pugachenkova 1991:216).

²²⁷ Istakhri says '[a]mong the buildings of Abu Muslim is the Dar-al-Imara, and it is at the back (*zahr*) of the mosque. And in this dar is a domed chamber (*qubba*) which Abu Muslim built, in which he used to sit, and for this reason the emirs of Merv used to sit in this *qubba*. It is a domed chamber made of burnt brick, and its measurement is 55 cubits. There is access to the flat part of the roof from the interior. And the domed chamber has four doors, each leading to an *ivan*. And the height of each *ivan* is ... [blank]. And the front of each *ivan* is a square *sahn* [?]' Istakhri quoted in Creswell 1979:3). Hillenbrand believes "the cosmic implications of such a building are evident and descend perhaps from the palace of Khusrau II, the fabled Taq-i Taqdis with its revolving dome" (1994:409) For Taq-i Taqdis, see al-Khamis 1990.

²²⁸ Khmel'nitsky says that following Khakimov's excavations in 1967, the central area was not domed (1992:220), which is supported by Hillenbrand (1994:409-411).

the plan becoming common in early Islamic palaces²²⁹ with cruciform plans with iwans surrounding a central throne hall. Thus, together with the Samanid lineage acknowledging Bahram Chubin as their ancestor, and the possible connection with the motif in the spandrel with the façade of the Parthian palace at Assur, this is possibly a further allusion to the Parthian dynasty. Were they also indicating that they were one of the *Pahlavan*, descended from Bahram Chubin? Alternatively, or as well they could be seen to be selecting the most desirable motifs from the caliphal centre, which resonated deeply with their own built heritage.

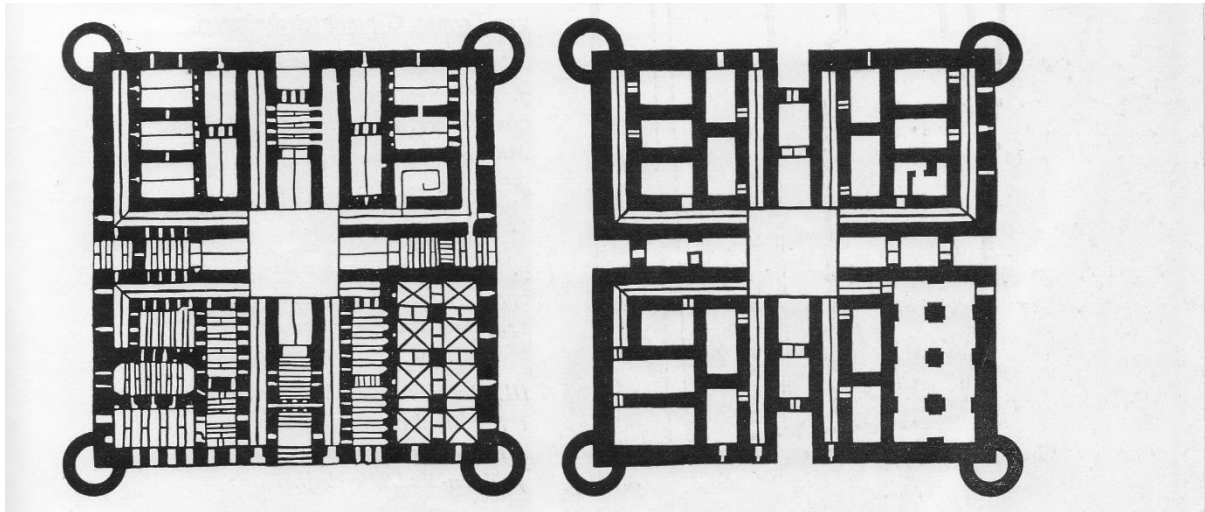


Figure 41: Kyrk Kyz, Uzbekistan, ground floor and first floor plans, from Pugachenkova 1981:17.

The interior of Kyrk Kyz was arranged in *iwans* round the courtyard and between the *iwans* were two tiers of arches in a kind of triumphal arch format²³⁰ seen in monumental palatial façades in Sasanian architecture, e.g. Ctesiphon as well as the early Islamic Ukhaider, Samarra and later on Lashgari Bazaar. The Diggaron mosque also shows a triumphal arch in cross section (Khmel'nitsky 1992:77), as does the late pre-Islamic palace of Varaksha (Naymark 2003). It is also noteworthy that the

²²⁹ Dar al-Amara at Kufa, the Umayyad palace in Amman citadel, the Victory Monument of Harun al-Rashid (786-809 CE) at Hiraqlah, as well as the Samarra palaces of which Jawsaq al-Khaqani, Qasr al-Jiss, Qasr al-Haruni Qasr Balkuwara and Qasr al-'Ashiq all have cruciform plans with iwans surrounding a central throne hall. This also possibly links to the round city of Baghdad. There are also references that relate to Abbasid royal ceremonial around the caliph, focussing on his centrality, where the caliph is surrounded by *ghulam* guards in all directions, whose distinctive clothing references different parts of the Islamic world. Tabbaa believes that the ritual recharged the ancient Near Eastern symbol "converting it from a static symbol of royalty to a dynamic symbol of authority" (Tabbaa 1993:185 and Note 48).

²³⁰ Tripartite courtyard façades have a long history, possibly combining the Roman triumphal arch in Parthian and Sasanian architecture with the *iwān* form; they have also been found at Varakhsha (Naymark 2003).

Samanids were using a form of kushk used by the Sogdian *dehqans* in the pre-Islamic period, showing a continuity with that period, and underlining the dynasty's local heritage, unlike the incoming Arabs.



Figure 42: Kyrk Kyz, brickwork, 2011.

In the Samanid period the stark defensive walls were no longer strictly functional, their standing army would have been defence enough. The fact that the building was cardinally orientated, is another connection with the Samanid Mausoleum, potentially underlining the centrality of the ruler who occupied it. Can we thus posit that the exterior is still very much in the trajectory of the Sogdian kushk, whereas the interior shows another aesthetic, connecting it, albeit on a diminutive scale to the early Islamic palaces? This might suggest that slightly different messages were designed for different

audiences, where the palace interior with its Abbasid stylistic origins was only accessible to close followers. The adopted forms, however, do not negate their Persian roots. The building's exterior when I visited in 2011 was substantially rebuilt, compared to the photos in Khmel'nitsky (1992), there is a sign marking the building and possible date, but none of the putative links to the Samanids, which is just as we would expect in Uzbekistan.

Stuccowork in Domed Hall, Samarqand

These stuccos from the so-called Domed Hall in Samarqand (Akharov & Rempel 1971) show both bevelled style carvings as well as naturalistic vine motifs in the same room (**Figs. 43-47**). They define three archaeological periods of stucco fragments from 8th century until the end of the 10th century. It is noteworthy that the bevelled style is used on the most important arch, the central triumphal arch, and its prominent location perhaps suggesting its imperial heritage. The bevelled motif still forms a border, in this decorative programme it has not received its all-over affect seen at Samarra.

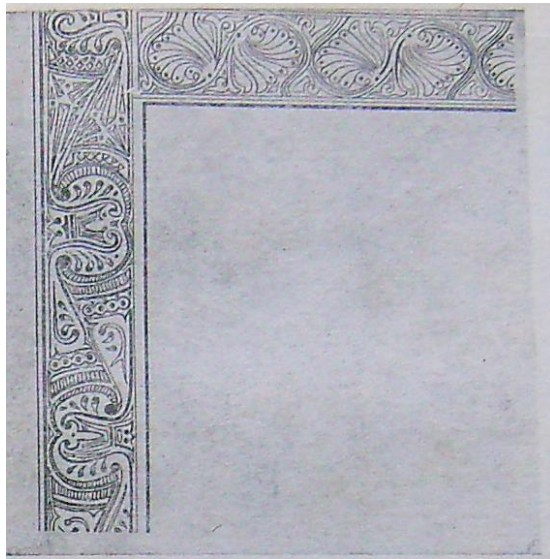


Figure 43: Stucco from the Domed Hall, drawing, Akharov & Rempel 1971, Fig 75.

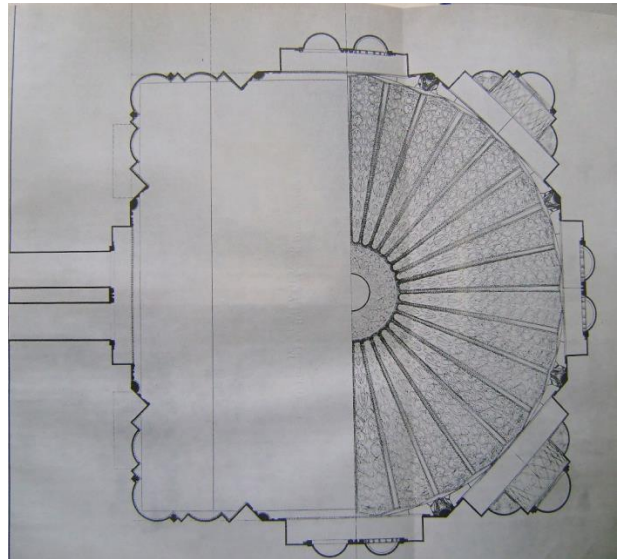


Figure 44: Plan of the Domed Hall, Akharov & Rempel 1971.

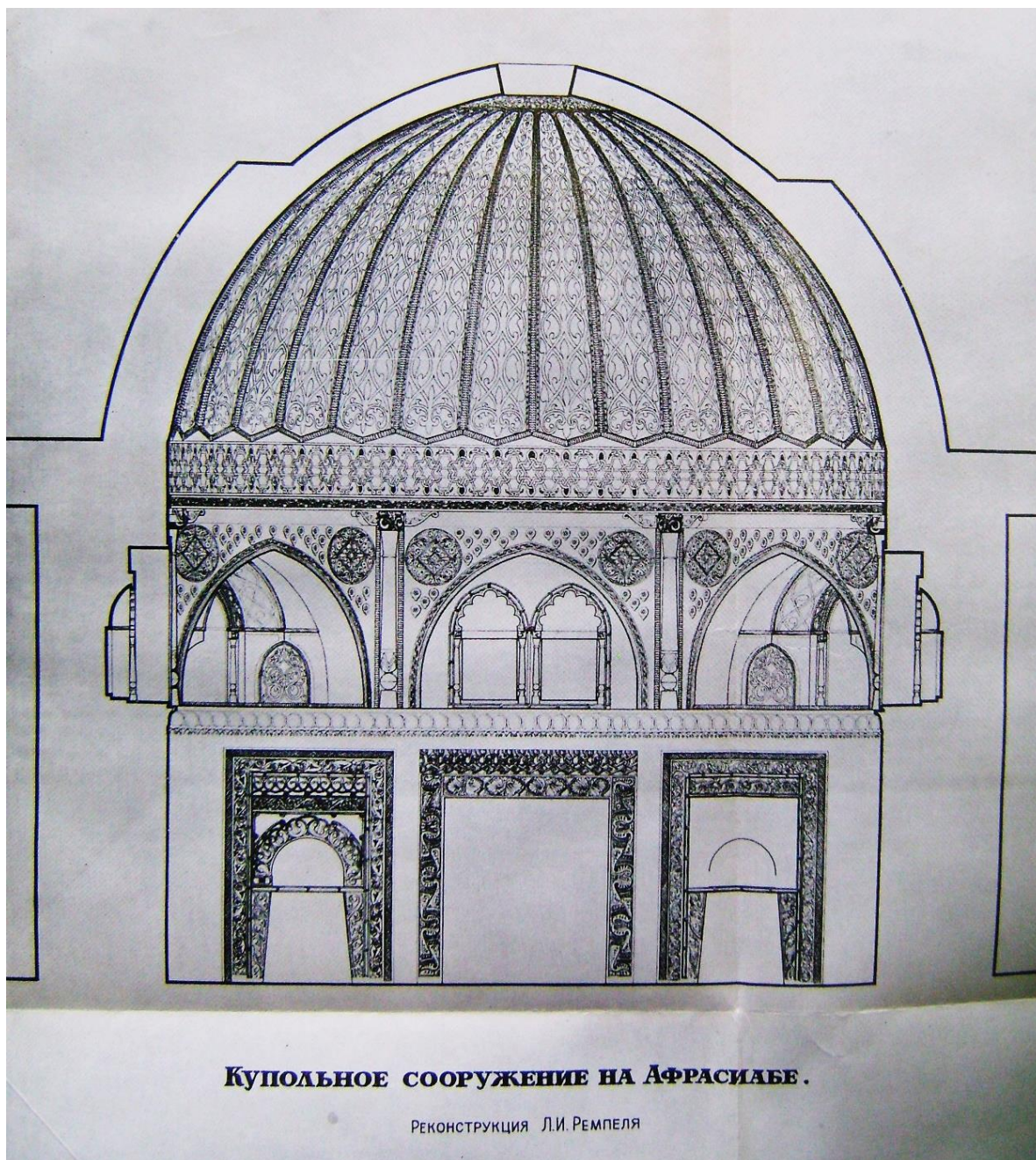


Figure 45: Domed hall, Samarkand, reconstruction, Akharov & Rempel 1971:96.

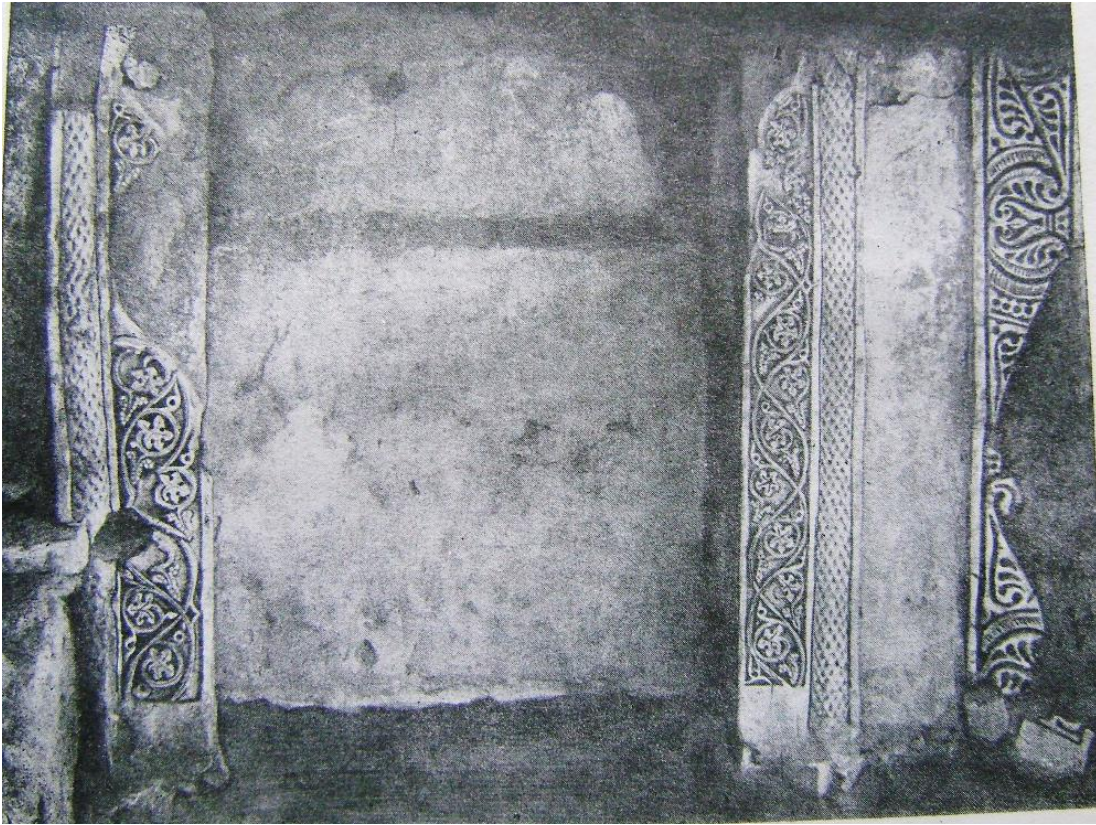


Figure 46: Stucco from the Domed Hall, Akharov & Rempel 1971, Fig 67.



Figure 47: Stucco from the Domed Hall, Akharov & Rempel 1971, Fig 74.

The niche, a probable mihrab discovered in the Samanid 'palace' at Samarqand (**Figs. 48-49**) is known only from photographs, as the original has not survived. It shows twelve curling branches which intertwine to form the central stem. This is similar to a 'sacred tree' however, this is on the path to abstraction. This implies that the dynasty was more heterodox than their silver coinage, seen throughout their empire, suggests. The mihrab can be compared to the donative medallion of Mansur ibn Nuh, intended for a courtly audience, which is also more heterodox than their coinage (see above). A similar motif is also found on the mihrab of the mosque of Jami al-Khasaki, Iraq (c. 762 CE), where it takes the form of a band of acanthus leaves, much more naturalistic in style (see Lechler 1937 fig 2), which seems to date from the early Abbasid period (Herzfeld 1927). Trees with animals either side can be found in roundels in Sogdian textiles, in the ancient sacred tree motif (Compareti 2006).²³¹ Above the mihrab in the modern Obburdon mosque there is a stucco panel with a stylised tree between two vases, showing that the sacred tree and the water of life (see Chapter Four) are still prayed in front of today.

²³¹ Online: <http://www.transoxiana.org/Eran/Articles/compareti.html> (Accessed 21/04/2014).



Figure 48: Niche (mihrab?), 'Palace' of Afrasiab, no longer extant, Khmel'nitsky 1992:117.

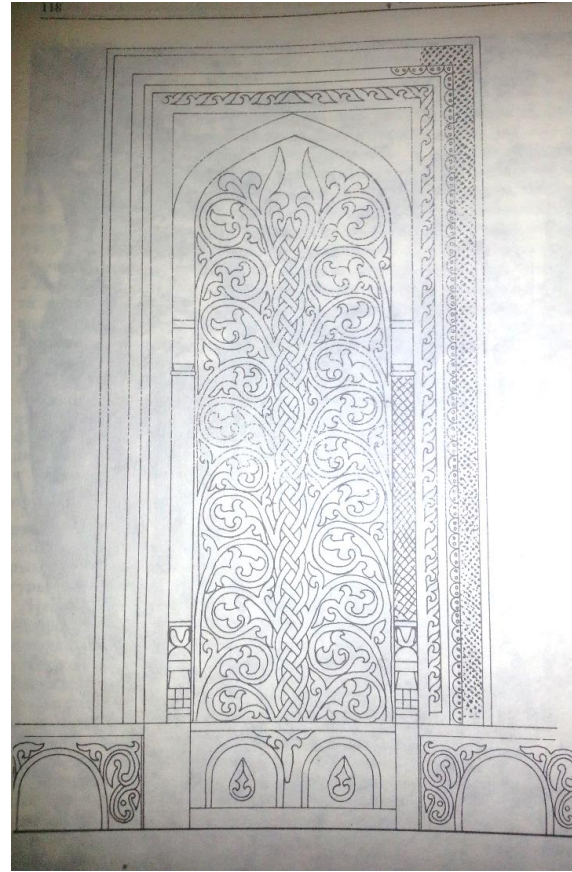


Figure 49: Drawing of niche (mihrab?) Afrasiab, Khmel'nitsky 1992:118.

Palace gardens

*The world is a garden, whose gardener is the state [dawlat];
The state is the sultan whose guardian is the Law [shari'a];*²³²

Islamic palace gardens were a very real symbol of control of precious water resources in an oasis, through which the ruler brought fruitfulness to the land, thus gardens became associated not just with

²³² Fakhr al-Din Razi of Herat (d. 1204), *Jāmi' al-'ulūm* in Eaton 1996:29, this later writer sums up how gardens were perceived in early Islamic period. Perhaps we can project this back to the Samanid period?

royal pleasure and luxury but also with power and territorial appropriation (Necipoğlu 1993a).²³³ Compared to the Ghaznavids and later dynasties (e.g., Fairchild Ruggles 2004, Scott-Meisami 2001:22ff.), very little is known about Samanid garden design, however Narshakhi describes the palace garden at Juy-i Muliyan with great care and not a little awe, we have a more detailed description of the garden than the palace interiors. It was obviously spectacular, an architecturally laid out, formal garden with water taken from one of the city's canals,²³⁴ Juy-i Muliyan, the 'canal of the clients'. The garden was described by Narshakhi as

"similar to paradise."²³⁵ There was no other place or residence like Juy-i Muliyan in Bukhara because all of it was filled with courts, gardens, parks, flower gardens and water flowing incessantly through its lawn. The ditches intersected with one another and flowed in a thousand directions to the lawns and flower gardens. Everyone who viewed the flowing water wondered from whence it came and whither it went. The artisans of the rarities of the age and the architects have created such a marvel. A prominent person has said 'the 'water of life' entered the park and with regret forsook it. It entered sighs because it had to leave this garden'" (Narshakhi 1954:27).

However, gardens were not just about power and pleasure, they also had a powerful mystic dimension for people living in an oasis in a dry land, Narshakhi's 'water of life'. Control of water also has a political dimension in contemporary Tajikistan as seen in Rahmon's focus on the construction of the Roghun Dam (see Chapter Six). The water in Narshakhi's description is talking in a kind of ekphrasis, lamenting leaving the Samanids' garden. The garden at Juy-i Muliyan also inspired one of Rudaki's most famous extant verses, symbolising Bukhara to a homesick poet, in the well-known story told by Nizami,²³⁶ which compelled Nasr II ibn Ahmad to head for home after four years in Herat:

*The Juy-i Muliyan we call to mind,
We long for those dear friends long left behind
The sands of Oxus, toilsome though they be,
Beneath my feet were soft as silk to me.
Glad at the friend's return, the Oxus deep
Up to our girths in laughing waves shall leap.
Long live Bukhara! Be thou of good cheer!
Joyous towards thee hasteth our Amir!
The moon's the prince, Bukhara is the sky;*

²³³ These associations continued from ancient near eastern palaces (see Winter 1993) right down to the 14th century when Ibn Khaldun counted the planting of gardens and installation of running water as well as the construction of monumental palaces being the fruits of royal authority (in Necipoğlu 1993a:4).

²³⁴ For the canal system see Gangler et al 2004.

²³⁵ Mansur ibn Nuh (961-977) built Karak-i 'Alawiyan villa (967) which was of "surpassing beauty (Narshakhi 1954). There are many comparisons in the Qur'an and poetry of Islamic gardens and paradise, giving an impression of greenery, flowing water, fountains, sensual beauty and delicious food (see e.g. Schimmel 1976).

²³⁶ See Williams Jackson 1920.

*O sky, the moon shall light thee by and by!
Bukhara is the mead, the Cypress ne;
Receive at last, O Mead the Cypress tree.* Quoted in Browne 2013 (1902: no page)

Here again, the location of the Samanids' palaces show a continuation from the pre-Islamic period, as Tughshada used to own Juy-i Muliyan, suggesting possibly one of the strands whereby Ismail legitimised the new Samanid rule was in connection with the pre-Islamic rulers of Bukhara.²³⁷ This is similar to the dynasty taking over the palace of Bidun in the citadel (see above). Nevertheless, Ismail bought rather than requisitioned these estates, suggesting his fairness to members of the old regime. Equally, he does not shut himself away (as the later Abbasid rulers did, see above) but gave portions in endowments to clients and pious men. This again suggests Ismail's openness as a ruler. It seems that after Ismail, subsequent Samanid rulers continued to build gardens and villas at Juy-i Muliyan. Another court (*saray*) is described in Narshakhi which extends from the Registan to Dashtak with

"all the houses symmetrical, wonderfully decorated in stone and resthouses with paintings on them. The court had beautiful fountains, elm trees, four lovely gardens²³⁸ filled with every kind of fruit tree and a pavilion so constructed that no ray of the sun, from the rising in the east to the setting in the west, ever fell on the pond. In these four gardens different species and kinds of fruit, such as pear, almonds hazelnuts, cherries, grapes, and every fruit which exists in the amber-perfumed paradise, exist also here, the best and the loveliest (Narshakhi 1954:27).

Could 'four gardens' indicate a *chahar bagh*,²³⁹ certainly Pinder-Wilson believes that this is one of the earliest Islamic references to one (1976:80). The *chahar bagh*, whose cross-axial form is connected with palatial gardens²⁴⁰ is a "powerful metaphor for the organisation and domestication of landscape, itself a symbol of political territory" (Fairchild Ruggles 2008:39). There is a ceramic dish in the Bekhzod Museum, dating from the Samanid period which also possibly depicts a *chahar bagh* (see Chapter Five below). It is difficult to know what is meant by the description of the pavilion's form,

²³⁷ Or just that the pre-Islamic rulers had chosen a perfect site for a palace.

²³⁸ Frye does not give the Persian translation, but it is given in Pinder-Wilson (1976:80 Note 25), who does not agree with Frye that *chahar baghya-hi khush* can mean "four lovely gardens". As support for this he mentions Dihkhuda's citation of Baihaqi "In that year he stayed in Nishapur; he wanted to purchase more land for a *chahar bagh*, and bought some thousand dirhams from three headmen (*kadkhuda*)", however he has not been able to trace the reference. Also see Yakubov 2007, who translates this as *chahar bagh*.

²³⁹ A *chahar bagh* is usually interpreted as a rectangular walled garden quartered by two streams intersecting at right angles, which contains the palace or pavilion (Pinder-Wilson 1976). The four streams or water channels possibly have a mystical correspondence with the four flowing rivers of paradise, also mentioned in Quranic and hadith literature. The tank in the middle of the garden is seen to symbolise the celestial tank of abundance, *al-Kawthar*, promised to Muhammad and seen by him at the time of his bodily ascension to Paradise. Early examples of *chahar baghs* include Lashgari Bazaar see Fairchild Ruggles 1997, 2008).

²⁴⁰ Fairchild Ruggles 2008:40ff, admits that this might be an archaeological accident as more palatial gardens have been excavated, however no non-royal gardens have taken the form of *chahar baghs*. Not all *chahar bagh* were cross axial, however this is more likely to be true in the earlier periods.

however could we posit that it was cruciform, designed for a cross-axial context.²⁴¹ According to Grabar it was domed (1963: Note 26).²⁴² The pond in the centre can be characterised as the sacred centre, or pool, from which the channels flow.

Thus, here again, it is possible the Samanids were conforming to Islamic royal examples, potentially alluding to the gardens in the Balkuwara Palace in Samarra²⁴³ (849-859 CE) while also being part of a trajectory of Iranian garden design which goes back to the Achaemenid period, where a possible *chahar bagh* is known from Pasargadae in 6th century BCE (Fairchild Ruggles 2008:40ff., Fig 21). The close association between garden and pavilion with the added feature of a pool or cross axial water channels was continued in Sasanian Iran (Pinder-Wilson 1976). There is less evidence of Sogdian gardens, however there is a Sogdian ossuary from China which has a depiction of a garden pavilion in a funerary setting (see Appendix B). Narshakhi compares these gardens to paradise; and *chahar baghs* are also seen to represent paradise, (however see Subtelny 1997).²⁴⁴ The earliest archaeologically attested Islamic cross-axial garden was found at Rusafa dating back to first quarter of 8th century (Fairchild Ruggles 1997). The quadripartite plan would also connect with the dar al-Imara type building of Kyrk Kyz (see above).

This Samanid palace and garden were designed to inspire wonder, this was part of their intended impact. In his poetry, Rudaki ascribed imperial titles to Nasr, including *shah-i jahan*, and *shah-i muluki jahan*, and also addressed him as Khusraw, which Treadwell believes is a generic term meaning 'Iranian king' (1991:286, Note 66). Thus, could the pavilion which the king used during life as well as the cardinally oriented Samanid Mausoleum built by the ruler to house him in death be a visual representation of a ruler who was *shah-i jahan*, king of the world. The double identity of king and state with each other also has ancient roots. "The palace is thus set up as a mirror of the king. It is a physical manifestation of the ruler's power and ability to build...and command, induce astonishment, and create a fitting seat of government – in short to rule" (Winter 1993:38), discussing Mesopotamian palaces. The exact descriptions of palaces and gardens in Daqiqi's poetry suggests they existed, rather than were poetic fantasies:

²⁴¹ Logically the pavilion's axial form might conform to the garden's structure. If the pavilion was centrally placed with good site lines, it is suggested "the optical hierarchy of axes and points of intersection serve the king both as a person and as an institution. The pavilion fixes sight and reifies the act of vision for it marks the central (or terminal) place around which the garden is organised and from which it is meant to be seen... The pavilion is the king" (Fairchild Ruggles 1997:176).

²⁴² However, I do not understand why this structure might be domed, following Narshakhi's text.

²⁴³ Here the intersections of the axes were marked by pools and pavilion-like portals are positioned at the terminals of major axes (Fairchild Ruggles 1997 Note 20), however she also notes that the question of whether the gardens were cross axial remains open, based on Herzfeld's incomplete *Reiseberichte*.

²⁴⁴ The inordinate scholarly focus on the 'garden as paradise theme', disassociates it from its agricultural reality (Subtelny 1997:119).

*J'ai tant pleuré que mes larmes
à la terre ont donné le teint de mon ami
Pareil au teint de mon amie est devenue le monde
Et l'on dirait qu'il s'est lavé avec de l'eau du Paradis
Le voilà tout entire semblable à l'Etendard des Souverains
Aux soieries a figures²⁴⁵ et aux étoffes de Kouffa
Il a revêtu sa robe d'avril
Et dépouillé son manteau de décembre
Dans les jardins les roses sont ouvertes
On croirait voir les parterres d'Eden
(Ode Printanière by Daqiqi in Safa 1964:48)*

Grabar, discussing Daqiqi's descriptions, concludes that there is a "visually definable vision of royal paradises. Were they fictions or reflections of reality? If the latter, are they creations of already Islamic dynasties or memories of earlier glories" (2012:37). There is no reason they could not be both, just as in their style of rulership. Here too we may see a convergence of ideas, where the imperial Abbasid centre was adopting various Sasanian forms which were not inimicable to the Persian Samanid dynasty, who thus could employ both these tropes together. We know for example they celebrated the Persian Nowruz²⁴⁶ and Mihrgan festivals in Juy-i Mulyian, using the palace and its gardens to receive guests. In Dashtak, all kind of sporting events took place over Nowruz (Yakubov 2007). Presumably these gardens would also have been the setting for Muslim festivals such as the end of Ramadan (Eid al-Fitr).²⁴⁷

"The placing of pavilions at a garden's nucleus in order to position the viewer centrally eventually became a trope in Islamic palaces where they became an expression of sovereign power" (Fairchild Ruggles 2004:42). Can we see such a garden pavilion as a panopticon,²⁴⁸ "this enclosed segmented space, observed at every point, in which the individuals are inserted in a fixed place, in which the slightest movements are supervised....in which power is exercised without division, according to a continuous hierarchical figure... a model of the disciplinary mechanism" (Foucault 1991:197).

In Ghaznavid Lashgari Bazaar palace (11th century CE), at least one walled courtyard had a centrally placed raised two-storey pavilion which probably had good views over the surrounding garden. It is suggested here that the prototype of such a pavilion could be the one described by Narshakhi, which was tall enough to block the sun out from reaching the pool. Pinder-Wilson (1976) suggests that the word *chahar bagh* might ultimately derives from Sogdian *s'r'b'gh* meaning 'tower' (see also

²⁴⁵ It is noteworthy that there seem to be figures on the robes.

²⁴⁶ Nowruz was also officially celebrated by the early Abbasids, e.g. caliph Mutawakkil, as was the festival of Mihrgan (Ahsan 1979). Thus, in celebrating these festivals, the Samanids were still firmly within the Islamic oecumene; they did not signify 'difference' in the Abbasid worldview.

²⁴⁷ See Ahsan 1979 for a description of Abbasid festivals.

²⁴⁸ See Chapter One.

Gershevitch 1954), which would further emphasise the panopticon suggested by Fairchild Ruggles. Is it possible that the Ghaznavids were adopting Samanid garden design, as they had many aspects of their Persianate culture and architecture? Equally, today, the sitelines from the Palace of Nations in contemporary Dushanbe have been cleared of trees, so that the President, can see and his presence be felt across vast swathes of Dushanbe's capitol complex.

With reference to Humayun's tomb, the garden pavilion is compared to the mausoleum (Fairchild Ruggles 1997). Seen through a poststructural theoretical lens, the former invites the garden to be looked at from the privileged viewpoint of the pavilion, thus (temporarily) displacing the ruler, generating an outward gaze. However, this is impossible with the mausoleum, as the deceased ruler permanently occupies this structure. We, the living, would not want to and cannot displace him at the centre of the mausoleum. Post-structural ideas help us see the viewer and their gaze as key participants in the building's visual system. Equally, statues of overt political propaganda such as the Ismoil Somoni statue would not be created today, if they did not have an audience.

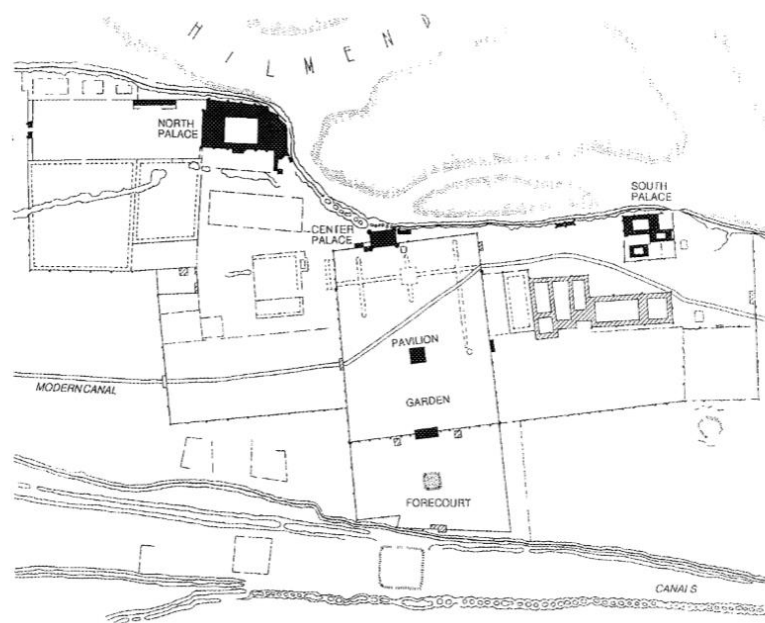


Figure 50: Lashgari Bazaar: Plan after Schlumberger. (Fairchild Ruggles 1997: Fig 11)

Fortifications

We have some indication of Bukhara's fortifications during the Samanid period from contemporary geographers (see above). Citadel and city in Bukhara (**Fig. 50**) had two different fortification

systems,²⁴⁹ suggesting that the Samanids did not completely trust the city, or possibly that they were more concerned for their defence than Ismail's comments would suggest (see below). The fortifications were a projection of power at the Samanid centre, the heavily fortified, wide, long walls were more visually impressive as well as being more defensible than any other city in their Empire.

In the Samanid period no new fortifications around the shahristan were built in other Sogdian cities and old ones were often neglected,²⁵⁰ meaning that "city walls had lost their significance for the inhabitants of Mawarannahr" (Naymark 1999:49). This is also supported by the recent French excavations in Nishapur, during Period IIIa (second half of 8th – 11th centuries CE), the Quhandiz fortress lost its military function and was reconfigured as an urban space, probably in the 10th century (Rante & Collinet 2013). Thus, the power predicated on city walls that had encircled separate city states was visibly gone, and with them the city-states' power to revolt. The lack of walls as viable defences meant that it was the state and its armies which ensured the protection of the realm, clearly stated in Narshakhi "Isma'il freed the people of the oasis from corvée²⁵¹ and heavy payments to maintain the great walls. Isma'il claimed that 'While I live. I am the wall of the district of Bukhara'. That which he claimed he performed. He constantly fought in person and did not allow the foe victory in Bukhara" (Narshakhi 1954:34). These walls according to Narshakhi were explicitly built against the Turks, thus Ismail was confident that he could either fight or control the Turks by having them in his army (see e.g. Paul 1994). This is the one phrase, even if now imperfectly understood, which every Tajik child knows, connected to Somoni. Often, they think (erroneously) that Ismail built the wall to protect the citizens.

²⁴⁹ As did Penjikent.

²⁵⁰ The exception is one repair of brickwork in the Afrasiab citadel and one small repair in Paykend walls dated from pottery in the mortar and brickwork technique to 9th century or later. Evidence for neglect of old fortifications is a 9th century drainage pit cutting through a wall in Varaksha and a 10th century pottery kiln in a ruined wall in Paykend (Naymark 1999).

²⁵¹ This must also have been popular, Narshakhi talks about the great trouble and expense to the population of Bukhara, who annually had to supply a large labour force and a great deal of money (Narshakhi 1954).

Mosque construction

It was important for Muslims in new environments to create a space that served entirely Muslim purposes. Ismail Samanid proclaimed his pious tendencies by adding his own section of the grand mosque in Bukhara, enlarging it by a third, probably also due to the increase in Muslim worshippers in the city. He made space for the construction by buying up houses.²⁵² It was not just Samanid rulers who wanted to have their name connected with religious buildings, but also the viziers such as Abu Abdallah al-Jaihani who built the minaret of the mosque at his own expense (918 CE), whose top was made of wood (see Chapter Four). Muqaddasi says that all Bukhara's mosques are magnificent and "I have never seen in the realm of Islam a more admired door than that on the mosque" (1994: 280-281). In the twelfth century, two mosques still remained from the Samanid period, one mosque near the citadel enlarged in 902 by Ismail Samanid, and the other near the court of the amir of Khurasan built by Nuh ibn Nasr in 951 CE. (Narshakhi 1954:48-52). Thus, we know that the Qarakhanids did not destroy these mosques. Another magnificent mosque was built under Abd al-Malik (954-961 CE), by Abu Ja'far 'Utbi near the palace of Nasr in the Registan (Barthold 1968:108-110). There were also madrasas in the Samanid period, a catastrophic fire in the summer of 937 burned Fardzhek madrassa (or Faradzhek), which probably stood in the south-eastern part of the inner rabad (Khmelnitsky 1992:26). These pious foundations allowed state authority to function at neighbourhood level, creating a shared culture between ruler and ruled (Rogers in Tabbaa 2010:184). During the 9th and 10th centuries "the highpoint of the Muslim intellectual movement.... *Adab*²⁵³ as a cultural ideal connected and tied together the courtly circles, the ruling circles and the intellectual circles" (von Grunebaum 1969 summarised in Tabbaa 2010:184).

²⁵² He did this, again, by purchasing the houses rather than requisitioning them. However, it seems that this reconstruction was not too stable, as it (or a later construction?) collapsed in Nasr's time, killing many of the congregation (Narshakhi 1954).

²⁵³ Adab was the literature of practical ethics and all education that man would need for life. See <http://www.iranicaonline.org/articles/adab-ii-arabic-lit> (accessed 21/08/2014).

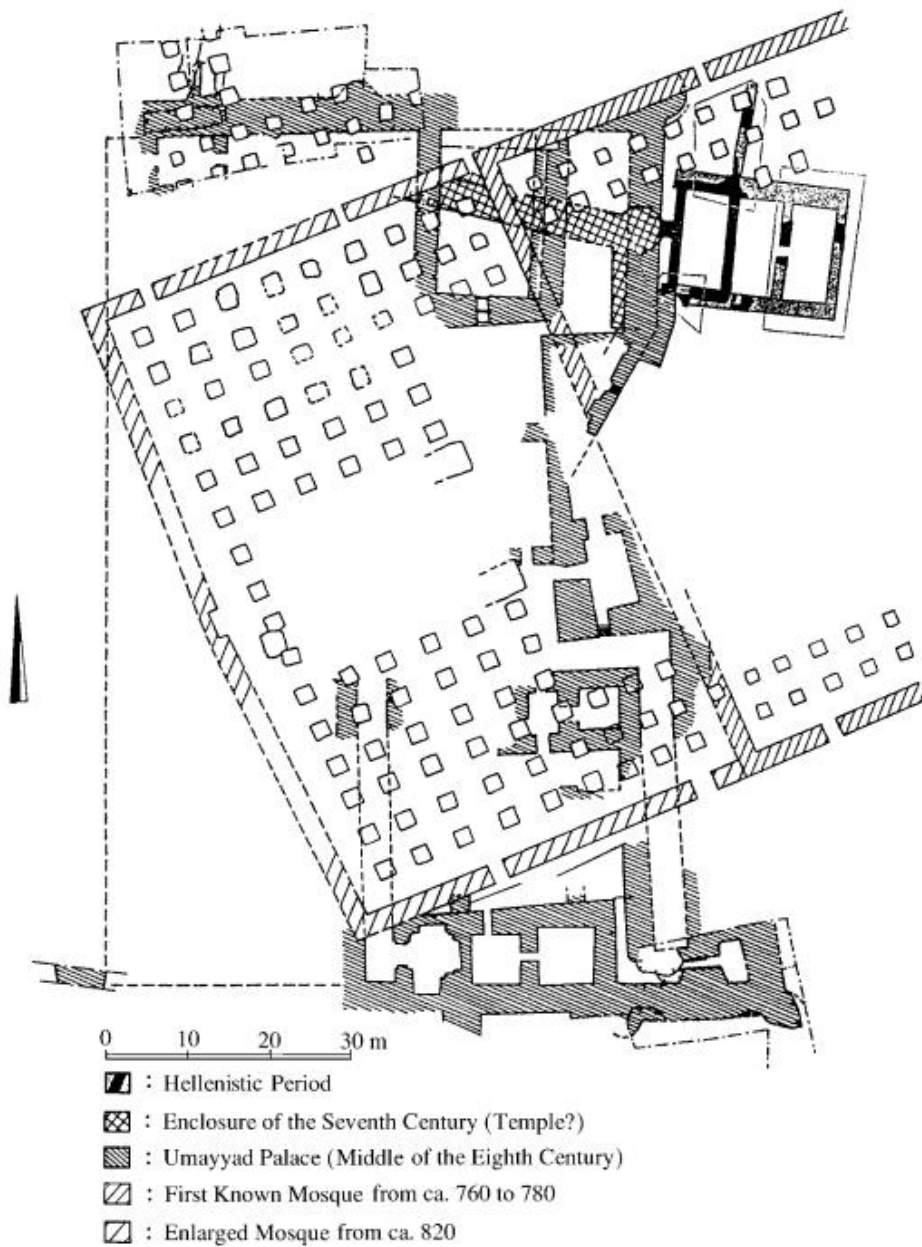


Figure 51: Samanid extensions to Afrasiab mosque, c820, from Karev 2004, Fig. 3.3 © University of Chicago (image used with permission).

While we do not have any Samanid mosques in Bukhara, nearby Bukhara in Hazara there is the small Diggaron mosque which might date to the Samanid era²⁵⁴ which has been linked architecturally to two more mosques, No Gunbad in Balkh (Golombek 1969, Melikian-Chirvani 1969), and Chahar Sutun in Termez (Pugachenkova 1981).²⁵⁵ It seems that the plan of these multidomed enclosed mosques owes much to the kushk manorhouse, but while in the pre-Islamic secular building there were partition walls between the domed rooms, in the later mosque architecture there is free circulation of space (Hillenbrand 2006b:4). However, these smaller mosques do not tell us what congregational mosques at the Samanid capital would have been like. In Afrasiab citadel a Friday mosque has been discovered archaeologically dating to the early Abbasid period (c.765-780 CE), built over the palace of Nasr ibn Sayyar the Umayyad governor (**Fig. 51**). The mosque was enlarged to the west in the early Samanid period (probably 820-830) (Khmel'nitsky 1992:65). Based on the archaeology, one of the first things the Samanid governor Nuh b. Asad did, when installed in Samarqand was enlarge the mosque. The original hypostyle mosque was of Arab type, with a central courtyard. The groundplan of the later Samanid addition shows that it continued this design, being also hypostyle in plan, seemingly around a second courtyard. Thus, in urban religious architecture, compared to smaller mosques, it is suggested that the Samanids, at least in Samarqand, mostly continued the forms and style of the Arab conquerors. However, Khmel'nitsky believes that this mosque might be covered by a laternendecke ceiling, and thus more indigenous in style, certainly many charred pieces of wood were found by excavation²⁵⁶ (Khmel'nitsky 1992:64). Thus, this suggests that there was a mixture of Arab and Sogdian styles in the main mosque in Samarqand.

Organisation of the diwans

The visual organisation of the diwans²⁵⁷ around the Registan is ascribed by Narshakhi to Nasr, Ismail's grandson:

"A very fine court was built which required much expense. Near the gate of his court he ordered a building erected for officials so that each functionary had a separate bureau in his court. At the gate of the sultan's court were the bureau for the prime minister, the bureau of the treasurer, the bureau of the chief of the guards, the bureau of the postmaster, bureau of the

²⁵⁴ Hillenbrand seems to date it to both pre-1000 and early 11th century (2006b, pages 2 & 4 respectively)?

²⁵⁵ Pugachenkova dates this to 9-10th century (1981), however Hillenbrand (2006b) dates it to 11th century, noting that it was previously dated to 9th century.

²⁵⁶ Thus, possibly showing again the importance of this form to the dynasty, cf. the Samanid Mausoleum 'cosmogrammes'?

²⁵⁷ See Treadwell 1991:125-130 for a discussion of diwans based on Narshakhi (1954).

chief of protocol, bureau of the private lands of the ruler, bureau of the chief of (the municipal) police, bureau of religious endowments, and bureau of the judges. He ordered the bureaus erected in such an arrangement (Narshakhi 1954:26).

The Registan was where the pre-Islamic rulers also had their residences. This proximity to the palace is a visible marker of their significance, suggesting the *diwans* were important to the ruler. Official state functions and administration continued in a location connected to pre-Islamic rulers, also suggests that the Samanids drew legitimacy from the depth of royal connections to those locations. Equally, *diwans* were key drivers of the Sasanian administrative system, even though the Samanids were probably copying this from the Abbasids rather than directly from the Sasanians (as this was alien to Transoxiana). Thus, while the Samanids were continuing with pre-Islamic traditions by building a ruler's court in the Registan, they also added their own ideas by combining these with Abbasid and Sasanian governmental models, which then became the model for the Samanid provincial centres (Frye 1965:47). Equally Sasanian was the virtuous circle by which the ruler cared for the peasantry, who provided the funds for the army, who protected the peasants. This custom also continued into early Islamic times. Court ceremonial as well as Sasanian customs of tax collection at village level were also used in the Islamic period (Kennedy 2009:14).

Ribats

Ribats²⁵⁸ were possibly a projection of Samanid power in the provinces and borderlands,²⁵⁹ as they were sometimes built and endowed by the rulers;²⁶⁰ according to Narshakhi, Ismail ibn Ahmad bought the prosperous village of Shagh near Bukhara including fields and estates with his own money, and endowed it to a ribat he built in Bukhara, inside the Samarqand gate (Narshakhi 1954:17, Kennedy 2011:172ff.). Equally ribats enabled the monitoring and regulation of human traffic along their frontiers, and as well as being able to concentrate military forces in sensitive areas. They were also a

²⁵⁸ A ribat is defined as a small frontier fortification built to house military volunteers.

²⁵⁹ Ribats were found along the northern edges of the state, around Isfiyab, in Nizak in western Ustrushana, in Nur (steppe region north of Samarqand) and in Paykend. There were also ribats along the border between the Ghuzz steppe and the mountainous northern edges of Jurjan. These latter included the large military complex of Ribat Farawa with three interlinked forts, one surrounded by a moat. These contained barracks, an arsenal, stable and water supply. Two more lines of ribats were built along the western fringes of Transoxiana, one line running between Merv and Amul protecting the east-west trade route to Khurasan and the other from Amul along the course of the Oxus to Khwarazm (Treadwell 2012b:7).

²⁶⁰ However, in one account, it was the Bukhara villagers who built more than a thousand ribats around the neighbouring city of Paykend (Narshakhi 1954), possibly the number is an exaggeration.

way of building relations with the local rulers (Treadwell 2012a:7). Thus, the presence of ribats has been linked to the Samanids as *ghazi* warriors for the faith.

However, the historical sources are not borne out by the archaeological record: Naymark notes that no Samanid ribats known archaeologically (unlike later Qarakhanid and Khwarzamschah period ribats) features any fortification element (Naymark 1999:50). The best known ribat complex is preserved in Paykend, does not correspond to what we know from Narshakhi of these being fortified.²⁶¹ Thus linking Samanid ribats to the presence of *ghazi* warriors on the Islamic frontiers seems more complex and possibly not upheld in the archaeological record. Samanid ribats seem to speak more for the presence of trade rather than military defence. Equally there is no evidence of a government programme for the construction and maintenance of the roads, bridges and frontier outposts which were required to deal with the Turkish threat in the first half of the century" (Treadwell 1991:276). So the logistics behind these wars and conversions seems inaccessible as yet through the archaeological and historical record. However, Haug has argued that Sogdian kushk from the preceding period recharacterised themselves as ribats in the Islamic period, presumably to give their frontier skirmishes with the Turks a religious tinge, and to gain military support from other communities, expressed as proselytising the Turk (Haug 2010:346).

Continuation and destruction of the past / spolia

An iron²⁶² plate naming the ruler Bidun Bukhar Khudat (mid-7th century)²⁶³ marking his rebuilding of the citadel and palace remained affixed to the palace gate (at least?) until 1128 CE.²⁶⁴ Thus the pre-Islamic past was not destroyed, and a political rival's name removed. It was allowed to continue to mark the urban environment, as a possible focus for collective memory, or *lieu de mémoire* in the heart of Bukhara's Samanid capitol complex. The Sogdian inscription would have been understood by

²⁶¹ The ribat was erected on a slope so the southern row of rooms were below ground. The entrance, flanked by two protruding portals, was hard to defend. Decorative corner towers were, at 3.3 m diameter, too small to be used by archers. Naymark believes similar buildings also had no military function; but were a group of inns (1999: note 91). However, he does not explain why these buildings are seen as ribats at all?

²⁶² Iron was often used on city gates, as well as in talismans, the metal was known to avert the jinn (Flood 2006).

²⁶³ Bidun was the husband of Khatun and the father of Tughshada, Khatun took over after her husband's death, before 674 CE (Naymark 2003).

²⁶⁴ The date of Narshakhi's translator. Frye notes the practice of putting plaques on doors was common in Transoxiana, these could also have figures. Also, ossuaries with figures have been found *in situ* in Sogd (Narshakhi 1954 Notes 112 & 185).

a diminishing number of people as time went on, thus becoming increasingly exotic as its 'real' meaning was lost. Is this an example of the past being appropriated through its traces, and put to work in service of the Samanids? It seems unlikely that its removal was simply overlooked. "Seen in this light, 'popular' beliefs concerning the urban landscape are neither superfluous grafts upon static artifacts nor necessarily the pre-eminent motivation for their (re)deployment, but represent specific engagements with the cultural artifacts that generate meanings in a dynamic relationship to them" (Flood 2006:146). This can be compared in some ways to the hammer and sickle, Soviet symbols retained on the Majlis or parliament building in 'post-Soviet' Dushanbe, capital of independent Tajikistan (see Chapter Six), in that they are both vestiges of an old political and cultural system, even though the Soviet symbols could be seen as reminders of Tajikistan's colonial past, whereas the Bukhar Khudats were indigenous.

The history of the pre-Islamic palace of Varakhsha,²⁶⁵ famous archaeologically for its stuccowork and wall paintings²⁶⁶ is also discussed in Narshakhi (1954:17). By Ismail Samanid's time, only part of the building was standing. Ismail offered the people of the village 20,000 dirhams as well as wood to turn the palace into a grand mosque. However the villagers refused, saying they did not need it, and the pre-Islamic palace remained standing until Ahmad ibn Nuh's reign, when he "brought the wood of the palace to the city and used it to build a mansion at the gate of the fortress of Bukhara (Narshakhi 1954:18). Thus, this action fits in well with the common practice of spolia taken from earlier palaces in order to decorate another building (Necipoğlu 1993a:4), and also links to the use of wood in Samanid architecture (see Chapter Four).

Another example of how past material remains were used, this time in a pre-Samanid Islamic religious context is shown by Qutaiba ibn Muslim's grand mosque built inside the Bukhara citadel in 712/713 CE, on a place which was formerly a temple, occupying the sacred place and assuming its power. During the Samanid period the mosque's doors had been requisitioned from villas of the indigenous ruling class after a fight, as they had refused to worship in the mosque, preferring to practice their old religion. The apotropaic images on the carved doors, were described by Narshakhi as "figures of their idols". When taken for reuse in the mosque the figures' faces were scratched out, but otherwise they were left unchanged.²⁶⁷ Scratching the faces out²⁶⁸ ritually disempowered the gods and made them more difficult to worship, however it is clear from Narshakhi's text that the idols were still

²⁶⁵ Shishkin 1963.

²⁶⁶ <http://www.silk-road.com/newsletter/december/varakhsha.htm> (accessed 23/09/2012)

²⁶⁷ Similarly in Egypt, pharonic material placed at Mamluk and Ottoman mosque entrances possibly facilitated "a performative iconoclasm" by those entering (Flood 2006:155).

²⁶⁸ Defacement, or mutilation of eyes and nose was a substitute for decapitation – following Muhammad's activities by the Ka'aba, described in the *Book of Idols* (9th century) where he pierced the eyes of statues with an arrow (Flood 2001 Note 33).

recognisable,²⁶⁹ again showing a strong pre-Islamic visual link to the past, or perhaps, power over the old religion and old aristocracy who had not protected their gods' images. The doors' new location and desecrated images were a visual reminder of the power of the new Islamic religion. Especially as we know that in spite of Qutaiba's frequent conversions of Bukhara's population to Islam, they kept reverting back to their old faith "in secret worshipping idols" (Narshakhi 1954:48).

This is fascinating as it goes against what we might expect about figures being used in an Islamic religious context and Islamic religious iconoclasm,²⁷⁰ where current discourse sees iconoclasm as primarily theological with political, aesthetic and even economic aspects merely secondary. Possibly these figures were valued for their aesthetic or talismanic properties. However it is also possible that this action still falls within the early period when attitudes to figuration were still being codified (Flood 2002:644), at least so far from the caliphal centre.²⁷¹ However that may be, the seizure of what must have been grand and luxurious doors also had an economic aspect. Flood sees this type of iconoclasm as instrumental, i.e. where a particular action is executed for the greater good,²⁷² as it permitted the survival of these images in a proscribed way, albeit with an altered form, which was "less an attempt to negate the image than neutralise it" (Flood 2002:647). Flood links this with Debord's ideas of *détournement*, through the physical manipulation of the objects the authority of the sign is subverted, as is eventually the relationship between signified and signifier itself (Debord 1956).

While art historians rarely prioritise the reuse of an object, concentrating on its original form, it is important how these objects were reused, and *seen* to be reused, which continued into the Samanid era. Pre-Islamic monuments remained in sight in Islamic cities well into the Middle Ages, where they were seen as *aja'ib* (wonders) in medieval writings (Flood 2006:147ff.). Today, the big Buddha in the National Antiquities Museum also has talismanic qualities for Tajik visitors, even though they are Muslims and not Buddhists (see below, Chapter Five). This might be seen to be reinforced by the wooden pillar and panel of Obburdon as well as Hazrati Shoh (see Chapter Four) where anthropomorphic animal designs were deliberately included in Islamic mosque architecture, rather

²⁶⁹ Ahmad ibn Muhammad ibn Nasr says that "in his time one of those gates remained in that place where you descend from the roofs to the door of the grand mosque. If anyone wishes (to see such a door) go to the court of the amir of Khurasan, stop by the first door and the second is what is left of those gates. The traces of the effacement on it are still visible" (Narshakhi 1954:49).

²⁷⁰ Pre-Islamic figures were usually but not always destroyed in religious contexts, see Tabari 2443:23&30 describing Sa'd entering the Great Hall in al-Mada'in (Ctesiphon) and conducting prayer there, although there were statues of men and animals, they left them as they were. See also Flood 2002 Note 17 and references there.

²⁷¹ There were shifts in figuration attitudes between late 7th and late 8th century. For example, it was only in 785 CE that figures on a censer in the Medina mosque were rendered innocuous, probably by decapitation (Flood 2002:644).

²⁷² As opposed to expressive iconoclasm, defined as the act itself satiating the desire to give vent to one's feelings (Flood 2002:646).

than as spolia from other contexts. This suggests different religious practices in the Abbasid caliphal centre.

Although there is some evidence of Christian churches being co-opted for use as mosques, most famously after the battle of Talas in 893 by Ismail Samanid, this also happened when churches fell into disuse, presumably following the conversion of their former congregation. A Christian church became the Bani Hanzala mosque in Bukhara, on the left of the 'gate of the spice sellers' (Narshakhi 1954:52), and Muqaddasi notes that in the town of Mirki in Ferghana a church was made into a mosque, the town's amir is noted as being Amid al-Dawla Fa'i'q (1994:312-313), the important Samanid vizier. It was Fa'i'q who was instrumental in Balami's 'translation' of Tabari, underlining the political nature of this history writing, as indeed today, Tajikistan's history writing is equally political and part of the nationbuilding project (see Chapter Five).

Samanid legitimization of kingship: material and textual evidence

The Samanids rose to power, not through their aristocratic *deqhan* roots, but through supporting and being supported by in turn the Abbasid rulership (see above, Chapter Two). They also gained authority from their status as Islamic holy warriors par excellence (Tor 2009: 282ff.). However, there were also other sources from which they derived power. Mansur ibn Nuh commanded Balami via his chief vizier Fa'i'q to make a 'translation' of Tabari's great history in Arabic. Balami produced a text which was one of the most important and popular Persian universal histories, supplementing Tabari's text in places, for example adding in sections about Bahram Chubin (Peacock 2007:118ff). "This almost certainly constituted an effort to propagate a state-sanctioned, "official" ideology of Islamic history and dogma, presumably in defence of the Samanid regime" (Daniel 1990:286). This emphasis on Bahram Chubin by the Samanids is presumably to boost their own prestige, as they claimed descent from him. One reason that they did this might be Bahram Chubin's own Parthian heritage.²⁷³ Mansur's accession was from his brother, he was not the legitimate heir, and thus Fa'i'q was trying to legitimate Mansur by commissioning Balami (Treadwell pers. comm.).

However only a few direct material links have survived publicly and incontrovertibly connecting Samanids to the pre-Islamic Iranian imperial past, their coins which were minted in every corner of the empire, were in Arabic mainly in Kufic script and with Islamic messages.²⁷⁴ However the *Bukhar*

²⁷³ See above, only Muqaddasi calls Bahram Gur the Samanids' ancestor (1994).

²⁷⁴ The *naskhi* script was first used as a public text on later Samanid rulers' names (Tabbaa 1994:126 and Note 35 – see Chapter Two).

Khudat coins did continue much older traditions, while the motif harked back to a Sasanian ruler its tradition of local use in Bukhara is arguably what was most important to the population. The coinage increased its use in the 9-10th century, suggesting it was a revival rather than left over from the past (see above). It is possible that the pre-Islamic claims and motifs were seen to speak to many different groups in the heterogeneous society that the Samanids ruled, uniting the *dehqans* and Arab incomers as pre-Islamic Sasanian heritage was also acceptable to the latter.²⁷⁵ This might have been part of the Samanids' legitimising project.

Equally, although their mausoleum took a form that harked back to the Sogdian *kushk*, with many Sogdian iconographical elements, it was also the start of something new. It did not simulate Sasanian or local Bukhar *Khudat* royal examples as a form of nostalgia. Possible exceptions to this and links to the pre-Islamic royal past are the quadripartite groundplan of Kyrk Kyz of four *iwans* around a courtyard and the 'cosmogramme' in the spandrels of the Samanid Mausoleum both of which hark back to forms found in the Parthian palace of Ashur. This might be a coincidence; however, it is possible that the dynasty were highlighting their Pahlavi ancestry or a more generalised East Iranian past?

Equally the triangles or leaves positioned over the entrance ways of the Samanid Mausoleum, might have been designed to be ambiguous, able to be interpreted by different audiences as they chose, an architectural allusion. To audiences who were accustomed to the image on the Berlin platter, with the wings over the door, then it is argued here that these 'triangle motifs' would be a visual metaphor of these. Just as motifs on ceramics were probably 'read' in a different way by someone of Zoroastrian heritage compared to an Arab Muslim (see Chapter Two). Certainly, wings appear above the entrance in the Berlin Salver (see above), and we know that Islamic rulers continued to occasionally use this motif (see above - Bahrami 1952). Winged crowns were worn by the Hephthalite kings,²⁷⁶ where Kageyama notes, following Il'yasov that "the diffusion of winged crowns in Tokharistan and especially Sogdiana is associated not as much with Sasanian influence but Hephthalite expansion" (2007:12). I would argue that their positioning above the entrance, as well as the fact that the symbols only appear in this location in the Samanid Mausoleum, suggest they had some significance.

In a private court context, it seems that Mansur ibn Nuh, perhaps only as a response to a particular set of circumstances (see above) called himself *xwarrah afzud* / *shahanshah* or 'King of Kings', using

²⁷⁵ Sasanian wings also appear in early Islamic monuments, most famously in mosaics on Dome of the Rock (688-692 CE) and also the eighth century Mshatta façade, the minbar and lustre tiles of Kairouan, and other early Abbasid artefacts (Dimand, 1937 & 1941). These are noteworthy as they come from Arab rather than Iranian contexts. Just as the Arab poet, al Buhturi, was nostalgic for the "long silence of the house of Sasan" in his poem (Irwin 1999:139).

²⁷⁶ See Treadwell 2012a for his theory that the Samanids were Hephthalites (see above).

the Pahlavi script. This unique find is now in the Ashmolean Museum and deserves to be better published. It has been argued that the title of *shahanshah* with reference to the Buyid king Adud al Dawla, “remained more a symbol of his aspirations than an official stamp of his power. Rather it was the title Malik which became the semi-official mark of Buwayhid supremacy under ‘Adud al-Dawla” (Donohue 2003:27). Thus, the title Shahanshah in the east Iranian world seems to have been used more for political reasons in the present rather than trying to resurrect the pre-Islamic past, it seems it was the Arabic title of *Malik* which conferred more power.

Equally the medallion’s imagery was east Iranian rather than imperial Sasanian, suggesting a confidence in the Samanid’s own heritage, rather than just harking back to a Sasanian past. This was the way in which the Iranian elites adopted and adapted to Islam, which meant that they could “maintain their old Persian cultural and political traditions without laying themselves open to the charge of being infidels (Kennedy 2009:14). It seems pretty clear now that the two were not seen in opposition to one another, or even mutually exclusive (Tor 2012:146ff.). The Islamic fascination with Iranian rulership was connected to a larger coherent phenomenon which took place after the ideological failure of the caliphate. This trend was not anti-Islamic but was adapted in order to assimilate it into Islamic culture and political life. While Tor notes that the issue is undecided, the best proof of the two strands complementary nature is the

“cultural and literary adoption of ancient Iranian kingship as an Islamic ideal by the vast Muslim literary corpus. Here, too, we see once again that this embracing of the pre-Islamic past lasted long beyond the existence of anything that could be called a Shuubi movement. The fact that this incorporation of the past becomes, if anything, more pronounced as time goes on indicates that we are not talking about a mere preservation or reversion to the pre-Islamic past, but a transformation and adaptation of it.” (Tor 2012:155 – present author’s emphasis)

Thus, the symbols used by the Samanids seem to allude to their past obliquely, but with a strong east Iranian flavour, giving a subtle political message, one that could be read differently by different audiences, like the triangles over their dynastic mausoleum. Just as today contemporary Tajikistan is not simply reverting to the pre-Islamic past; but is transforming it to serve the needs of the present.

Chapter Three: Summary and conclusions

It is argued here that descriptions of the Samanids’ garden design in Narshakhi and the possible Samanid summer palace at Kyrk Kyz give us great insight into the architectural programme of the Samanid Mausoleum and how material culture was used by the dynasty to reflect and further their power. Both buildings are cardinally oriented and have a quadripartite structure. Viewing these

layouts' similarities ²⁷⁷ contributes to our understanding of their meanings for builders, commissioners and viewers. It is argued that the two buildings could be a similar expression of power, albeit one is inward facing, designed to impress close associates, compared to the outward facing funerary structure, designed for a more public purpose. It is possible that one of the Samanid palace gardens in Bukhara was laid out as an early *chahar bagh*, better known from later palaces.²⁷⁸ From the description, the garden also had a central pavilion near a pool, which are also features of the *chahar bagh* form. Thus, this thesis argues that Samanid garden design may also contribute to the dynasty's visual programme of communication of legitimacy and power. The Samanid Mausoleum could be seen as a garden tomb, similar to the garden pavilion used by the king in life.

The Samanid Mausoleum is seen here as a symbol of the ideal society, made up of baked brick where every brick both supports and decorates the building. Like music, modular units compose complex compositions when placed together, with every brick, like every member of Farabi's *Virtuous City*, knowing their place. The building's power lies in its position as an *axis mundi*; presenting the same face to the four directions, which meet under the dome. This ancient motif has links to both Buddhist and Iranian architecture and seems local to the region. It is argued that this layout is the visual display of Rudaki's appellation of Nasr as *shah-i jahan*, and *shah-i muluki jahan*, king of the world, and king of kings of the world.

Thus, the Samanid Mausoleum, embodies in its structure the quest for and display of invented traditions, as well as simultaneous multiple frames of reference, as discussed in Chapter One above. The building's different elements are not structurally related, the four small domes are not connected to the four corner towers for example, and the small upper corridor only accessible with a ladder also has questionable use. However, this building was designed in answer to a specific set of circumstances in a rapidly changing postcolonial world, where new forms must be rapidly cobbled together to reflect and keep up with political events. This is also the time when *lieux de memoire* are at their most productive, during periods where the equilibrium is ruptured. During these moments, *lieux de memoires* are deliberate creations, symbolising a new form of rule, an Islamic dynastic Persian state, suggested by the monument itself. It is in the form of a *kushk*, with the corner towers of a defensive Sogdian castle, but with a dome which connotes royalty and the infinite. These *kushk* were during the Samanid period being reformulated as ribats, military monasteries from which to undertake jihad at the edges of the empire (Haug 2010:346). Could there be thus another layer of meaning which was placed on the building by contemporaries, that of the king's duty to carry out holy war, for which Ismail is well known.

²⁷⁷ The central space in Kyrk Kyz is the same size, approx. 11 m square as the Samanid Mausoleum.

²⁷⁸ Narshaki 1954.

What is important for an understanding of the building is seeing it as part of Bukhara's capitol complex, along with other buildings directly connected to the dynasty, which as sketchy as this material is, it does provide certain clues about their iconographical and building programmes. The siting of the early Samanid palaces in Bukhara's Arg or citadel, suggests they drew their dual legitimacy, firstly from a continuity with the pre-Islamic period, as well as possibly associating themselves with the legendary Siyavush. In this they presaged the Islamic palatial paradigm from later centuries, discussed in Tabbaa (1993 e.g. 53ff., 2010). However important legitimacy was also drawn from the siting and expansion of the main mosque of the city.

The architecture of Kyrk Kyz may be seen as an iconographical bridge, (Vale 1992, Chapter One) through space, linking the Samanids with the caliphal centre, and the palaces in Abbasid Samarra. However, it is suggested that this is very different from Nasr ibn Sayyar's palace in Samarkand, as it was a post-colonial choice, rather than a colonial imposition of a foreign cultural form. This quadripartite design may act as an iconographical bridge through time, alluding to the Samanids' Parthian past, like their lineage.

Equally Samanid use of the bevelled style seen on the Samanid Mausoleum and in the stuccowork from Samarkand has been characterised as an imperial style par excellence. But in the Samanid period it is also reworked, it is argued here, as part of a two-way creative process between two regions, which only in some ways operated in a centre-periphery relationship. In others Samanids were Kings of the East, *malik-i Mashriq*, who claimed the mantle of the pre-Islamic Iranian rulers through their lineage. It is argued here that the mihrab in what was probably their private palace in Samarkand, can to some extent be seen to be the equivalent of the medallion discussed in the last chapter. A more private rather than a public message, it suggests that the Samanids were more heterodox and with more feeling for the pre-Islamic past, than their public messages on their coinage would proclaim. To a favoured few, the shared history of the pre-Islamic past was on display.

Just like the coinage, power is a driver of architectural design in the real world. Destruction as well as creation may symbolise power, like Stalin demolishing the Cathedral of Christ the Redeemer (see Chapter Six). Thus, the ordered destruction of many fortification walls, or allowing them to collapse while the walls of the Samanid centre, the Arg stayed strong, was also a symbol of power. This meant that cities could not rebel and be safe behind their walls, sitting out a siege, they were vulnerable to attack. Thus, the empire had to rely on the central standing army, under the Samanid ruler. It is suggested that when cities lost their walls, they lost some elements of their individual identity, which contributed to the region becoming more homogenous, an empire rather than a collection of city states.

The great building programme in the Registan with the central placement of nine diwans was also important, showing the centrality of this orderly form of bureaucracy to the dynasty. It is important to remember that architectural monuments during this period were not built by the state, but were commissioned by individuals, either the royal family, or other rich and powerful people (Treadwell

1991). Thus, it was personal and dynastic power which was being expressed, rather than state power. Which is arguably the same in Tajikistan today, where much of the state's post-independent architecture has been created by one man, a president with an overweening ego. Rahmon is able to command state resources as he pleases and display this conspicuous consumption monumentally.

This synthesis in the case of the Samanids is compounded by the mixed culture that they came from. Part of the Central Asian nobility, they shared a large part of their cultural codes with the Iranians, but they also diverged socially and politically from them through their contact with the Chinese, the steppe, and its nomadic dynasties. De la Vaissière believes that there was a continuum between Turks and Sogdians intermarrying and participating in the same military and administrative hierarchies (2007:273). It is seen that any true understanding of their architecture, is not just bound up with tracing its formal and functional antecedents, as important as they might be, it has to be seen in its contemporary context, as much as that is accessible in texts, poetry and comparisons with other sites. In the case of the Samanid Mausoleum, it must be seen as part of Bukhara's capitol complex.

"The art of princes in the early Middle Ages – and perhaps at all times – was not tied to any single culture but belonged to a fraternity of princes and transcended cultural barriers" (Grabar 1987:177). And certainly, we shall see this in the next chapter: where a regional ruler, the Afshin of Ustrushana was able to take up governorships in Egypt as well as Sind at the behest of the Abbasid caliph (see Appendix C). Next we travel to the upper reaches of the Zarafshan Valley, which gives us another view on how identity in the 9-10th centuries might have been formed and displayed by objects, as we look at the carved wood and columns from the Zarafshan Valley and material from Ferghana and Ustrushana.

CHAPTER FOUR - 'Periphery': Zarafshan Valley, Ustrushana and Ferghana Valley

We must look for the ways in which a given epoch solved for itself aesthetic problems as they presented themselves at the time to the sensibilities and the culture of its people. Then our historical enquiries will be a contribution, not to whatever we conceive 'aesthetic' to be, but rather the history of a specific civilisation, from the standpoint of its own sensibility and its own aesthetic consciousness.

Umberto Eco *Art and Beauty in the Middle Ages*

Outstanding wooden artefacts from the upper Zarafshan Valley in Tajikistan (**Fig. 52**), including columns, panels and console as well as the Iskodar Mihrab, are discussed in this chapter along with the Hazrati Shoh complex and the clay Asht Mihrab from the Ferghana valley. The clear intermingling of motifs from pre-Islamic and Islamic periods is seen not only to shed light on these beliefs²⁷⁹ in their own era, but also, as mentioned above they are evidence of a regional identity within the Samanid Empire which is usually characterised by historians for its increasing uniformity. They also represent a major and unusual corpus coming from within Tajikistan's current borders, showing heterogeneous non-courtly beliefs, similar to the Samanid ceramics. However, they also show the 'Samarra C' bevelled style most famous from the Samarra stucco from the caliphal centre, which is fascinating to see in this region and on objects which show an unbroken craft tradition from pre-Islamic times (see Appendix C). This material is mostly contemporary to that discussed in Chapters Two and Three, which is now in Uzbekistan and elsewhere. The objects under view in this chapter have for the most part remained within Tajikistan, either *in situ*, or in Tajik museums.²⁸⁰ Thus they are seen as symbolising the Samanid period in Tajikistan, in our own time, and might be useful historical objects to explicate Tajik cultural identity today. Especially the Iskodar Mihrab, which is also covered in Chapter Five; where, transposing our view, we look at how these artefacts are discussed in museum signage. Thus, the presence of this material goes against the received wisdom that the culture from

²⁷⁹ The Asht mihrab and fragments from a similar object in Mazar Mavloni Ali, Upper Zarafshan suggest that these were not just local beliefs. These fragments were on display in the Bekhzod Museum, and show quatrefoils interspersed with swastikas (Khmelnitsky 1992:108-11).

²⁸⁰ The exceptions are the Obburdon column and panels in Uzbekistan. Were they either too large, too fragile or otherwise not of interest to Soviet curators for the Hermitage Museum's collections? According to Fatmev mosque's *mutawalli*, the Fatmev column was taken to Leningrad in the Soviet period but was returned after independence (pers. comm. August 2011).

within the current Tajik borders during this key Samanid period was purely 'peripheral'.²⁸¹ The Zarafshan minarets (c. 9-10th centuries CE) also probably date to the Samanid period. However, minarets and wooden structures rarely seem to be discussed together, dealt with in different publications by different specialists who divide objects typologically. The Zarafshan objects' historical context in Ustrushana is outlined in Appendix C, as a background to the material culture.

²⁸¹ Khulbuk, a regional palace in southern Tajikistan (Khojaev 2010, Simeon 2008, 2012) is another contemporary site with a rich record, including architecture, stuccos and objects. However, it has only been mentioned as a heritage site in this thesis (Chapter Five, **Figs.127-129**) due to matters of space.

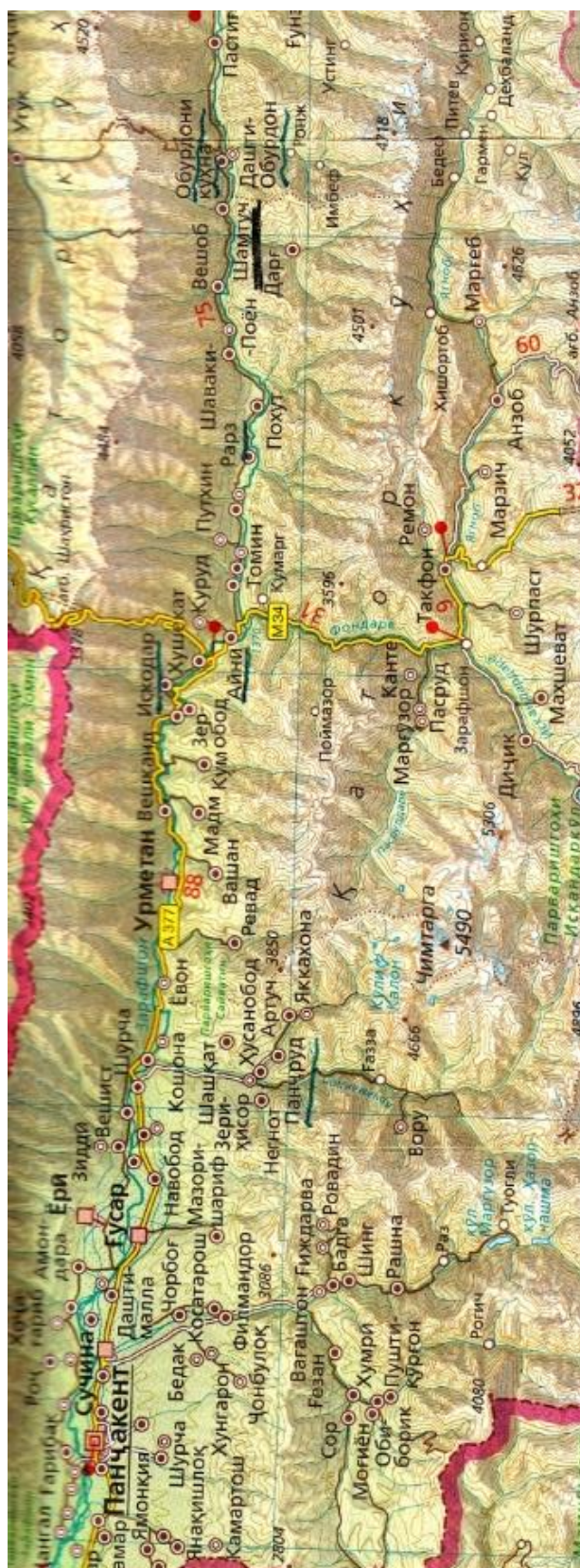


Figure 52: Tajik map of upper Zarafshan Valley, Tajikistan, from Penjikent (west) to Obburdon (east), author's underlining, showing some of the major sites I visited. This was my map of travel in the area.

Upper Zarafshan mosques today²⁸²

Just as the history of carved wood in the Zarafshan valley has a long history (see Appendix C), wood continues to be a major construction element in upper Zarafshan valley mosques today (**Figs. 53-56**), including either flat or coffered²⁸³ ceilings (**Fig. 56**), wooden panels and partition walls, wooden doors and window grilles and shutters as well as columns and consoles (Brentjes 1992). Similarly constructed mosques are known from Sogdia such as in Bukhara Arg (Dodkhudoeva 2007b), and Khwarazem, most famously the 18th century Jame Mosque, Khiva probably rebuilt on a much earlier building (see below). This hypostyle mosque has 212 wooden columns, some dating back to the 11-12th century. Its two small roof apertures are characteristic of large hypostyle mosques whose fabric was not strong enough to withstand the stresses on long courtyard façades (O’Kane 1995:119-122).



Figure 53: Kurut Mosque interior and mihrab, Zarafshan Valley, 2011.



Figure 54: Iskodar mosque, Zarafshan, 2011.

²⁸² See Appendix C for pre-Islamic antecedents; mosque plans and woodworking in the Zarafshan valley

²⁸³ A coffered ceiling describes a ceiling with one or more sunken panels, square or polygonal, which can either be decorative or part of the architectural structure. Coffering can also be found on vaults or soffits.



Figure 55: Urmitan Mosque, Zarafshan Valley, 2011.

These Upper Zarafshan mosques have a square plan with a central wooden column in the main cella, or in a large mosque, four wooden columns,²⁸⁴ and a veranda on one, two or more sides. Undated in any inscriptions, it is hard to ascertain the mosques' age; also due to these buildings' many reconstructions (Hayes 2010:26). It is unlikely that wooden artefacts are housed in buildings as old as them, Deniké notes that the Obburdon column came from a partially ruined newer mosque (1935:69). This suggests that these objects were important to the local population and seen as worth preserving. Possibly, like Khiva's Jame mosque, newer buildings were built on old plans.

²⁸⁴ The early mosque of Diggaron, in Hazara near Bukhara is also possibly linked here as it has four columns, but in brick (Pugachenkova 1991:218ff., Khmel'nitsky 1992:72-78).



Figure 56: Coffered ceiling, Iskodar Mosque, 2011.

Iskodar Mihrab

This large wooden mihrab,²⁸⁵ to which the epithet spectacular is appended by many scholars (e.g., Blair 1992: 78-9, Khmel'nitsky 1993), was 'found' by Andreev in 1925 in the small village mosque in

²⁸⁵ The mihrab is made of birch and put together without nails or glue from small individual parts in at least two tones of wood. It is 290 cm high and 180 cm wide, standing on a base 18cm high. Its central niche is c.97 cm wide and 157 cm high. Above the niche is a square section (71 x 71cm). The upper central 'grille' in the tympanum is a blunted six-sided star interlaced with a six-petalled rosette. The concentric borders surrounding the mihrab on three sides include trefoils and the interlace known from the Samanid Mausoleum and Obburdon column. Clockwise and anticlockwise swastikas can be seen on the columns. A pearl band further links the mihrab to iconography on the Samanid mausoleum, Hazrati Shoh and the Zarafshan columns. The unusual niche arch has a horseshoe-shaped half-oval; however, the underside of the arch is keel shaped.

Iskodar in the upper Zarafshan valley, 70 km east of Penjikent.²⁸⁶ Today it is one of the jewels of the National Museum of Tajikistan in Dushanbe, having been moved with the rest of the collection from the Bekhzod Museum (see Chapters Five and Six). However, when it was brought to the Bekhzod Museum in 1946, some parts became missing in transit, or were not put together correctly (Khmelnitsky 1993:243), this could be key for the object's understanding. Khmelnitsky depicts it in its original condition (see below).²⁸⁷ The mihrab resembles a pishtaq porch, and it has been compared to the Arab Ata Mausoleum at Tim and to the mihrab of Shir Kabir in Dehistan by both Blair (1992) and Khmelnitsky (1993). It has a small niche surmounted by a keel shaped arch.²⁸⁸

The two columns have gently widening capitals, resembling pre-Islamic columns and the characteristic column bases well-known from many archaeological excavations, and also seen in the Obburdon and Kurut columns. The consoles above the column are known from the Obburdon column and consoles in Sangiston and Chorku²⁸⁹ (see above). In the centre of the grille is a golden painted boss on a red and blue painted round wooden border. Khmelnitsky questioned whether this circular element could represent the sun (Khmelnitsky 1993:246). This combination of a six-petalled flower and a six-pointed star can be seen in stuccowork in a Samanid era panel from Afrasiab, now in the Samarqand Museum (Rempel 1961 Fig 58). Thus, can we posit that the motifs in the centre are somehow comparable, the circle and the quatrefoil of the stucco niche?

²⁸⁶ Obviously, the village inhabitants knew of the mihrab all along, today they have to make do with a blurred photograph in the mosque where the mihrab once was.

²⁸⁷ However, he does not give the supporting evidence for how it looked *in situ* (Khmelnitsky 1993).

²⁸⁸ Voronina compares the medallion, tympanum and archivault with the Samarra stuccos, however by comparing it to the Jame Mosque in Khiva, dates it to the 10-11th century (Voronina 1950 in Brentjes 1971 (see below).

²⁸⁹ This type of console is not known later (Khmelnitsky 1993:245). See Appendix C.



Figure 57: Iskodar Mihrab, Iskodar, Zarafshan Valley, Tajikistan, Kamal al-Din Bihzad Museum, Dushanbe.

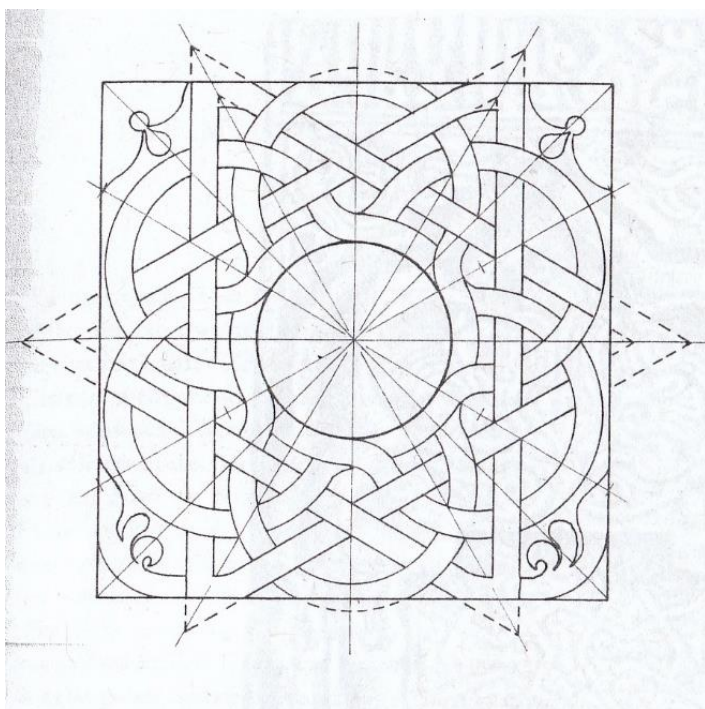


Figure 58: Iskodar Mihrab, drawing of central boss in panel over niche, Khmelnitsky 1993, Fig 2.

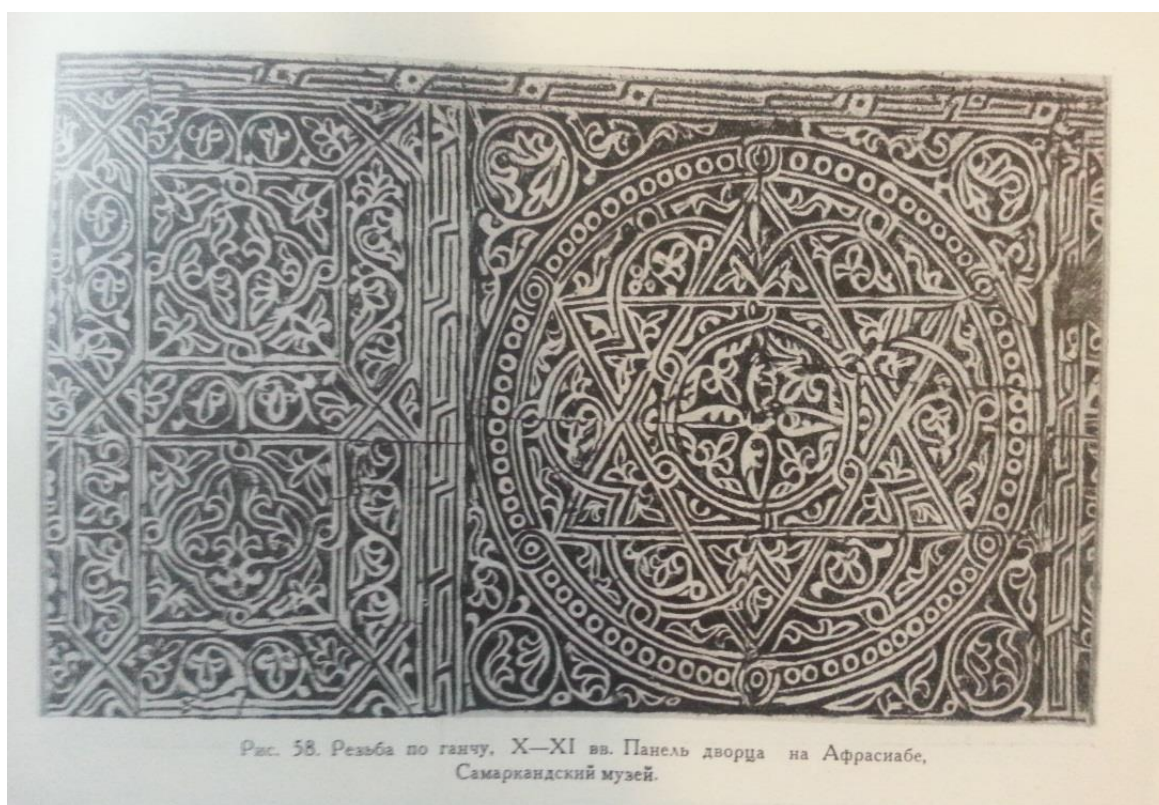


Figure 59: Stucco panel, Samarqand, Rempel 1961, Fig 58.

The relatively small rectangular niche is surmounted by a flattened half dome, which resembles a conch whose sides hang over the corners of the niche. This has been seen first in the Sasanian period, but is also common in Early Islamic architecture.²⁹⁰ The arch resembles Indian architecture from 5-7th centuries, especially Ajanta and Ellora cave temples, which have similar arches. The similarity between them is also based on the arch's decoration by a frieze of smaller arches with trefoil shapes. This frieze type can also be seen in wooden construction in India (Khmelnitsky 1993:243). The arch frame has a row of roundels within which are three stylised fish. Within the large circle under the horseshoe arch are what could be six stylised fish surrounding a spiralling form from the centre, evidence of *horror vacui* and anthropomorphic forms. These would be extremely unusual in an Islamic religious context, especially on the mihrab itself, but not unique (Flood 2002).

²⁹⁰ The oldest examples come from the Sasanian palace of Ctesiphon and the palaces of Qasr al-Hayr al-Gharbi, Qasr al-'Ashiq and Ukhaider as well as the Friday mosques in Kairouan and Isfahan. These methods were also used in Middle Asia, in Talhatan Baba mosque (11th century) and Khoja Mashhad in Tajikistan, 11th century, (Khmelnitsky 1993:243).

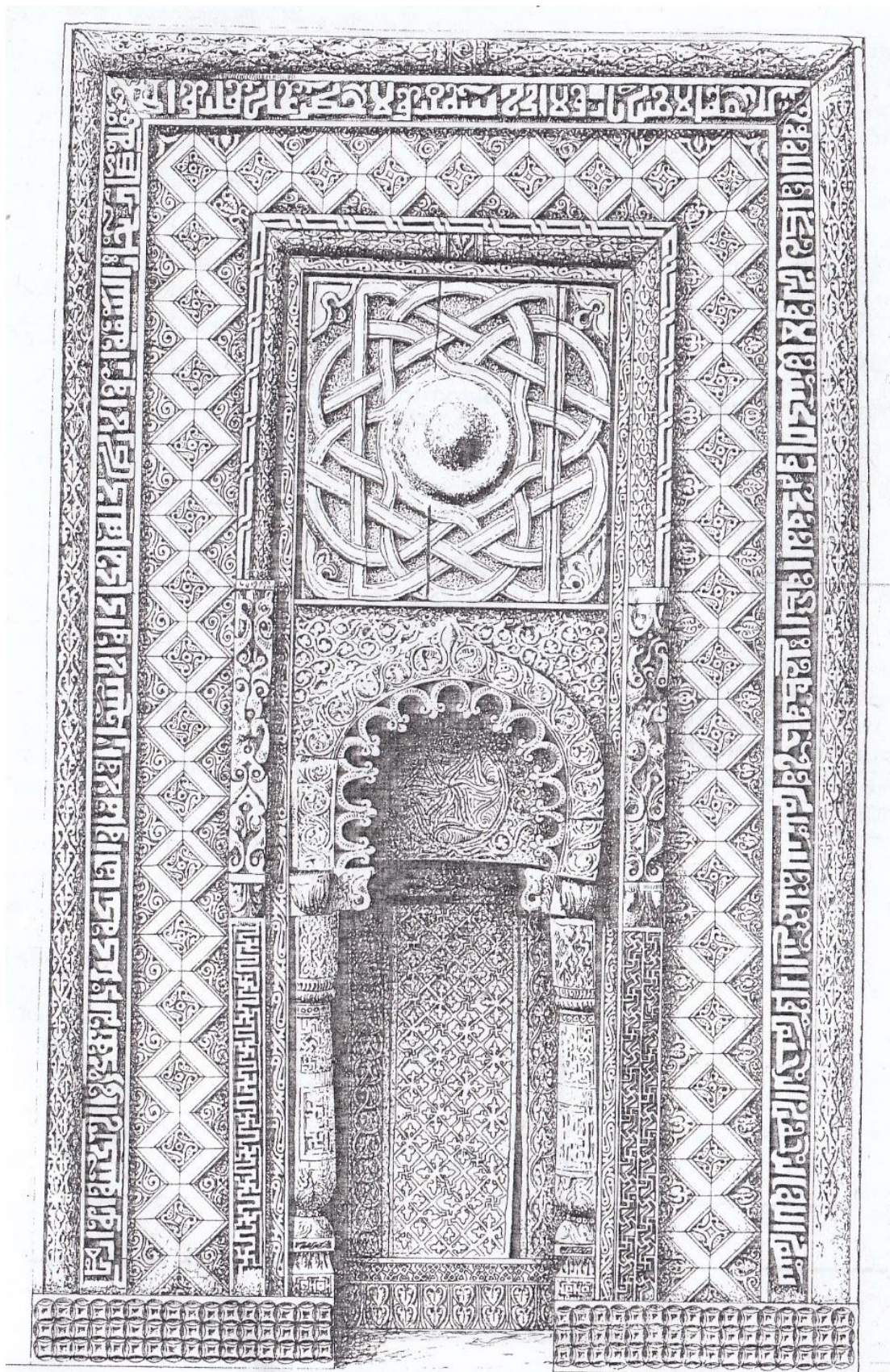


Figure 60: Iskodar Mihrab, drawing, Khmel'nitsky 1993: Fig 1 Original condition.

The open door

The most perceptible difference in Khmelnitsky's reconstruction to the mihrab as displayed today is that the central panel at the back of the niche is slightly open in the reconstruction (**Fig 59**). Although this symbolism of the open door is rare, it is not unique, there are other mihrabs with this feature, such as the marble mihrab from the Baghdad Museum dating to the 9-10th century. This "probably symbolises a door which shows the way to Paradise" (Khmelnitsky 1993:245). The mihrab itself has also been seen as the gate to paradise, possibly because Muslims do not have any other sacred object in front of them during prayer (Dodkhudoeva 2007b). There seem to be two possible antecedents for this iconographical motif, the first links the mihrab to the Zoroastrian *chahar taq*: as a two-dimensional representation of where the sacred fire was kept (Melikian-Chirvani 1990). Alternatively Khmelnitsky believes that the form's antecedents are in Roman sarcophagi which show a slightly opened door, leading to the other side (1993). This explanation of the open door was not included on the interpretation panel in the Bekhzod Museum (see Chapter Five below).



Figure 61: Image of Iskodar Mihrab in later Iskodar Mosque, showing where it was located prior to removal, Zarafshan Valley © Ariane Zolaïkha Ali.

Iskodar Mihrab: Inscription

The inscription is a hadith in floriated Kufic script and is translated as follows:

"Basmala. The Prophet, upon him be peace, said, Whoever guards the front line and the first [one word], he will be ... If the heavens and the earth [were] all ink and the trees pens, and the angels scribes, they would not be able to write your reward" (Blair 1992:78).

بسمه قال النبي عليه السلم من حافظ على
الصف المقدم والنكسة الاولى اعط...
السوات والارض كلها مداداً واشجاراً واقلاماً
والمليكة كتاباً لم يقدرُوا ان يكتبوا ثوابك

From Blair 1992:78

Hadith were not as common as Qur'anic quotations in monumental inscriptions, however when used they often have sectarian purposes (Blair 1992:78). This hadith exhorts believers to hold the front line, appropriate both for a site on the frontiers of Islam and reminds us of the Samanids' role as *ghazi* warriors (see Chapter Two). As Blair notes, it is not listed in Wensinck's extensive *Concordance et indices de la tradition musulmane* to traditions from canonical sources and "might well have been coined for the occasion" (Blair 1992:78).²⁹¹ However it might seem ironic that this orthodox hadith is chosen to sit with these obviously pre-Islamic forms, there is certainly a mismatch between the two, but the fact that this mihrab and other wooden artefacts remained in sacred spaces in the very religious Zarafshan Valley for around a millennia, suggests for the population there was no religious barrier to them, and the two traditions were allowed to intertwine.

²⁹¹ This hadith also resembles the Quranic Chapter of the Cave, Verse 109: Say, "If the sea were ink for [writing] the words of my Lord, the sea would be exhausted before the words of my Lord were exhausted, even if We brought the like of it as a supplement." <http://corpus.quran.com/translation.jsp?chapter=18&verse=109> (Accessed 20/04/2014). However, the hadith on the mihrab is directed at an audience who lived far from the ocean.

Iskodar Mihrab: Dating

Most scholars now date the Iskodar Mihrab to 9-10th century CE.²⁹² While it might be seen that some Tajik scholars may want to put a date on it to link it to the Samanid period, there is internal stylistic evidence which connects it with 10th century architecture, especially Arab-Ata at Tim as well as decorative elements in the Samanid Mausoleum, thus in the present author's mind a 10th century date is most likely. It does seem extraordinary that such a piece could have been created in and most importantly *for* such a supposedly peripheral area, far from sophisticated urban life. However, the wooden columns and other carved wooden items that come from this valley support the hypothesis that it stems from an indigenous tradition. The presence of the three minarets also corroborates this theory that the Zarafshan valley (see below) was much more important culturally, than we might think. Other elements of the Iskodar Mihrab's interpretation are discussed with the Bekhzod Museum's interpretation in Chapter Five.

Wooden columns, panels and consoles

The wooden columns from Obburdon (**Figs. 63-65 and 70, 72**), Fatmev (**Fig. 73**), Urmitan (**Fig. 75-76**) and Kurut (**Figs. 69 and 74**) as well as the Obburdon panel (**Fig. 66**) are the largest and most richly carved of the group of carved wooden artefacts under discussion, which also include the carved column from Sokan in the Yaghnob Valley (**Fig. 77**) and a carved console from Sangiston (**Fig. 78**). These artefacts show there was a rich tradition of woodworking in the early Islamic period, they were probably preserved due to the somewhat inaccessible nature of the Zarafshan Valley.²⁹³ It seems clear that this woodworking tradition was indigenous and a continuation from the pre-Islamic period (Bloom and Blair 2009:430). However, because this 'style' seems to fuse together different elements, including the Arabic script of the Iskodar mihrab as well as Indian motifs, there is probably more than one iconographic source. Thus while they might have incorporated the imperial bevelled style known from the Samarra stuccos, this was grafted on to local traditions in an area which is still known for

²⁹² Blair subsequently revised her earlier date to c1000, same as Mashhad-i Misriyan (Blair and Bloom 2009:91). Also dated 10th century by Yakubovsky by epigraphic comparison to Samanid coinage (Yakubovsky 1950 in Brentjes 1971), and Khmel'nitsky as the inscription is written in the oldest non-ornamented style typical of 8-10th century (1993). Dodkhudoeva dates it 9-10th century (2007c), calling it a transitional piece.

²⁹³ Even when I visited in 2011, the road between Rarz and Fatmev had collapsed into the River Zarafshan below, due to a landslide. I walked to the next village together with some locals along a high path above the river, with a donkey carrying my pack.

woodworking to this day.²⁹⁴ Certainly the bevelled style as used here often appears with other elements, appearing in the blind arcade around the base of the Obburdon column,²⁹⁵ and as a background for opposing snakes in the Obburdon panel. In the Kurut column the bevelled style frieze around the column base is bordered top and bottom with a pearl band. In the Fatmev and Urmitan columns the style begins to assume its all-over look, with no beginning and end, like the 'true' bevelled style known from Samarra. Equally at Hazrati Shoh there are friezes of bevelled style elements along with more naturalistic vegetal scrolls with curling vine tendrils, like the Samarqand stuccos (see above).

²⁹⁴ The Iskodar Mihrab is now in the National Museum of Tajikistan, Dushanbe.

Sangiston console – National Museum of Tajikistan, Dushanbe

Urmitan column – Penjikent Museum

Kurut column – Penjikent Museum

Fatmev column – Museum of Sogd, Khujand

Asht mihrab – National Museum of Antiquities, Dushanbe

Obburdon column – State Museum of History of Uzbekistan, Tashkent

Obburdon panels – State Museum of History of Uzbekistan, Tashkent/ Samarqand Museum – not found?

Sokan column – *in situ* in Yaghnob Valley?

Rarz column, is still *in situ* in village mosque. This is not included in the thesis, due to its much later attributed later date, possibly Timurid (Brentjes 1992).

²⁹⁵ The Obburdon column was 'found' by the ethnographer Andreev in 1915 in Matsha (Masjoh), the highest, most inaccessible part of the Valley. This building was already semi-ruined when Deniké saw it (1935:69). According to old inhabitants the column and crosspiece were taken from a more ancient mosque, now in ruins (Field and Prostov 1938:256ff.). When I visited the village in 2011, the *mazar* supposedly where it was found was being restored, according to locals and Muzaffari, Kamol & Nabotzoda (forthcoming). The column is made of *artcha Juniperus*, which is interesting, as the tree has medicinal properties, and is still considered sacred in Tajikistan today. It is also seismically resistant. There is also a later cursive inscription, but I have not been able to read it or find the reference.



Figure 62: Upper Zarafshan Valley, Tajikistan, 2011.

The only way to date these wooden artefacts is art historically, based on iconographic and epigraphic research as no dendrochronological research has yet been done. Thus, there is some disagreement on the objects' dating, relative to similar artefacts, such as the Samarra stuccos, and dates vary by a few centuries. However, there seems to be a consensus that the earliest Islamic wooden artefacts in the region date to 9-10th century (Bloom and Blair 2009), so possibly coeval with Samarra. Brentjes dates the Obburdon and Sokan columns (the latter from the Yaghnob valley)²⁹⁶ and panels to the Samanid period, (1971) as does Deniké who believes that the Obburdon column is the oldest and dates from the end of the first millennium (1935). Deniké dates the Kurut column²⁹⁷ to late 11th- early 12th centuries. It is argued here that while the Iskodar Mihrab, Obburdon column and panels, the

²⁹⁶ I did not visit the remote Yaghnob valley, but it is very possible the column is still *in situ*, as it is not displayed in a Tajik museum. See Appendix C below for further discussion of the column.

²⁹⁷ The cylindrical Kurut column without base (support) is 244 cm high (Andreev in Deniké 1935:70). Made from a single piece of wood, it tapers towards the top and then widens to form a cylindrical capital, completely covered in carved decoration. The column is also carved in high relief and has a small frieze near the base. Four consoles are carved with Samarra C decoration. The carving on the capital consists of the larger upper part showing a rhythmic repetition of demi-palmettes with curling tips. The lower section consists of four friezes of trefoils and curling leaf forms hanging from a pearl band.

Fatmev and Sokan columns are probably 9-10th century, the Kurut and Urmitan²⁹⁸ columns may be later, dating either to 10-11th centuries, similar to Hazrati Shoh. However possibly mitigating against this, are equivalent dated objects for the trefoil arch seen in the Kurut column, also seen in a Samanid stucco panel from Nishapur now in the Metropolitan Museum (see below). There is also a possible 10th century date for the Hazrati Shoh structure, by comparing its inscription with one found on a grave cover from Siraf, found by excavation (see below). The bevelled style is also seen in an arch in the blind arcade in the Samanid Mausoleum, dated at the latest to c. 943CE (see above, Chapter Three).

“For a long time, it was difficult to explain why such superb early pieces were found in remote villages, although it is suggested that these works were done by a master who was as skilled as those in the capital” (Bloom and Blair 2009:430). It is noteworthy that styles are always thought to start in the ‘more developed’ metropolitan centre and ‘diffuse’ out; diffusion theories in archaeology have been problematised since the 1970s,²⁹⁹ (cf. Shalem 2012 with reference to the bevelled style, see below; as well as literature on the Arab Ata Mausoleum in Tim, see Appendix B and footnote 634). It is interesting here that while the Zarafshan columns *could* have been influenced by the metropolitan style downstream, this does not explain the Hazrati Shoh complex, in Ferghana, while not far from Khujand, this was not a major urban centre on the scale of Samarkand. We should not forget however that there were cultural centres nearby such as Kalai Kahahaka and Penjikent which had a high court culture in an earlier period (see Appendix C), and the ability to commission quality artefacts. There was a continuation of pre-Islamic culture in the Zarafshan and Ustrushana as a whole, which was an area where they could more easily escape Arab control, and the fact that the region was one of the last in Central Asia to accept Islam (Barthold 1968:165ff.). We are also reminded of Stark’s *refugia* hypothesis, where Saka and other groups were found here (2008, see Appendix C). The accidental find of the Mehr Ahura god,³⁰⁰ in all his finery hidden in a mountain cave near Aini could be seen to support this theory.

²⁹⁸ The column from the mausoleum of Abu 'l-Qasim Gurgani in the regional centre of Urmitan is 181 cm high and is only partially complete (Voronina 1966, Brentjes 1992). It also has bevelled style Samarra C decoration. It is clear enough that deeply cut carving in high relief has the swirls and spade shaped palmettes that can be seen in the Samarra stuccowork. The surface is textured, with small circular impressions on the upper-most surface of the column. There is also a pearl border around the base of the capital which unlike the other columns is a rectangular, rather than cone shape.

²⁹⁹ For example, by New Archaeologists such as Ucko (1995) in Storey and Jones (2011), sometimes called hyperdiffusionism, where all culture change is related to that. Biology gives us the terms *homologous* and *analogous* traits, where the former are functionally similar as they have the same heritage, whereas the latter are functionally similar but this is due to environmental situations rather than heredity, in archaeology this is called convergence.

³⁰⁰ Now in the National Museum of Antiquities in Dushanbe (see Masov et al n.d.:173-75).

The Obburdon column is the best known of these Zarafshan columns, due to the fact it is thought to be the oldest, and it has been relatively more accessible for longer in the Uzbekistan History Museum in Tashkent,³⁰¹ where it is dated to 9th century CE in the signage. The museum sign also states its provenance from the Zarafshan Valley, which is found in both Uzbekistan and Tajikistan, without mentioning Obburdon or the fact it is from the Upper Zarafshan, which would betray its Tajik provenance. I would surmise that the Museum would rather the public believed that the column was found in Uzbekistan, thus claiming it for Uzbek cultural heritage rather than Tajik (see Chapter Five).

The Obburdon column carries four consoles with decoration in high relief, with clear zoomorphic elements on the capital. This has a motif of addorsed birds' heads gazing down set in a series of roundels which also contain foliage.³⁰² There is no mistaking this stylised motif, it has not yet been taken to near abstraction like the Tulunid panel (see below). The roundels' upper rings contain two sets of birds' heads, whose necks resemble the foliage of a Corinthian capital, which is probably the origin of this motif (Khmelnitsky 1992:290-302).

³⁰¹ Rather than remaining in the village mosques, Blair notes in 1992, the columns were still *in situ* in the Fatmev, Kurut and Urmitan mosques (1992). Which cannot be reconciled with the *mutawalli's* statement that it was returned from St Petersburg?

³⁰² These Zarafshan mosques are not the only ones to have birds depicted in them, they are also known from the Yemeni mosques such as the Mosque of Suleiman ibn Da'ud Marib, where spolia from earlier churches or synagogues such as column capitals and inscriptions also included bird sculptures (Hillenbrand 1994:91). However, use of spolia is different from the Zarafshan columns which were made specifically for mosques or mazars.

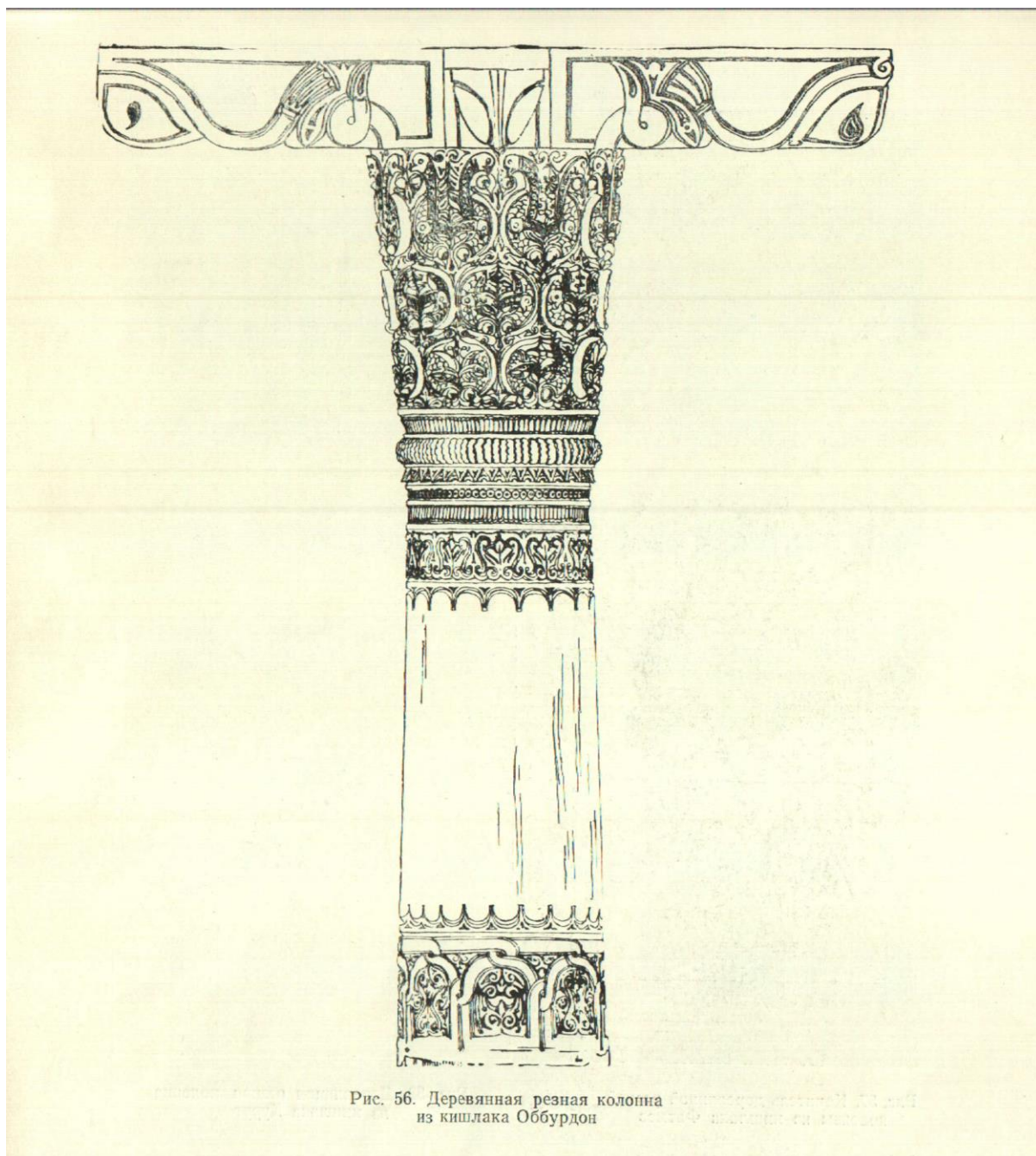


Рис. 56. Деревянная резная колонна
из кишлака Оббурдон

Figure 63: Obburdon column, from Voronina 1966, Fig 56

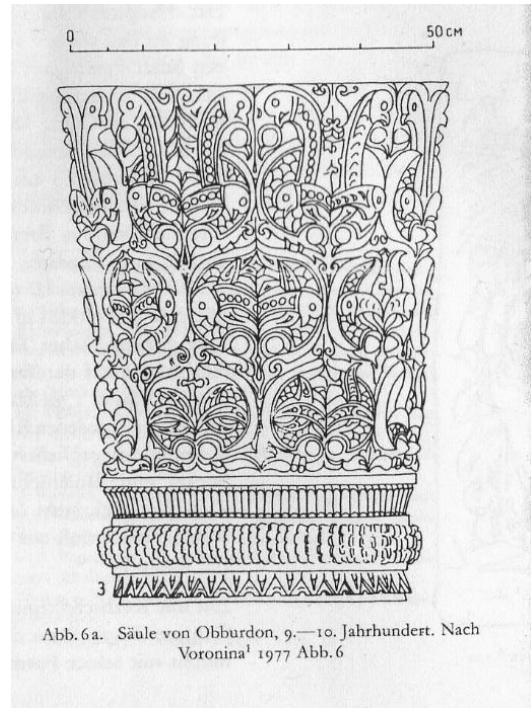


Figure 64: Obburdon column (capital, above and base, below), National Museum of History, Uzbekistan, Tashkent.

Figure 65: Obburdon capital, from Brentjes 1992.

The composition of the Obburdon panel³⁰³ (Deniké 1935:69-70) is determined by the undulating line of two snake-like creatures, whose heads approach each other.³⁰⁴ The background of these fantastic figures is made up of scrolling motifs in the bevelled style. This panel is presumably in a museum in Uzbekistan, possibly the Samarqand Museum which is currently closed for restoration (2011), as I could not locate it.³⁰⁵ We might count among the possible comparisons for this piece's iconography, snakes which are also seen in Samanid era stucco work in Samarqand (Rempel 1971 Fig. 64).



Figure 66: Obburdon panel, from Deniké 1935, Fig 2..

What is fascinating is the bevelled style seen with figurative ornament, thus this piece seems 'transitional' between the pre-Islamic and Islamic ornamentation, similar in some ways to the Tulunid panel (Grabar 1992a:140, Makariou 2012a:85-87 & 102-104),³⁰⁶ but here in the Obburdon panel the bevelled style remains the background to the figure, or alternatively, the snake-like figure provides a border to the bevelled motif, in a similar way to the horseshoe arches of the Obburdon column. Thus, bevelled motif³⁰⁷ and figures are separate elements rather than the bevelled lines creating the figure itself as in the Tulunid panel, where these lines which form the shape are ambiguous. Thus, we do not

³⁰³ Three carved wooden panels were also found at Obburdon, and first recorded by Andreev in 1925 (Deniké 1935). Only one has been illustrated (Deniké 1935, fig 2, Cohn-Wiener 1930 Pl 9, top right) which he describes as 'Turkish style'. This is the best example found in Turan supporting Strykowski's hypothesis of a 'Turkstil' in Islamic Samarra, however the fragmentary evidence still does not allow for conclusive proofs to be drawn for the style's origin (Cohn-Wiener 1930:12). These fragments were found with the column and are similar stylistically. Khmel'nitsky has suggested it formed part of a ceiling frieze (1992).

³⁰⁴ In a medieval Islamic architectural context, Tabbaa noted all documented examples exist on gates or portals, "and should perhaps be viewed as components in the imagery of power, impregnability or even good fortune of the structure they decorated (2010:77: Note 15).

³⁰⁵ Deniké states that column and panels were divided between the Samarqand and Tashkent museums (1935).

³⁰⁶ The panel is dated from end 9th - beginning 10th century.

³⁰⁷ He notes that bevelled style is found on Central Asian objects dating back to 4th century BCE (Grabar 1992a:140).

know where the bird's beak and the leaf that it holds begin and end, causing an unreality or impossibility of the design and the represented creature. It is suggested here that the Obburdon piece is earlier on the 'path to abstraction', and has a different motivating aesthetic than that which Grabar suggested for the Egyptian panel, which shows a "uniquely Muslim view of the universe – a universe in which divine creation alone is permanent and real" (Grabar 1992a:140). However, because of the different provenances of the two pieces, it is difficult to date them vis-à-vis one another.

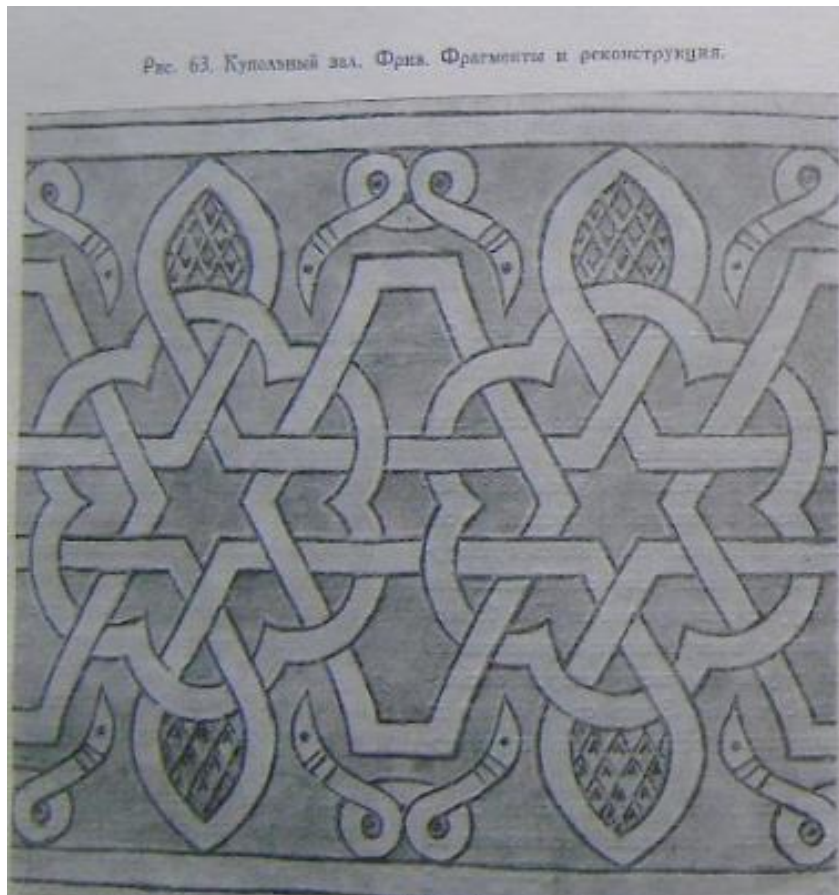


Figure 67: Snakes in Samanid stucco from Afrasiab, Akharov & Rempel 1971: Fig. 63.

The Fatmev column is slimmer and less massive than that from Obburdon³⁰⁸ but also shows elements of Samarra C, this time in a 'comma' form around its decorated capital. This column was discovered in a military store in the Khujand fortress, situated next to the Khujand Museum, following

³⁰⁸ Height of the Fatmev column is 298 cm, it is made out of the wood of the walnut tree (Juglans). Brentjes believes that the column was in secondary use in the village mosque (Brentjes 1971:296).

enquiries as to its whereabouts by the present author.³⁰⁹ It is now safely in the museum, (from September 2011) much to the delight of the curators. Khmelnitsky believes that the motif on the Kurut column is similar to an abstracted acanthus leaf, suggesting the Corinthian origins of this motif (1992). There is also a frieze of fish along the base of the capital. Here again the bevelled style appears with vegetal and zoomorphic forms. This column is also in the Penjikent Museum (2011). The trefoil form can be compared to a stucco panel from Nishapur, dated 10th century (Metropolitan Museum 40.170.439) which shows a similar trefoil motif, (**Fig 68**).³¹⁰

The Urmitan column also combines the bevelled style with zoomorphic motifs. The capital also has different iconography from the strict Samarra C style, this is important vis-à-vis affiliations with the Abbasid material as it has a series of arches in a blind arcade, decorated with a vegetal scroll frame, within which are trefoils and vegetal forms. There is a frieze of fish near the capital base. However, they do not seem to have eyes, like true zoomorphic forms. Below this is a series of arches where naturalistic flowers with stalks and a leaf either side, are interspersed with more abstract owls. Notably, these owls are not placed in the arches, where the deity would have been placed in the pre-Islamic period, but next to them. The column is now found in the National Museum of Tajikistan (since 2013, when the museum reopened in its new location).

³⁰⁹ I had been told by the Fatmev mosque's *mutawalli* that the column was in Khujand, but on enquiring with the curators there, they did not know anything about this. However, they initiated a successful search, and the column was returned to the museum in Summer 2012.

³¹⁰ Contra Rugiadi pers. comm. and n.d. MIT notes, who has argued that the trefoil motif is only seen in the Ghaznavid period onwards, with reference to the Ghaznavid marbles, and thus the Kurut column must date to the Ghaznavid period. The trefoil arch also seen on the innermost arch of the mihrab in Shir Kabir, Mashhad-i Misriyan (late 10th – early 11th century).

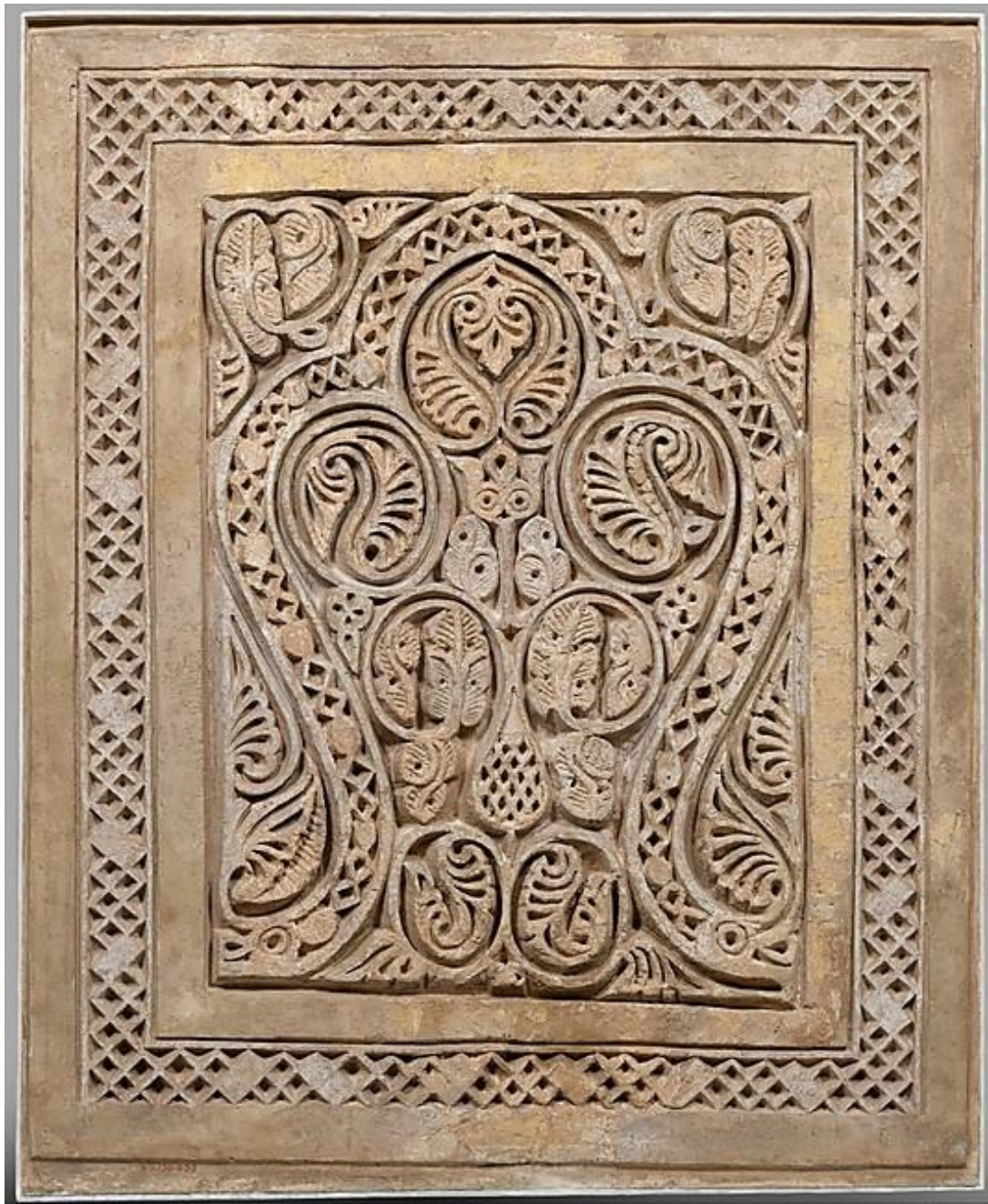


Figure 68: Stucco panel, Metropolitan Museum of Art, 40.170.439, Nishapur, 10th century.



Figure 69: Kurut column, illustration of capital, from Brentjes 1992 Fig 6.1.

Brentjes has noted that the birds' heads motif probably comes from Sogdian iconography and reminds us of 6-7th century textile designs (Brentjes 1971:296). Birds in Sogdian ossuaries are symbols of fortune (Grenet 2013:21), and it is interesting to speculate whether they continued to have this meaning in the Islamic period, especially if placed in a mazar showing a continuity of funerary function. They were also one of the most popular designs on Samanid ceramics (see above). The representation of a tree with birds perched on its branches was meaningful and an important image in medieval Islam (Daneshvari 1986).³¹¹ In al-Hujwiri's *Kashf al-Mahjub*,³¹² a bird on a tree is linked not only to paradise, but also to the tomb. Here it might represent the soul who flies to heaven, linking possibly to the column being made for a mazar rather than a mosque.

I saw that my spirit was borne to the heavens. It looked at nothing and gave no heed, though Paradise and Hell were displayed to it, for it was freed from phenomena and veils. Then I became a bird, whose body was of Oneness and whose wings were of Everlastingness, and I continued to fly in the air of the Absolute until I passed into the sphere of Purification and gazed upon the field of Eternity and beheld there the tree of Oneness (al-Hujwiri 2000:238) .

Thawban, the son of a Nubian, is described as

³¹¹ Daneshwari gives many more examples of this.

³¹² The *Kashf al-Mahjub* (Unveiling the hidden) is the only work extant by Abu'l-Hasan 'Ali b. 'Otman Hojviri (d. between 1073 and 1077 CE), and the oldest surviving independent Sufi manual in Persian. Hojviri was born in Ghazna and travelled in Transoxiana and eastern Iran.

this is the beloved of God, who died in love of God, slain by God. At his funeral the birds of the air gathered above his bier and wove their wings together so as to shadow it (al-Hujwiri 2000:100).

The mazar of Shamsi Tabrezi, most famous for being Rumi's teacher, is located in Shamtuch, one of the larger villages in the Upper Zarafshan, showing that there were Sufi beliefs in the area at an early date. Birds are also often mentioned in the Shahnama and of course in the Convocation of Birds by Farid al Attar (2005). Thus, while it might be that pre-Islamic ideas were still being depicted, these were in the process of being re-semanticised into a new religion with new visual forms, shown by the bevelled style and the geometrical designs on the Zarafshan woodwork. It is suggested here that

It transferred to the viewer the interpretation of forms by making the latter sufficiently imprecise to allow for a range of possible interpretations. It is possible to develop a cultural explanation for this type of art within Islamic culture in general and the ninth century in particular - for instance in the theory, common at that time, of atomism, the argument that infinitely numerous combinations of a small number of similar units make up the whole creation (Grabar 2009:252).



Figure 70: Obburdon Column, National Museum of History, Uzbekistan.



Figure 71: Evolution of column cross pieces from Corinthian capitals Akharov & Rempel 1971, Fig 89.

The historian al-Maqrizi (d.1442), describes three capitals in the al-Azhar Mosque (970 CE onwards), as carved with birds' images as a talisman to stop pigeons and other birds nesting there. Some Byzantine columns with bird capitals have also been found, however it is hard to know whether these were set in place as talismans or identified as such after installation (Flood 2006:142). This might give another explanation for the use of bird images in the Upper Zarafshan mosques?



Figure 72: Obburdon column capital, Tashkent Museum of History, 9-10th century.

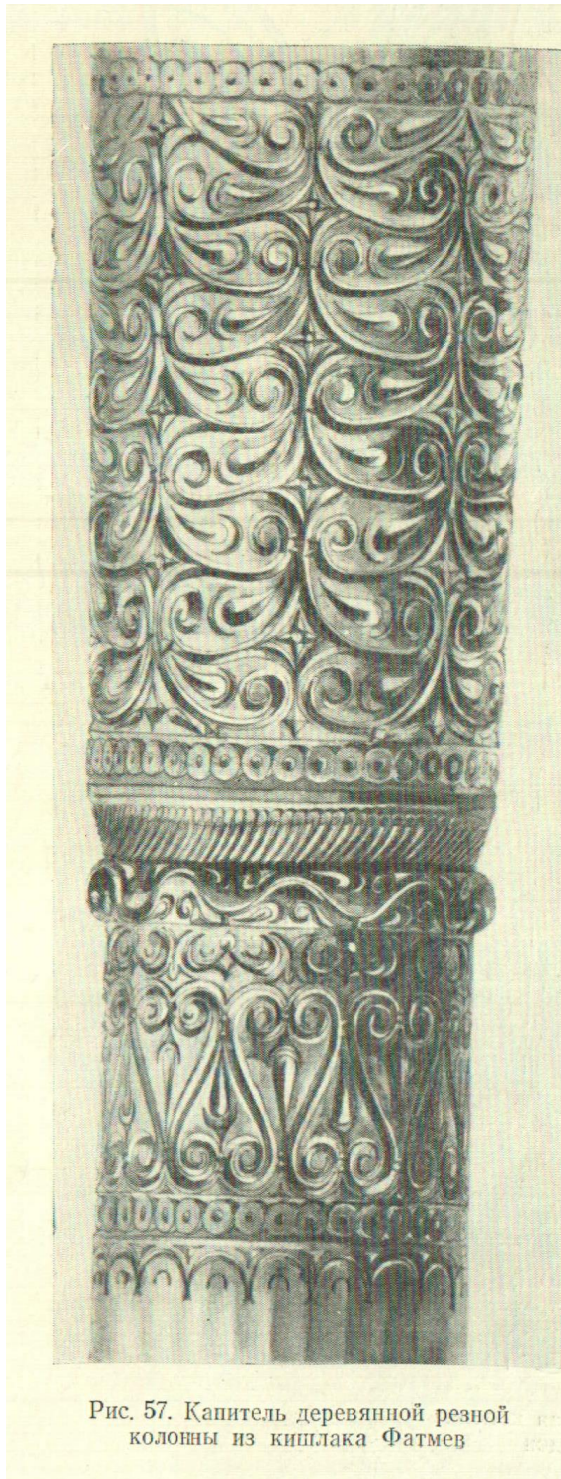


Figure 73: Fatmev column, from Voronina 1966, Fig. 58 and in Sogd Regional Museum, Khujand, 2011.



Figure 74: Kurut column, Penjikent Museum 2011.



Figure 75: Urmitan column, Penjikent Museum.

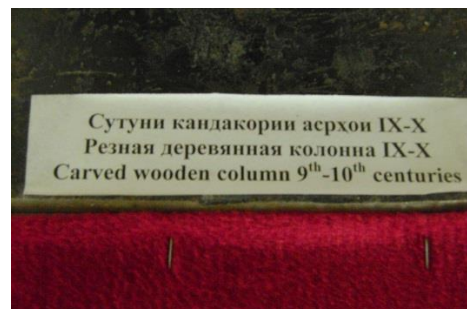
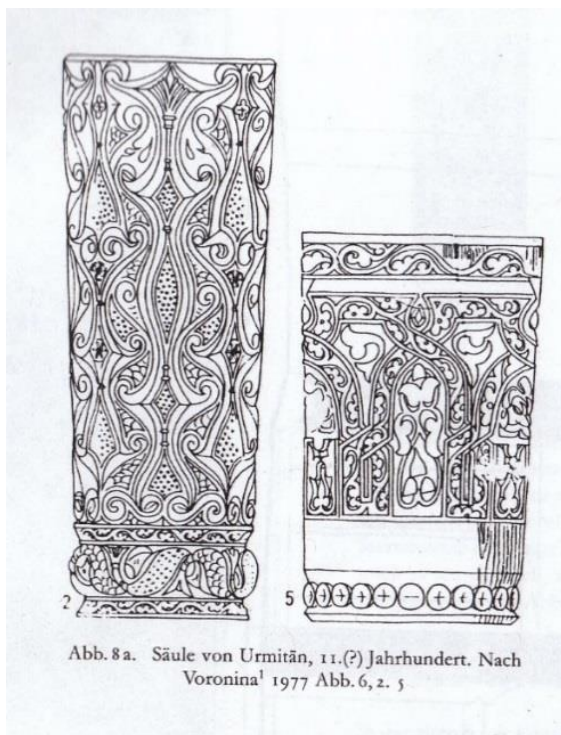


Figure 76: Urmitan Column, Penjikent Museum, 2011 and illustration from Brentjes, 1992, Fig 8a.

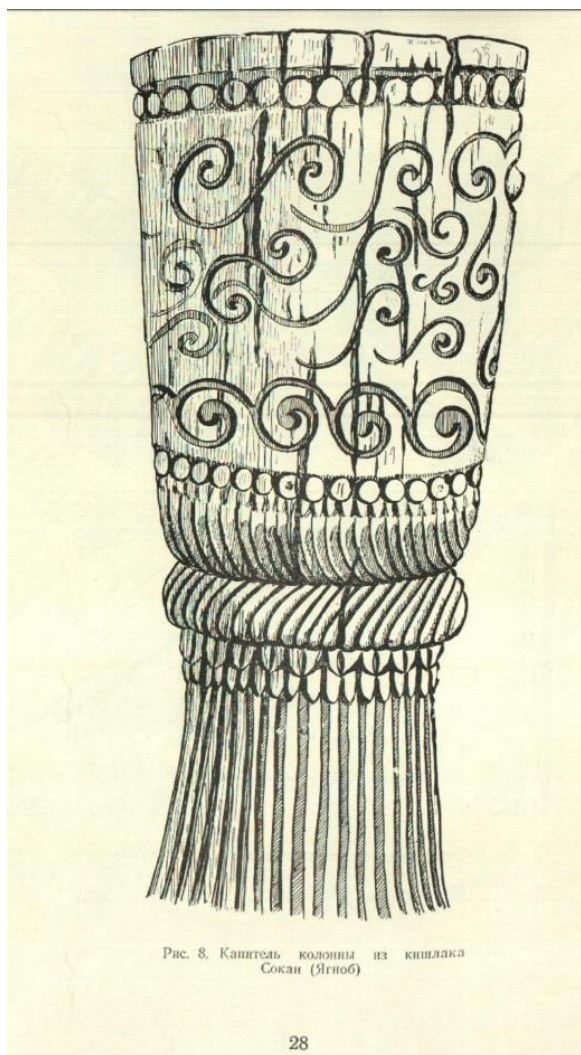


Figure 77: Sokan column, from Voronina 1966 Fig 8.



Figure 78: Sangiston console, near Aini, 10th century, Bekhzod Museum.

Today, there is still a strong woodworking tradition in Sogd (Dodkhudoeva 2007b), underlining the importance of this tradition in the region. I saw a young master craftsman carving wood by hand in the old styles called Jamoliddin.



Figure 79: Jamoliddin, woodcarver, in front of one of his doors, Shamtuch, Zarafshan, 2011.

Zarafshan Minarets³¹³

In Upper Zarafshan valley are found three mud brick minarets, the tallest minaret is in the small town of Ayni (Aini), (**Fig. 80**)³¹⁴ and two more in the villages of Rarz³¹⁵ (**Fig. 81**) and Fatmev,³¹⁶ (**Figs. 82-83**). It is noteworthy that these minarets were found near mosques with ancient columns in both Rarz and Fatmev. Dated from their brick sizes and the fact that they are all in unbaked brick, it is suggested that these minarets are 10th century (Khmelnitsky 1992:103-108). Baked brick seems to have become the norm by the 11th century however it was generally in use from the early 10th century.³¹⁷ These tapering minarets have, in two out of three cases,³¹⁸ a square base, and simple decorative bands. It is questioned whether they are in a different tradition or are possible precursors to the slender cylindrical baked brick Iranian minarets often seen resting on a polygonal plinth, introduced around 1000 CE (Hillenbrand 2006b). Certainly, their bands might be seen to herald the outstanding ornament of later 12th century Central Asian minarets, most famously the Kalyan minaret in Bukhara, but also those of Wabkent and Uzkend. Not only was the minaret possibly the locus of the call to prayer, but

³¹³ See Appendix C for discussion on minarets' antecedents.

³¹⁴ Aini minaret's preserved upper part is 13.5 metres high, tapering markedly upwards, with a spiral staircase inside. It stands on a square base 1.7m high, and 3.85 by 3.85 metres across. The brick size is 42 x 23 x 8 cm. Brentjes dates it 9-10th century (1993:113). The masonry is strengthened with wooden struts. The minaret has four decorative bands in brickwork. It stands next to the later mosque on the main road. There is no sign telling visitors about this monument, although the town used to be called Varzi-Minar (tall minaret) after the minaret. Although better preserved than the other minarets, it is in a poor state of repair. There is a local legend which says that the Padishah Jalal-ad-din ordered his seven minarets to be built in the Zarafshan valley. Today, three are preserved, namely the Varz-i minor (Aini), Rarz and Fatmev minarets.
http://www.naison.tj/EN/ISTORIA/vel_shelk_put/put.shtml?put1.htm (accessed 10/10/09). I have been able to find no confirmation or other discussion of this legend, mentioned on the website.

³¹⁵ Rarz minaret is further upriver along the Zarafshan valley in the village. It stands alone on the main road running alongside the river. The preserved height is 11.5 metres and it is mounted on a stone socle 1.5 metres high and 2.75 to 2.75 metres broad. The brick sizes are 33-40 and 15-17 x 7cm. There are two decoration bands of horizontal and vertical bricks. Brentjes dates it to the 10th century (1993:112). Khmelnitsky dates it to the 9-10th centuries, due to the brick size (1992). There is no sign telling visitors about this monument.

³¹⁶ Fatmev minaret is in an unkempt graveyard, opposite the old village mosque. The mud brick minaret is preserved to a height of c 6m high, with brick sizes, 42x22x8 cm. The minaret is directly on the ground, there is no plinth. Brentjes dates it to the 10th century (1993:111). Khmelnitsky dates it 9-10th centuries, due to brick size (1992). There is one ornamental belt, a row with two vertical bricks interchanged with two horizontal bricks. Bands of decoration on both minarets are clearest to see on Rarz. On Fatmev this is smaller and more difficult to see. There is no sign telling visitors about this monument. Until recently the nearby mosque housed the 10th century column, now in the Khujand Museum (see above).

³¹⁷ Hillenbrand notes that the quality of the early Islamic baked brick was often better than the Sasanian craftsmanship, and that this material was "crucial in the formation of a distinctively Persian Islamic architecture from the early fourth / tenth century onwards" (Hillenbrand 2006b:4).

³¹⁸ Aini and Rarz.



Figure 80: Aini Minaret and Mosque, 2011.

also where the ruler's name was proclaimed. Towers were also attractive because they were cheaper to build than mosques and were pleasingly visible. It is possible that these Zarafshan valley minarets, some of the earliest extant in Central Asia (if not the earliest?) could perhaps shed light on the development of the form in Central Asia.³¹⁹ Neither Hillenbrand nor Bloom have discussed them with regards to their theories.³²⁰ It is perhaps significant in this context that there are signs of Chinese and Indian cultural influence in the Zarafshan valley both during the Sogdian period, as well as in the early Islamic centuries. For example the wooden statue of Mehr Ahura found in a cave near Aini, dating to the 8th century, presumably hidden from Arab invaders, has been thought by scholars to show Indian influence, as do the wooden caryatids from Penjikent, and there is an over-life-size statue of Shiva and Parvati at Penjikent (Masov et al n.d.). Although clearly of Sogdian style, for example, Ustrushanan paintings show influences from the east, notably from Buddhist sites in Xinjiang and Gansu during the Tang era (see Chapter Appendix C).³²¹

³¹⁹ They might be also compared to the minaret found at Siraf, dated early 9th century (Whitehouse 1971:2ff.).

³²⁰ "Scattered textual references give only a vague hint of the early years of their development in the 9th and 10th centuries, for apart from those towers already discussed at Samarra, virtually no physical evidence for those early towers remains" (Bloom 1989:145). Which the present author would disagree with.

³²¹ Dated 750-850 CE <http://www.iranicaonline.org/articles/sogdiana-vi-sogdian-art> (accessed 24/06/2013).



Figure 81: Rarz Minaret, 2011.

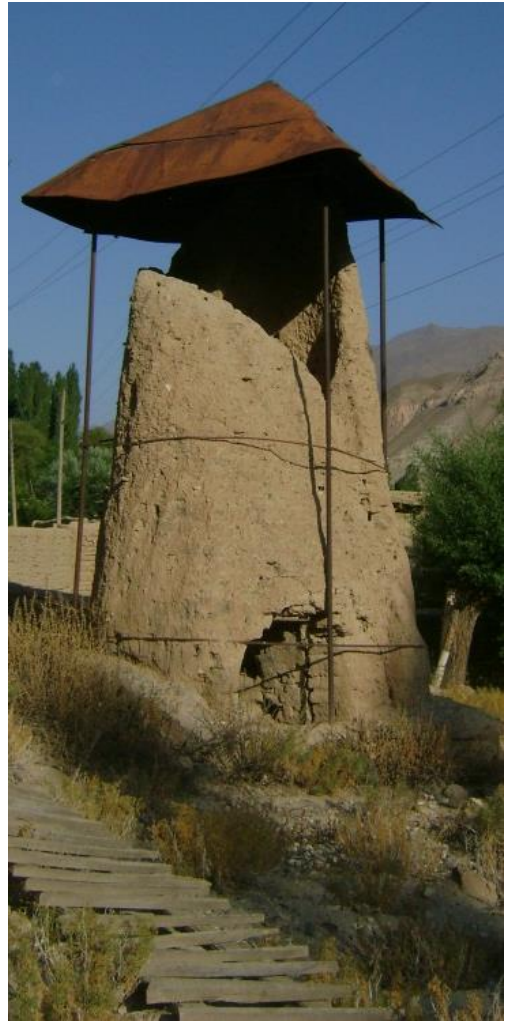


Figure 82: Fatmev Minaret, 2011.

The local Ustrushanan dynasty was conquered by the Samanids at the end of the 9th century, they imposed direct rule and forced conversion to Islam (Narshakhi 1954).³²² Previously, there were close links with the Abbasid centre through the Afshin in the 9th century (see Appendix C), however according to Tabari, probably the majority had not converted to Islam by the time of the Afshin's death in the mid-9th century. This was possibly due to the rulers' status as semi-divine leaders protecting their population's rights to worship them.³²³

³²² See Appendix C for a historical outline of Ustrushana during this period.

³²³ See Appendix C.

Thus, when the minarets were built, Islam would have been a new faith in the region. If minarets are seen to be Abbasid symbols of power, it is significant that these appear near mosques that have anthropomorphic iconography, very different to Abbasid norms (see above). Whereas, if the minarets have an indigenous heritage, it is noteworthy that the upper Zarafshan Valley was heavily fortified in the pre-Islamic period, with over 400 kushk castles, as some scholars, e.g. Pugachenkova have linked the minarets' form to the *kushk*'s corner towers (see Appendix C).³²⁴



Figure 83: Fatmev Minaret and mosque to right of picture, 2011

However, it seems most likely that the minarets date to the Samanid era in Ustrushana, i.e. 10th century, and are possibly linked to Ismail's conquering of the Zarafshan. Thus, these minarets might be a visible sign of a newly converted place, and Samanid power against a recalcitrant population? If

³²⁴ According to Yaqubi there were as many as 400 fortifications in Ustrushana, probably the castles of the *dehqans* (in Barthold 1968).

that is so, then they would also be coterminous with at least some of the wooden columns from the nearby mosques and the Iskodar Mihrab, setting up a dialogue between these two groups of objects.

The Zarafshan minarets can possibly be compared to two other early minarets,³²⁵ one in a seemingly peripheral location in Burana, in the Semirechiye on the borders between the Islamic world and the steppe as well as one in the Qarakhanid capital, Uzkend in the Ferghana Valley. They may possibly be seen as symbols of power to the pagan or newly converted Turk. The Uzkend minaret has been described as a 'victory minaret' (Ball 2012 Pl. 21), which is also how these Zarafshan minarets might be characterised.³²⁶ It seems certain the mosque tower was popular not only because served as a generalised sign of Islam but also as a particular sign of local power.

Tabbaa (1993:182ff.) discussing the minaret on Aleppo citadel,³²⁷ believes it could have been used as a watchtower for surveillance of the city, and this function has also been attributed to the Juyushi mosque, Cairo, Egypt (1085).³²⁸ This might suggest another interpretation for the minarets in the Zarafshan, either to send light signals to each other,³²⁹ or watch the inhabitants up and down the valley. Just as the panopticon, minarets could still fulfil this function if people feel that they *might* be being watched even if nobody was viewing them. Similarly, today a vast mosque is being built in Dushanbe, of which one of its functions is to watch the congregation and the imams, checking not only on their actions but their beliefs (see below, Chapter Six).

³²⁵ Early baked brick minarets are found in Burana, near Bishkek (late 10th century) and Uzkend in the Ferghana Valley (11-12th century) (Mamedov & Muradov 2013).

³²⁶ However, see Leisten 1996 for discussion on this.

³²⁷ The Aleppo minaret, placed at the highest point of the citadel, was used for surveillance and as a sniper tower during the ongoing Syrian civil war. In April 2013 it was destroyed in battle <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-middle-east-22283746> (accessed 20/08/2014).

³²⁸ The Juyushi mosque was sponsored by Badr al-Jamali, the chief of the armies of al-Muntasir, the Fatimid caliph (1036-1094), see also Behrens-Abousief 1989. Shafi 1965, believed it was a watchtower because of its remote location far from settlement and due to kiosks on the minaret's top, which have prayer niches in, but could be used for guards. Grabar (1966:28-29) believed that this was a victory monument, rather than a watchtower. However, I would argue that it could be both a victory monument and used for surveillance when necessary, and the two functions are able to feed into and support each other.

³²⁹ A possible function of the Juyushi mosque (Shafi 1965), however I am not sure, looking at the map of the mountainous upper Zarafshan whether the three in Rarz, Fatmev and Aini would have been able to communicate in this way?

Hazrati Shoh, Chorku, Ferghana Valley

In the courtyard of the mosque of Hazrat-i Shoh³³⁰ in the Chorku village, near Isfara in the Ferghana Valley, northern Tajikistan the wooden structure of Hazrati Shoh (**Figs. 84-85, 87-88**) consists of an *ivan*, or what is described as a *musalla* (open space in a mosque for prayer) (Brentjes 1992, see also Ruziev 2007:49ff.). The carvings show the region's advanced level of woodcarving, still famous for this skill today. The columns are completely covered in carved³³¹ motifs, which include the trefoil and stylised pomegranates, snakes, fish and birds such as the eagle owl which are interlaced into the outline of the decorative complex (Ruziev 2007). The knot interlacing on this wood is also seen on pottery and on the Samanid mausoleum, showing how various motifs are reused in different mediums. The heavy architrave is covered with a superb Kufic inscription with interlaced stems (Blair 1992:77).³³² According to the inscription the tomb inside the mosque contained the Shi'i imam Hussein's son, imam Zayn al-Abidin, who was also Shi'i (Shozimov 2004:144).³³³

³³⁰ This building is also known as the mausoleum of Amir Khamza Khasti Podshoh and the mausoleum of Kasim. Local tradition also refers to connections with Amir Hamza b. 'Abd al-Mutalib b. Hashim (Brentjes 1992).

³³¹ The carved columns and eight wooden sub-beams or consoles resemble stylised birds which support the carved ceiling, also made up of carved beams and wooden roof panels. The pillars in the western and southern sides and the roof are preserved. Also extant are carved lintels and grilles.

³³² Blair does not give the inscription and only notes its dedication to a Husaynid (1992:77).

³³³ The Arabs wanted to know whether the young man who looked after the tomb discerned the contradiction between Sunni and Shi'a traditions. The young man shrugged his shoulders and said there were no contradictions since both were parts of the single Muslim tradition (Shozimov 2004:144).



Figure 84: Hazrati Shoh © Çağlayan Hergül, 2011.

Hazrati Shoh is the only remaining wooden structure from the Early Islamic period. It has been variously dated by scholars, to 9-10th centuries (Ruziev 2007:49), 11-12th centuries, with reference to its inscription (Brentjes 1992). It is also dated to the late 12th century, also with reference to its inscription (Blair 1992:77), and 12-13th century (Voronina 1967 in Khmel'nitsky 1992:307-324). Khmel'nitsky argues that, contra Voronina, the building dates to 9-10th centuries which he deduces from the plaited Kufic script (1992), and indeed this may be supported by a dated gravecover from Siraf (**Fig. 86**) which has one of the earliest dated plaited Kufic scripts (late 10th century, Whitehouse 1971:16ff. and Fig. 7). This elaborately plaited Kufic text closely resembles Hazrati Shoh's inscription, as well as the floriated ornaments, it is closer to Hazrati Shoh than that of Radkan West, dated 1020-21, which is more reserved, the grave cover also has the same interlace seen on Hazrati Shoh and elsewhere. Thus, a late tenth century date could be possible for Hazrati Shoh.



Figure 85: Hazrati Shoh, inscription © Çağlayan Hergül, 2011.

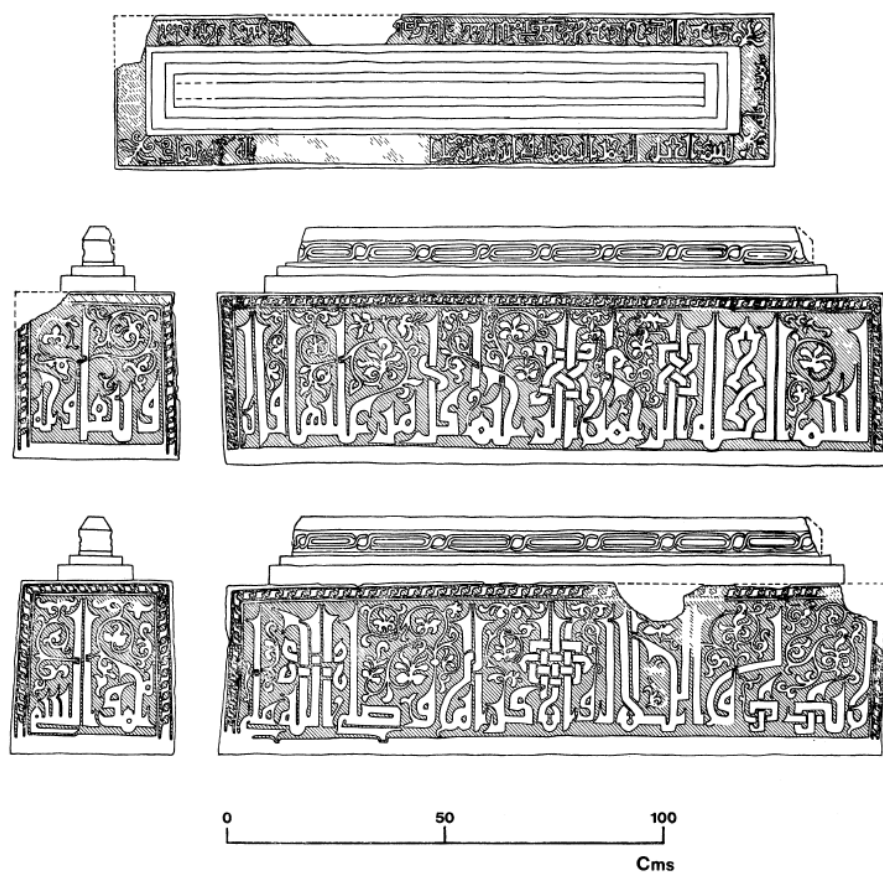


Fig. 7. Stone grave cover.

Figure 86: Sandstone grave cover with plaited Kufic script dated Jumida II 383/993, found by excavation at Siraf, Whitehouse 1971: Fig 7. Reproduced with kind permission from the British Institute of Persian Studies



Figure 87: Hazrat Shoh, © Çağlayan Hergül, 2011.

What is fascinating here is the multiplicity of decoration, vine scrolls and bevelled style as well as a range of geometric forms which look as if the artist is working out how these fit together. This is not a 'finished' piece, we are seeing his workings, like viewing a sketchbook.³³⁴ Larger and smaller polygons are carved with a continuous line, but they are not symmetrical, nor is there the overall *girih* pattern. The structure is currently on the UNESCO World Heritage tentative list.

³³⁴ Or possibly the panels are later inserts (Contadini pers. comm.).
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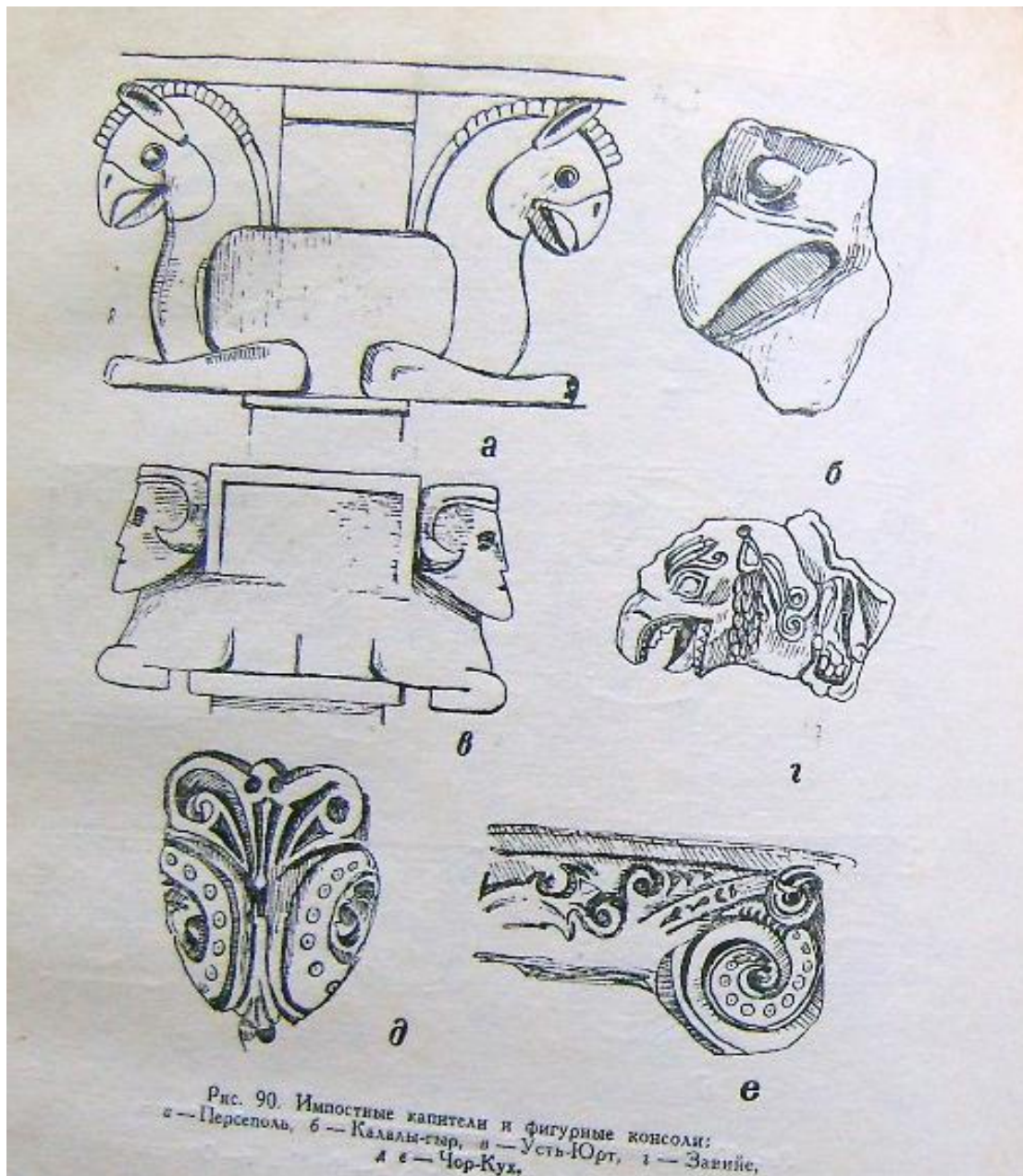


Figure 88: Evolution of the crosspiece from the double headed protome in Akharov & Rempel 1971, Fig 90 – where a) shows Persepolis and e) shows Hazrati Shoh.

As can be seen from the above diagram it has been suggested that these protomes in Hazrati Shoh are derived from the double headed Achaemenid protome (Akharov and Rempel 1971). It is noted that the column capitals used on the modern National Museum of Tajikistan are in the double headed protome style originally from Persepolis showing bulls rather than the griffins shown here (**Fig. 88**). Decisions were made not to choose their later local derivation as found within the territory of Tajikistan, on Hazrati Shoh and other structures (see Chapter Six below).

Asht Mihrab

This unbaked clay mihrab³³⁵ was found in a mosque in the village of Asht (**Fig. 89**) in the Ferghana Valley in northern Tajikistan. The mihrab consists of two main sections, of which the upper part is almost complete. It takes the form of a recessed arch, or flattened conch, which has a fragmentary inscription in Kufic around its border, consisting of Verse 23 from the Qur'an:

In the name of Allah, Most Gracious, Most Merciful. Prosper believers who are humble in their prayers.

The interior shows a scalloped border arching around a roundel in the lower centre containing cross hatching and small swastikas. At the top of the arch is the winged motif known from Sasanian art. Both Brentjes (1993) and Dodkhudoeva (2007c:18) date the mihrab to the 9-10th century but neither gives any basis for their dating. However, it has also been dated to 10-11th centuries (Khmelnitsky & Negmatov 1963). Almost identical to the Asht Mihrab is an unbaked clay fragment found in the Mazar Mavlono Muhammad Ali together with other architectural fragments in the Upper Zarafshan Valley, which also has swastika and quatrefoil interlace (**Fig. 90**), which Khmelnitsky publishes and dates to 9-10th centuries (1992). The lower arch in the Asht mihrab, most of which has not survived has a cusped arch similar to Shir Kabir mihrab (Khmelnitsky 1992:110), Arab Ata at Tim (Pugachenkova 1963) and the Samanid tombstone from Nishapur (now in Metropolitan Museum, New York, Chevedden 1986 Fig 6).

³³⁵ Emanating from the roundel are thirteen comma shapes with an infilling of alternating crosshatching and vegetal designs. The lower part is only partly extant, this is a flat plane, with what looks like an inner arch within a rectangular shape, but this inner arch is destroyed. The outer border is mostly extant so can reconstruct the size of the whole. The border consists of deep cut vegetal arabesques which lie in a wave formation. Either side of the arch in the spandrels are patterns of four pronged spirals.



Figure 89: Asht Mihrab, National Museum of Antiquities, Dushanbe, 9th-10th century



Figure 90: Fragment of mihrab? From Mazar of Mavlono Muhammad Ali, Bekhzod Museum, 10th century

Imperial style: Samarra C?

The bevelled style³³⁶ is seen by some scholars such as Haase (2007) as a token of Islamicate identity, and indeed the genesis of what many scholars consider true 'Islamic art' (Gonnella 2013 and references there). The design displayed artistic abstraction and covered the whole field, the perfect

³³⁶ The famous Abbasid stuccowork known from the imperial city of Samarra in Iraq was divided into three styles, Samarra I, II, III, by the excavator, Herzfeld (1923). This famous analysis has influenced all future art historical analysis of Abbasid art (Gonnella 2013); most discussed is Herzfeld's bevelled style (Samarra I), which came to be called Samarra C by Creswell (1932). This style is mostly found in the palace of Jawsaq al-Khaqani or Dar al-Khalifa c. 836, rather than the Abbasid mosques, which by and large were decorated very soberly. The Dar al-Khalifa was built by al-Mu'tasim in 836 CE as a principle public palace and private residence and continued to fulfil these roles until Samarra was abandoned by the caliphs in 892 CE. The building underwent many changes and adaptations, but it is difficult to know when during the building's life cycle these took place (Northedge 2001).

horror vacui,³³⁷ where the artist would either eliminate the background, or let it play a decorative and positive role of its own (Ettinghausen 1979). Thus, it is the relationship between the lines, dots and planes, in much the same way that Grabar has noted in a Nishapur bowl (1972) which are important.³³⁸ The geometric and vegetal forms have disappeared along with the background. It is thus seen as the forerunner of the arabesque or *giri*h (Ettinghausen 1952). With regards to the origins of Style C, many see it as an imperial style, some scholars have suggested a Syrian location, pointing at the middle Euphrates town of Raqqa, where a series of alabaster column capitals are known from the Great Mosque of ar-Raqqa, which are now scattered in museums around the world.³³⁹ However other scholars from Kühnel onwards,³⁴⁰ including Ettinghausen (1979), drew distant connections with the animal style of Central Asia as it has been found on objects created by Central Asian nomads as early as 4th century BCE (Grabar 1992a:140), where the “main comparative feature linking the Central Asian animal style and the later vegetal motifs and the Samarra style of carvings has been the avoidance of any plane interval as a background” (Haase 2007:441). We are reminded that in Ustrushana some remnants of the Saka tribes were still living in the early Islamic period (see Appendix C).

Thus, one hypothesis has the style arriving in the Abbasid heartlands with the Turko-Sogdian soldiers. The difficulty many had with this theory was that “close observation does not make it any easier to decide on the aesthetic impact of *slave armies* on the style of the caliphal court” (Haase 2007:441 present author’s emphasis). However, De la Vaissière has argued convincingly that these were not just ‘Turkish slaves and mercenaries’ as was previously thought. Instead he suggests that the united *Turko-Sogdian elite* were the main influence at the Abbasid court until the rise of the Tahirids, when Persian replaced Sogdian in Central Asia and the Khurasani elite replaced the old Turko-Sogdian elite (de la Vaissière 2007: e.g. 38ff.). We are also reminded of the palace of the Afshin of Ustrushana in Samarra, which had objects and visual reminders of his homeland, specifically Ustrushana. There are

³³⁷ Thus, this style is the opposite of the famous Samanid epigraphic ware, which makes the empty space a key part of the overall design of the object (see Chapter Two).

³³⁸ Rather than individual elements, like Samarra styles A and B.

³³⁹ Haase suggests a north Syrian origin, due to a more coherent artistic development in these stucco finds than from Iraq or Central Asia. He posits an evolution of vegetal ornament to a bevelled style similar to Samarra. Column capitals from the Mosque of ar-Raqqa/ ar-Rafiq in Raqqa in the Metropolitan Museum of Art possibly support this hypothesis (Haase 2007:442ff.). One of the alabaster column capitals (36.68.1) in the Metropolitan Museum, dated 8th century, is described as showing the emergence of the bevelled style from an earlier vegetal one. However, it was purchased in 1936 and thus is not datable with any degree of accuracy. It could be later than Samarra and thus indebted to it (Ettinghausen et al 2001). “The stylistic sequence... in stucco ornament still has an uncertain chronology due to the lack of clear dates from coins or by other means... The more naturalistic outlook of the examples of Bevelled Style in the Jazira region could be taken as an antecedent of the more abstracted forms of Samarra which later on spread to the other regions, but they could also be interpreted as using innovative techniques while remaining more conservative in their motifs than the caliphal workshops” which he dates to c.730-840 (Haase 2007:449).

³⁴⁰ Kühnel 1929, 1947 as quoted in Haase 2007 and 1977.

also a few other indications of elements of Abbasid style and architectural iconography having a Central Asian origin, such as the circular shape of the city of Baghdad, possibly based on the circular Buddhist shrine of Naubahar in Balkh.³⁴¹

Hoffman (2008) has also provided a useful reminder that the search for origins of the Abbasid style as an East-West binary has its genesis in early 20th century politics, seeking origins for visual material in the Orient or Rome.³⁴² It has been suggested that the style of the Samarra wall paintings originated in Central Asia and was possibly brought with the “Turkish mercenaries”. However, Hoffman believes that these interpretations are based on Herzfeld’s drawings rather than the less legible photographs themselves. She argues that Herzfeld completed these drawings using Sasanian prototypes, and slightly flattened their forms. There was a wide overlap between the Sasanian and Roman styles, and a wide repertoire of shared mythological subjects. Abbasid art can be seen as “a synthetic cultural mix with a plurality of continuities expressing its own distinct identity” (Hoffman 2008:122).³⁴³ However this binary also ignores the Greco-Bactrian material, where Classical styles could have been mediated by sites to the East.

³⁴¹ Beckwith 1984. Alternatively, Baghdad has been given a Classical origin, linked to the late antique palatine cities of the Late Roman Tetrarchy (Hoffman 2008, Note 64).

³⁴² Strykowski championed an East Aryan art which came from Iran, Armenia and Inner Asia Minor, which is now linked to an early 20th century quest for identity, which would become the Aryanism of Nazi Germany. See Maranci 1998.

³⁴³ A visual depiction of the myth of Romulus and Remus being suckled by a wolf is also known from a wall painting in Ustrushana, where it links to depictions on Byzantine coins (Brentjes 1971b:183ff.).



Figure 91: Dish with bevelled style decoration, Samarqand, 10th century, Metropolitan Museum of Arts, 28.82.



Figure 92: Bevelled style on unglazed ceramic pot with handle, 9-10th century Bekhzod Museum, Dushanbe.

Ettinghausen (1952) surveyed dated bevelled style objects from Iraq, Syria, Egypt and Iran, with the earliest being from Isfahan and other towns in Central Iran (11th and early 14th centuries CE).³⁴⁴ Possibly the oldest monument known to Ettinghausen is a fragmentary stone carving from Bisutun (Ettinghausen 1952 PI XIV) which possibly dates to the 10th century? By comparison, in the same article, Ettinghausen mentions these wood carvings from the Zarafshan Valley published by Deniké in passing (1952), saying that they are Samarra C style. However he believes that these 9-10th century dates given by Deniké may have to be revised because of the other new material he has published here, which is firmly dated later.³⁴⁵ However the bevelled style found in the Samanid stuccowork from Samarqand, found by excavation, may suggest that these columns could all date earlier than

³⁴⁴ Other dated objects include the carved stucco panel above the mihrab in the shrine of Davazdah Imam in Yazd, (1037 CE) (Pope 1938-39 pp.1279-80). Also the stucco decorations on the impost blocks above the double columns carrying the main dome of the Masjidi Jame in Isfahan dated to between 1072 and 1092 CE and with the name of Malik Shah and Nizam al Mulk and the wooden minbar and the wooden mihrab in the Masjidi Maydan in Abanyeh (see above) dating to 1073 CE and 1103 CE respectively (Ettinghausen 1952 Plates XI and XII).

³⁴⁵ Possibly Obburdon and Kurut columns, Deniké figs 1 and 3 are later than 10th century (Ettinghausen 1952:81 Note 24).

Ettinghausen maintains. He does not mention here the theory that the style could have come from the Syctho-Siberian animal style from Central Asia (Turkestan) rather than Central Iran, which could argue for an earlier date for the Zarafshan material. The palm-shaped outline known from the bevelled style is also known on ceramics, on a dish from Samarqand in the Metropolitan Museum (**Fig. 91**) and on an unglazed jug in the Bekhzod Museum in Dushanbe (**Fig. 92**), dating to the Samanid period. Somehow it seems unlikely that this simple, fairly homely jug would be decorated with a very similar motif to the *Reichstil* emanating from Baghdad and Samarra? It is believed here that “works produced in many of the so-called ‘marginal’ areas expose the fact that it is often the margin that takes the leading aesthetic role and even imposes on the artistic production of the so-called centres and principal capitals, this paradigm should undoubtedly be revisited”. (Shalem 2012:4). Shalem links this to orientalist ideas that believe iconography diffuses from the centre to the periphery, instead seeing the periphery as an artistic well-spring in its own right (2012:4).

Chapter Four: Summary and conclusions

The heterogeneous population of Ustrushana had a specific cultural style which resembled that of neighbouring Sogdiana but was not the same. While the area might have functioned as a place of refuge from the lowlands, this hypothesis is not needed to explain its carved wooden artefacts and early Islamic architecture. The indigenous culture was seemingly complex, rich and fertile enough to have provided local commissioners, craftsmen and audience for the objects. The carving on columns, mihrabs and Hazrati Shoh has indigenous pre-Islamic antecedents, both in style and motifs. It is possible that some of them were deliberately designed to be seen as either zoomorphic or as pure abstract forms, such as the consoles with owls' heads in Hazrati Shoh, where the act of looking enabled the viewer to view things in the way they wanted, which Grabar has linked to atomism, popular in the ninth century (Grabar 2009). The columns' bevelled style is also found in Samarra and Tulunid Egypt, thus it might be traceable to the Abbasid heartlands, both during the Afshin's period and the Samanids there were direct links.³⁴⁶ It is more interesting however, to consider what an interpretation of this style means in this context, by no means was it taken on wholesale, but reinterpreted to suit its new environment, just as the bevelled decoration on the Samanid Mausoleum and Samarqand stuccos (Chapter Three). While it seems unlikely it was an independent invention, we can trace the development of styles from vegetal scrolls to abstraction, especially in the Hazrati Shoh complex. It is thought that following Hoffman there was “a far more integrated scenario of dynamic networks of interaction and connections... linking East and West, past and present” (Hoffman

³⁴⁶ For example, the stuccowork seen in Varaksha palace in Transoxiana and Umayyad palaces (Grabar 1993).

2008:108).³⁴⁷ Worshippers prayed facing fish, swastikas and other pre-Islamic elements such as the Sasanian spread wing motif in front of the Iskodar and Asht mihrabs. Possibly the birds and fish depicted on these columns link to the *murgh-u-mahi* (bird and fish). Islamic sources, such as the later poet Nasir Khusraw “whenever describing the cosmos, refer to the fish and bird (or the fish and the moon) as its symbolic limits” (Daneshvari 2005:118). Birds and fish occur frequently together on Samanid ceramics (see Chapter Two). Birds were also linked to the tomb, depicted on both Sogdian ossuaries and in early Sufi texts (see above).

Our interpretation of the columns vis-à-vis the minarets depends on the dating. Based on what we know of the Afshin’s relationship to the old religion, he would have been less likely to build minarets than the Samanids, and thus it is argued here that the minarets may be Samanid power symbols communicating their rule and the Islamic religion’s precedence through a series of panopticons over the Zarafshan area. Where the population could see the Samanid presence in these monuments, and possibly be seen by Samanid spies as well. If that is the case, could we connect these mihrabs to Ismail’s campaigns at the end of the 9th century, which might fit with these minarets being built of mud brick rather than baked brick which became more common in 10th century? Thus, the names of the Samanid rulers would have rang out across this most intractable valley, and they would be represented by the minarets when they were far away in lowland Sogd. This is pure speculation; however, decoration was certainly a secondary concern for the minarets’ builders.

If that is the case, could we posit that the columns and mihrab show a subtle kind of continuity in both material and iconographic motifs, where material culture is in dialogue with and speaking out against these symbols of Samanid power. The columns and woodwork symbolised the survival of old religious beliefs, which through Sufi texts were in the process of being transformed into something new. Certainly, these columns were protected by the local population, and moved to new buildings, when necessary. Together with continuity of architecture, mosque decoration and craft tradition of woodworking, this all points to ancient and deeply embedded traditions. Mihrabs and columns were local answers to a changing world of cultural norms brought by the new religion and rule from outside, possibly brought by the Samanids. This area, although seemingly peripheral had had a high culture in the preceding period and it was on the Silk Roads to India and the west. Thus next we turn to current Tajik identity formation in post-Soviet Tajikistan, firstly how the Samanids have been used as a trope to further the government’s policies and also how artefacts such as columns and mihrabs discussed in this chapter are interpreted as part of Tajik national identity formation today.

³⁴⁷ Discussing the Samarra paintings.

CHAPTER FIVE – Tajikistan: State and non-state sponsored material culture and identity

The first rule which we have to follow is that of national character: every people has, or must have, a character; if it lacks one, we must start by endowing it with one.

Jean Jacques Rousseau

Along with the national anthem, the national emblem, the national festival, a nation needs its national library, its national archive, and its national museum.

Poor indeed is the country that cannot lay claim to enough history to fill an archive, enough scholarship to fill a library, and enough artefacts to fill a museum!

Singh 2003:176

This chapter is structured in a similar way as Chapter Two. I will first discuss why the Samanids have been chosen as post-Soviet Tajikistani foundation figures to unite the country,³⁴⁸ it is then important to examine the other axes along which Tajikistani identity is aligned, including Zoroastrianism, Islam, the Uzbek 'Other' and regional identity, as these layered perceptions of past and present all have a visual realisation in Tajikistan today. This is followed by government sponsored material culture, most importantly paper money, a pervasive symbol of state power, as well as how the Samanids are displayed and interpreted in museums and at architectural sites from the era, including Khoja Mashhad, Khulbuk and the Zarafshan minarets. The chapter finishes, like Chapter Two, with non-government sponsored material culture, in this case contemporary art, and how it displays or subverts national and other identities. The 2008 exhibition entitled "Pre-Islamic heritage in Tajik culture" in Dushanbe's Bekhzod Museum discussed pre-Islamic iconographic forms on the Samanid period Iskodar Mihrab which were then interpreted by contemporary artworks, these joint displays provided a visual reflection on Tajik identity. These different identity axes are highlighted in the museums which

³⁴⁸ The historical context for Tajikistan's identity construction is given in Appendix D. Soviet ethnogenesis or the formation of ethnic groups thought to make up the newly formed Union and the causes of the Tajik civil war suggest reasons for the possibly fragmented nature of Tajik identity today.

may or may not reflect different messages, and in the post-independence architecture (see Chapter Six). The Samanid Mausoleum in Uzbekistan is also discussed here as a pilgrimage and heritage site. Soviet ideas of ethnogenesis and the causes of the civil war are considered to be useful context and background to this chapter (Appendix D).

Construction of a new national identity: Competition for ideologies

Contemporary characterisation of ethnicity sees it as formed during conflict, competition and rapid cultural change, which reconstruct culture according to changing social opportunities (Jones 1997:56ff., Gunn 2003). Arguably, just as Samanid society was in its time, Tajik identity today is in a state of flux where it is being fixed and solidified according to contemporary needs. Most importantly in Tajikistan, national identity formation is designed to instil national unity in a dangerously fragmented present, where the factionalism of local patron-client networks and the civil war are powerful countervailing forces (Atkin 2011:1-3). Of course, there are various cultural identity tropes operating in Tajikistan, with more thoughtful commentators seeing Tajik heritage as a palimpsest of peacefully coexisting cultures, including elements of Iranian, Turkic, Russian, Indian and Chinese heritage (Shozimov 2004:144). It seems clear that in the ideological vacuum following the fall of the Soviet Union, different ideologies, including various versions of Islam, were competing to fill this void. In the early years post-independence in Central Asia, ethnicity and its correspondence with national identity, unlike Marxist ideology, retained the political importance it had under the Soviets. However, it took time to construct Tajikistan's national identity, not simply in the context of chronic political instability and economic crisis, but also because of hesitation as to the role Soviet ideology should continue to play. Tajikistan, unlike Uzbekistan for example, has not rejected its Soviet past,³⁴⁹ although communism has ceased to be the overriding national ideology. This is clear in its currency, stamps and state symbols as well as its museum displays.³⁵⁰ The new national anthem is even sung to the same tune as their anthem in Soviet times!³⁵¹ The neoclassical parliament building, the *Majlis* built in the Soviet period still has the Soviet hammer and sickle on it (**Fig. 93**). Thus, the building has retained

³⁴⁹ The Soviets / Russians (conflated in the Soviet period) are seen as the 'external Self' in post-independence Tajik history text books, "partially internalised and incorporated into the Tajik Self", even in contemporary textbooks their policies are mostly presented positively, remaining heavily influenced by Soviet historiography, ignoring the pains of collectivisation for example (Blakkisrud and Nozimova 2010).

³⁵⁰ See also post-independence currency (below) which continues to honour Soviet era politicians such as Shotemur and Makhsum.

³⁵¹ Unlike most other 'post-Soviet' nations, this seems to encapsulate the continuing sovietised public symbolic space. Which is especially interesting seeing as there was a change of government.

the Soviet symbol in the heart of their postcolonial government, showing continuity, or the lack of will to hack into the decorative stucco. We can compare the Bidun Bukhar Khudat's iron sign left on the Samanid palace (see Chapter Three above). This retention of Soviet symbols and lack of postcolonial revisionism is for a number of reasons, Tajikistan had the most to lose possibly, economically (see Appendix D) out of all the Central Asia nations in the breakdown of the USSR and due to the impact of the remittances on their GDP sent back from Tajik workers in Russia they are less likely to want to aggravate Moscow, compared to Uzbekistan (see below).



Figure 93: Majlis building, still with the Soviet Hammer and sickle, opposite the Somoni Statue, Dushanbe in 2011.

During 1991-92 the main universal identity project was both pan-Islamic and pan-Iranian, led by the intelligentsia, especially the linguists and philologists who contributed to the *Rastokhez* movement,³⁵² which was more political rather than Islamist (Buisson & Khusenova 2011:100 ff. & 108ff.). These identity concepts linked them to broader geographic areas (pan-Iranian) and their religion (pan-Islamic); from which the Soviets had forced a rupture. This identity is depicted in the monumental gateway to the Botanical Gardens in Dushanbe (see Chapter Six below). Firdowsi was the figurehead of the pan-Iranian project, shown by the erection of his statue in central Dushanbe where Lenin once stood (and Somoni now stands). This underlines how there was no *national* idea of Tajikistan in the early years post-independence, during the civil war, this concept only started in 1997 at the time of the peace process, according to Shozimov.³⁵³

All new Central Asian states adopted visible symbols and trappings of independence, a new flag, national anthem and coat of arms. Tajikistan was the last ex-Soviet state to adopt a new flag (24th November 1992), underlining its identity crisis, and the problem of who was in position of power to choose new state symbols. Pan-Iranian ideas and motifs can be seen in the Tajik flag adopted in November 1992 (the first year of the civil war), which has green, red and white, similar to Iranian colours, as well as a nod to the ancient symbol of Iran, with a rising sun and crown above it. Tajikistan's Soviet flag also had green, red and white bands, though here the Soviet red dominated the colour scheme. Discussing the new flag's symbols in parliamentary debates, "[t]he crown drew few objections (many of the deputies had learned that the crown expressed the Toj concept, meaning "the crown," or "crowned") for the simple reason that cultural figures associated it with the name of the nation (Tajiks)" (Shozimov 2004:145). The crown links to the ethnic group the Tajiks, arguably a symbol for them rather than all Tajikistanis. Therefore, choices made about the flag's symbolism underline and prioritise the Tajiks' ethnic identity and Aryan links with Greater Iran, rather than suggesting any civil Tajikistani identity. However, the meaning of colours and other symbols may vary depending on context, though red is commonly thought to link to the country's Soviet past, while green stands for Islam (or agricultural abundance), and white for purity or the cotton crop. It is sensible in a dangerously fragmented country, that the symbols are malleable according to situation.

³⁵² The popular movement, *Rastokhez* ("resurrection" or "renovation" in Persian) founded on 14th September 1989 to engage with and promote Tajik identity and political reform, by economist Toher Abdudjabbor Nekzod from Ast, and journalist / politician Otahon Latifi from Penjikent, (Buisson & Khusenova 2011 Note 4). During the peace process Latifi, one of the United Tajik Opposition leaders, head of the secular-liberal movement was assassinated in Dushanbe in 1998. His murderers were never caught.
http://www.jamestown.org/single/?tx_ttnews%5Btt_news%5D=16169&tx_ttnews%5BbackPid%5D=212&no_cache=1#.VABbP_I7eRM (accessed 21/08/2014).

³⁵³ Shozimov pers comm. Dushanbe October 2011. Also, Firdowsi cannot be easily claimed by Tajikistan as he was born in Tus and is thus claimed by Iran.

Most debated are the seven stars, seen by some³⁵⁴ to be the Amesha Spentas, alternatively seen to be Tajikistan's regions, or independence in general.



Figure 94: Twenty Years of Independence Day celebrations, Rudaki Street, Dushanbe, 2011, the world's longest flag.

In 2009, Tajikistan introduced Flag Day in order to popularise this symbol of independence, and as part of the Twenty Years of independence celebrations in 2011 (**Figs. 94-95**), the largest flagpole in the world at the time was put up in Dushanbe.³⁵⁵ Another tall flagpole was erected in Khujand in 2014, as part of bringing the nation-building project to all areas of Tajikistan, inaugurated by President Rahmon.³⁵⁶ The Tajik flag carried in the twenty years of independence celebrations was also

³⁵⁴ MZ pers. comm. November 2010.

³⁵⁵ The flagpole stands at 165 metres and was acknowledged by the Guinness Book of Records in 2011 as a world record (this international recognition was important), with the world's largest flag hung from a flagpole, which all underline the symbol's significance. See <http://globalvoicesonline.org/2012/11/24/time-to-change-tajikistans-flag/> (Accessed 30/04/2014) for discussion on various blogs about the flag's meaning. This record has since been superceded.

³⁵⁶ Underlining its importance as a political symbol, see <http://www.asiaplus.tj/en/news/rahmon-inaugurates-55-meter-flagpole-khujand> (Accessed 30/04/2014).

reportedly the world's longest.³⁵⁷ The long swathes of green, white and red material were carried down Rudaki Street by a procession of 3000 Tajiks, according to the mayor's office,³⁵⁸ towards the Somoni statue, the focus of the celebrations, and the location of the stands for the most important guests. These Tajiks, young men dressed in white shirts and black trousers and tie, and women in colourful national and regional dress processed holding the flag down a street empty of traffic. The flag was designed as a trope to unite Tajikistani citizens, flattening regional differences by turning them into mere spectacle.³⁵⁹



Figure 95: Anniversary of Twenty years of Independence, Dushanbe, September 2011.

³⁵⁷ 2011 metres long (to correspond with the year) and weighing in at 860 kg.

³⁵⁸ <http://news.tj/en/news/tajik-longest-flag-weighs-860-kilograms> (accessed 20/09/2011).

³⁵⁹ See for example Adams 2010 on the spectacular state in Uzbekistan as well as Marsden 2012a:348ff.



Figure 96: Stamps showing lion and sun crest, 1994 – the Latin text is still the sovietised spelling.

The Tajik state crest used between 1992 and 1994 shows a lion and sun³⁶⁰ (Fig. 96), and thus similar to the pre-Islamic Republic Iranian symbol. It is notable however that the new Tajik crest is less pan-Iranian and remarkably similar to its crest as a Soviet Socialist Republic (Fig. 97), (Marat 2008). The mountains stand for Tajikistan's mountainous geography. This links to the logic of the new states inventing a clear nationalist legitimacy but one that does not break too abruptly with the Soviet past, which gave birth to the new republics and is thus part and parcel of their legitimation (Roy 2007:163).



Figure 97: Tajikistan's Soviet (left) and post-independence emblems, from Marat 2008.

³⁶⁰ See <http://www.iranicaonline.org/articles/flags-iii> (accessed 10/05/2014).

Like many other new states, Tajikistan turned to its own past as one of the main sources of identity formation for its new state.³⁶¹ History writing thus became one of the principal pillars of state-building in Tajikistan. This emphasis on a rich historical past and its material signs in statues to national heroes, museums and memorials which operate on a country-wide level can be seen as a veil for the stringencies and factionalism of the present.³⁶² “Sub-national regionalism continues to be a problem and persistently lurks beneath a thin veneer of pan-Tajik reconstruction and reconciliation” (Nourzhanov 2005:126). It is noteworthy that, in any case, much of Tajikistan’s national history harks back over five hundred years, and some is much older than that. It is a past beyond collective memory (see Chapter One), unlike the shared collective memory of the Soviet period, sometimes still seen as the Golden Age. It is important for Tajikistan, along with the other Central Asian countries, to demonstrate an ancient past, linking the present day with a period of high culture (see above), just as it was in the Soviet times. This period of the Silk Road during the late pre-Islamic and early Islamic periods was one of great cultural achievements, so it is considered a suitable candidate.

After the civil war these pan-Islamic and pan-Iranian ideas were de-emphasised (Laruelle 2007). Shozimov believes that the national project cannot be placed in or stem from the pre-Islamic era possibly because it is too broad geographically, and not specific to Tajikistan and also perhaps because there is no consonance of religion.³⁶³ Thus there was a problem with Tajiks building a closer identity to Iran, as both countries claim the same past, and Tajikistan in this respect is seen as the poor relation. Much of the former Persian greatness has been taken on by Iran, poets such as Rudaki, Firdowsi and scholars such as Ibn Sina, to name but a few can legitimately be claimed by both countries, and in the case of scientists, other Central Asian countries such as Uzbekistan. The selection of Somoni was a late choice by the government and it is explained by the replacement of the linguistic pan-Iranian elite, with one more politically oriented to nationalism. These politicians and historians wanted to give national identity a political and statist identity. Thus, the Samanid dynasty in the 9th and 10th centuries became one of the periods that the Tajik state has been emphasising in its identity formation. Shozimov’s analysis of this competition of ideologies concluded that

Tajikistan has a paradoxical political situation where the restraining factors preventing the monopolization of power are not political institutions but a competition between different cultural and political projects and their charismatic leaders that create a propitious political balance in society. However, this situation is unlikely to continue indefinitely, and if these cultural resources will not be institutionalized in modern institutional forms, this could lead to the renewed destabilization of Tajikistan (Shozimov 2005).³⁶⁴

³⁶¹ See Rogun Dam below, Chapter Six.

³⁶² MS pers comm. May 2011.

³⁶³ Shozimov pers comm. Dushanbe October 2011.

³⁶⁴ Accessed online <http://old.cacianalyst.org/?q=node/3437> (accessed 20/08/2014).

How the earlier Aryan/ Zoroastrian period is interpreted in Tajikistan, compared to the Samanid period may elucidate an understanding of how these different parts of the 'Tajik' past fit together. The Samanid Empire can be characterised as a myth of the golden age and the Aryan / Zoroastrian period as Tajikistan's deep rooted heritage, otherwise seen as the myth of descent. It is suggested that the situation is more complex now, and these historical elements also complement each other, rather than being in a simple binary opposition between competing pasts. It is also worth noting that many (post)-Soviet nationalities were used to using various models and methodological approaches for understanding their past, according to current political expediencies, and arguably, this is no different to what happens elsewhere.³⁶⁵ There is a visual emphasis on the current borders, with maps of Tajikistan appearing on posters (**Fig. 98**) and official number plates (**Fig. 99**) celebrating twenty years of independence in 2011, which seems part of the visual acceptance of the state's current borders, thus giving up claims on the Tajik-speaking cities of Bukhara and Samarqand.



Figure 98: Poster, 20 years of independence with map, Somoni statue and Palace of Nations, 2011.



Figure 99: Map on number plate on Dushanbe car belonging to official, 2010.

³⁶⁵ For example, see Shnirelman 2005 on Ossetia.

Tajikistan was unable to coalesce around the ancient Tajik cities of Samarkand and Bukhara which were lost to Uzbekistan. In the early years of independence, there were calls for their return, especially as Samarkand is only thirty miles from the Tajik border, however these claims have now disappeared, supplanted by the symbolic inclusion of these metropolises in the Tajik sphere, (Laruelle 2007), forming part of the territory of 'Historical Tajikistan' which coincide with the borders of the Samanid Empire. This was the most important reason why the Samanids act as key identity tropes.

Why the Samanids? Samanid celebration, 1999

It is argued here that the Tajik State views their history and organises the past in terms of their former greatness, partly linked to the Samanid period. There are many reasons why Ismail Samanid was chosen as a foundation figure, uniting Tajikistan after the civil war, and why the Samanid past has been emphasised by the Tajik State. Ismail was seen as a just ruler and a powerful fighter. The collapse of the Samanid state through internal tensions, as well as the efforts of the Turkic tribes, is today used as a bogeyman as to what will happen if the country is not united (under the present leader, of course).³⁶⁶ Under the Persian speaking, Islamic Samanid dynasty the territories stretched further across Central Asia than they would again under a Persian ruler, uniting Transoxiana and Khurasan. This is one powerful reason why the Samanids have been prioritised, as they represent 'Historical Tajikistan' visualised by the map of the Samanid Empire which exists as part of the National Unity Complex (see Chapter Six below).

President Rahmon decided to celebrate 1,100 years of the Samanids (**Fig. 100**) in the wake of the peace process in 1997 (Akiner 2001:63), it was also a logical counter to the 660 years of Timur held in Uzbekistan in 1996 (Horák 2010), designed to emphasise, no doubt, the temporal priority of the Samanids and thus the fact that Tajiks have more ancient roots on the territory of Central Asia. The event took place in 1999; as Nourzhanov puts it

*Political stabilisation and prospects of national reconciliation compelled Rahmon's regime to substantiate its legitimacy symbolically, through historical narratives, school textbooks, holidays, dramas, and monuments that would be understood and accepted if not by the bulk of the population, then at least by the majority of the elites. This time around, the Samanids proved to be an ideal choice for a comprehensive ethno-historical reconstruction (2001).*³⁶⁷

³⁶⁶ <http://news.tj/en/news/president-congratulates-tajikistani-people-independence-day> (accessed 09/10/2011).

³⁶⁷ Nourzhanov is an Australian National University lecturer, however he was also a Tajik government adviser on parliamentary reform (2000-2001).



Figure 100: 1100 years of the Samanids stamps.

As well as the Persian language, Sunni Islam is key symbolic element creating strong links between past and present. Moreover, the Samanids' cultural patronage rather than their religious beliefs are emphasised by the secular Tajik government in their state building. Somoni's name is also given to a type of local vodka (**Fig. 101**), unusual for an Islamic ruler (!).



Figure 101: Somoni vodka, © Gai Jorayev, 2011.

However, the Ismaili population might see the Samanids otherwise. Under the Samanid ruler Nuh b. Nasr Ismailis were persecuted (see Appendix A), so there could be reasons why they do not share the state's viewpoint, or possibly it has no purchase with them in any case, as a top down phenomenon. Tajikistan's emphasis on the Samanid period is not new: according to Gafurov, Tajik identity itself came into being during the Samanid period (1972).³⁶⁸ In his view there were three aspects of identity formation which forged the Tajiks in this period: the development of a centralised, independent government, the revival of the Persian language as the official state language, and the reintroduction of ancient, primarily Sasanian traditions into the now Islamic lands of Khorasan and Transoxiana. As he was writing in a time when Tajik identity was being affected by being part of the USSR, it was important to actively retain pre-Soviet cultural elements. "The Samanid society that Gafurov and other Tajik scholars regard as the formative stage of Tajik identity enjoyed an intriguing dual character: on the one hand, it was an Islamic version of a set of ancient Iranian traditions with specific ancient Iranian values; on the other hand, it was an Iranian version of a set of Islamic values based on Sufic and Shu'ubi thinking" (Bashiri 2008,³⁶⁹ see Chapter One).

In post-Soviet times, the Samanids have also given their name to the highest mountain in Tajikistan, Pik Somoni. Located in the Pamir Mountains, it was formerly called Pik Communism, the highest mountain in the former Soviet Union. The Tajik currency has been renamed from Som to Somoni, and Somoni's face is on the 100 somoni note, which was the largest denomination until 2011 (see below). The Samanid period is also being studied for other aspects where it might be still relevant today, for example the legal system, as Rahmon said "[l]earning from [the] Samanid[s] to create a centralized state and the assimilation of its historical lessons... can be very useful for young Central Asian countries that emerged after the collapse of the USSR. These lessons are essential for modern Tajikistan."³⁷⁰

A programme of international conferences and symposia included *The contribution of the Samanid Epoch to the cultural heritage of Central Asia (The proceedings of the international colloquium)* which produced book of the papers (1999).³⁷¹ Rahmon gave the welcome speech, underlining the colloquium's political as well as historical importance, maintaining that study of successful past states such as the Samanids is important. Their rise to prominence and how they held onto power may hold

³⁶⁸ There is a Soviet era painting of Ismail Somoni with his troops seen in Penjikent Museum in 2011 by A.N. Kamelin 1961-62.

³⁶⁹ Online see <http://www.angelfire.com/rmb/bashiri/Identity/identity.pdf> (Accessed 20/04/2014)

³⁷⁰ <http://www.lib.ua-ru.net/diss/cont/101391.html> (accessed 02/08/2014).

³⁷¹ As Azimov, the Prime Minister of Tajikistan said in his speech, it was important that this event, supported by UNESCO and conducted by the Tajik government, was both 'scientific' and 'international', and *seen to be so*.

lessons for the 'young countries' of Central Asia. Equally the fall of the Samanids may also prove instructive to Tajikistan today as the state fell due to regionalism and losing the support of the common people, which almost happened during the Civil war of the 1990s (in UNESCO 1999:124-28). All of these activities³⁷² helped to foster national pride, strengthen confidence and social cohesion (UNDP 2000: 41). However, there were, naturally, no conferences held in the Samanid capital of Bukhara in Uzbekistan because of the Uzbek government's political opposition and antipathy to the dynasty. These narratives of national heroes although designed to reach a broad public, are especially reinforced at military institutions (Marat 2007). This idea of a national hero is being critiqued by Central Asian contemporary artists from across the region (see below).

The anniversary of twenty years of independence on September 9th 2011 was another opportunity for Rahmon both implicitly and explicitly to compare himself to Ismoil Somoni. Buisson (*pers. comm.*³⁷³) is not completely convinced that this statue is meant to resemble Rahmon, as some believe (e.g. Dagiev 2013) and I cannot see the likeness between the two. Once, in a poster I saw in Qurganteppa, Rahmon supplanted Somoni in his victory arch (see Chapter One), directly taking on the mantle of the medieval ruler and the two rulers were portrayed side by side on posters at the Arbob Palace, Khujand (see **Fig. 3**). In Rahmon's countrywide visits celebrating the event, girls in traditional dress and boys in starched white shirts recited poetry comparing their leader to a revered 10th-century Tajik king, as well as legendary heroes.³⁷⁴ There is no doubt who this tenth century ruler was.

Somoni symbolises two qualities seen as essential to many Tajiks; stability and social harmony, which is how Rahmon is portraying himself through the media. However, one of my contacts³⁷⁵ spoke about how the people just do not believe Rahmon anymore when he talks about the past, the nation and their ancient glory. In his eyes, people are now beginning to see it for what it is, a veil covering the stringencies of the present. He thinks that it is clear that the president is lying to them. Thus, there is mismatch between the two, outwardly the president talks about democracy, liberalism and civil society which plays well with the west but in reality, corruption and regionalism dominate. He would even say that the preoccupation with the past in Tajikistan seems to be a kind of necrophilia, unhealthy in the extreme. Thus, the Tajik state's emphasis on the Samanids can be seen to be one of "the ways in which the rulers create and maintain their legitimacy, and the process by which the goal of legitimisation is being pursued" (Matveeva 2009:1096). Matveeva goes on to discuss the issue of

³⁷² The Ministry of Culture reportedly organised more than 10 festivals, eight international and national conferences, and published 189 books. Conferences were held in Dushanbe and across Tajikistan, Saint Petersburg, and Iran, devoted to the "History, Civilization and Culture of Samanids".

³⁷³ Meeting November 2010.

³⁷⁴ http://www.rferl.org/content/tajik_president_behind_the_facade/24298855.html (Accessed 1/12/2011).

³⁷⁵ MS meeting 21 April 2011 and Sharifov 2006-07.

legitimisation in both its performative and symbolic aspects, describing how the public is misled by the state about its performance as well as threats to stability and order, and how this is disguised by the symbolism used by the state to maintain itself (Matveeva 2009). When I asked Larisa Dodkhudoeva³⁷⁶ if, in spite of their emphasis in the Bekhzod Museum, the Samanids were not as fashionable now as before, and whether other historical periods had taken their place in Tajik opinion, her response was interesting. She believes that because now the Samanids are an integral and axiomatic part of Tajik history, they do not need to discuss them continually, and can talk about other periods. Also this endless “year of Y” does not mean that the older “years of X” are superseded, but rather shows their history’s richness.

The museum under the statue is closed to the public (when I went in 2008 and 2011-12), thus it could be thought that the Samanid period is no longer so important to the Tajik state, and other pasts are winning the competition for prominence in Tajik identity formation (Shozimov 2005). Buisson believes that there are a number of difficulties with viewing the Samanids as fathers of the nation.³⁷⁷ He thinks that the Samanid period is too short, equally the territory covered by Tajikistan was marginal to their empire, where you come up against the paradox that Lenin was the state’s founder rather than Somoni, which is a major limit of this state building exercise, as Lenin statues are being marginalised giving way to Somoni! However, the visual emphasis on Ismoil Somoni and his pairing with Rahmon in the twenty years of independence celebrations in 2011 certainly belies this however, at least in some circles.

It is interesting now that the information provided by Google (**Fig. 102**), shows Ismail Samanid as shown on the Tajik currency, who is joined in the Google images section by the Somoni peak and the Somoni statue, none of which have anything to do with the historical figure. Tajikistan’s new world of visual forms is being reproduced and reinforced on an international stage, creating a new symbol.

³⁷⁶ Meeting Dr Larisa Dodkhudoeva 14 April 2011.

³⁷⁷ Meeting Dr Antoine Buisson November 2010, Dushanbe.

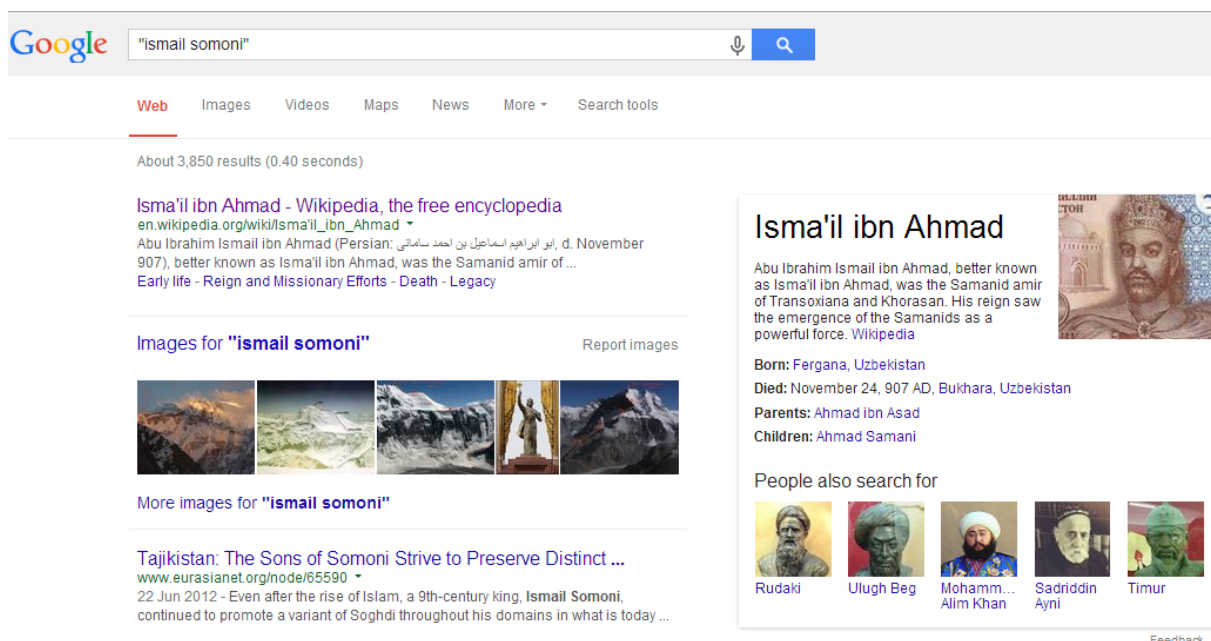


Figure 102: Google search – Ismail Somoni, August 2014.³⁷⁸

In order to emphasize this reading of history, Rakhmon became famous, like other Central Asian presidents, with the publication of a large, multi-volume historical book, *The Tajiks in the Mirror of History*. At the time of writing only the first volume has so far been published, entitled *From the Aryans to the Samanids* (1999).

The erection of the Samanids as a national symbol is, as indicated by the book's title, competing with the rehabilitation of the ancient Zoroastrian era and, with it, of the Aryan ideal (Laruelle 2007:54).

I would argue that we should not expect the next volumes from the President any time soon, as they would cover the period of the Turkic dynasties, which would be unlikely to be highlighted in this context. Next we will turn to the other identity axes that make up the Tajik quest for identity, firstly the Zoroastrian / Aryan project.

³⁷⁸ A similar google search for Ismail ibn Ahmad does at least bring an image of the Samanid Mausoleum on the first page.

Other identity axes

The Samanid period is not the only past that is being foregrounded by Tajik government officials, intellectuals and historians as well as contemporary artists, as part of a quest for Tajik identity formation. The following four sections on Zoroastrianism, Islam, Uzbek as Other and Tajikistan's regional identity are seen as other axes along which Tajik identity falls, which alternatively contest, deepen or reinforce that identity provided by the Samanids as driven by the Tajik state.

Zoroastrianism / Aryan Project

It is clear that there are Tajik traditions and beliefs which hark back to Zoroastrianism, these include customs surrounding death and uncleanness, attitudes to fire and creation myths (Scott 1984, see also Bekhradnia 1994). The political authorities highlighted Tajikistan's links to Zoroastrianism in 1999, the same year as 'Year of the Samanids', showing that it was possible for the government to emphasise two different strands of identity at once. Indeed, according to Rahmon, "Ismail Somoni remained unfailingly faithful . . . to the elements of Aryan statehood," and even allowed "the wise implementation, through the state apparatus, of the spiritual standards of Islam and their fusion with the Aryan heritage."³⁷⁹ While it is clear (see Chapters Two and Three), that the Samanids integrated some pre-Islamic kingship ideas with Islamic beliefs, to call these pre-Islamic ideas 'Aryan' is highly problematic. Equally, Samanid poets' allusions to Zoroaster "should not be taken as evidence that they were non-Muslims, but rather that formal religion weighed lightly on the external lives of these humanists. Zoroaster was really a symbol of a kind of leader in a garden of Eden for them" (Frye 1965:167).³⁸⁰ This is why the Samanids still work as Tajik foundation figures as they are able to mean all things to all people, incorporating as they did ancient local traditions with strong Islamic beliefs. Buisson however does not think that emphasis on the Samanids or the Aryans is a question of factions but of personality.³⁸¹ The celebration of the Year of Aryan civilisation in 2006 demonstrated that Tajikistan's identity quest was being ethnicised and the country's (mythical) history politicised which was at root secular and anti-Islamic but also anti-Uzbek (Laruelle 2007).

Although 'Zoroastrianism' and 'Aryanism' have been linked, this is problematic as 'Aryan', in particular, is an incredibly difficult concept to pin down; as linguistic term, social status, or ethnic identity. Soviet and post-Soviet Tajikistani scholars treat it unreservedly as an ethnic term, thus

³⁷⁹ Rakhmonov 1999 quoted in Laruelle 2007:54 Note 10.

³⁸⁰ Showing the syncretistic beliefs of the time.

³⁸¹ Meeting – Antoine Buisson, 18/11/2010.

ignoring links to extreme nationalism, Nazism and xenophobia. The swastika symbol³⁸² was resurrected and used on Tajik banners and posters (**Fig 103**).



Figure 103: Swastika on banner on Dushanbe street, 2005 © RFERL ³⁸³

Inevitably, use of the Nazi symbol resonated negatively worldwide. Tajik scholars are unaware of or ignore Western research on the ‘thorny’ Aryan question.³⁸⁴ It is impossible to link Aryan ‘tribes’ with ancient material culture, archaeologically. Tajikistan is not the only nation claiming Aryan descent, linking them to Eurasian ‘high culture’ rather than perceived Asian ‘backwardness’ (Shnirelman 2009:558ff.). The Aryan project (**Figs. 103-105 and 109**) emphasises the antiquity and uniqueness of the Tajiks as well as hinting at Tajik cultural superiority. It also facilitates Tajik connections with co-linguists in Iran and Afghanistan on the one hand, and India on the other. It is no coincidence that the English translation of Gafurov’s opus “The Tajiks” was first published in Delhi.

³⁸² I am not aware of the swastika being used in contemporary Tajik architecture, although it is found in many old Zarafshan mosques (see above), as well as in medieval mausolea including Arab Ata, Tim (976 CE), Mir Said Bahrom (10-11th century), both in Uzbekistan as well as the monumental gateway at Khulbuk, 10th century and the Iskodar Mihrab (see above). In all these swastikas appeared alongside Islamic Kufic inscriptions. There were no swastikas used in 2011 independence posters. See Masov 1991 & 1995 for his racist anti-Uzbek discourse.

³⁸³ <http://www.rferl.org/content/article/1064129.html>, image used with permission (accessed 20/05/2014).

³⁸⁴ Subject of 200 years of fierce controversy, the relation between a proto-Indo-European language and the material culture of a putative ‘Aryan’ homeland is highly problematic and there is no scholarly consensus today that such a homeland even existed, see Lamberg-Karlovsky 2002 for debate and references there.



Figure 104: Painting of Zoroaster, National Museum of Tajikistan, 2013.



Figure 105: Zoroastrian bible on display in National Museum of Tajikistan.³⁸⁵

Many of the mosques in the upper Zarafshan Valley have decorations of swastikas, such as the main mosque in the village of Obburdon (see Chapter Four). This mosque has a relief panel of a stylised tree between two pots (**Fig. 106**), bordered with swastikas placed above the mihrab (**Figs. 107-108**). This is similar in idea, it is argued, to the mihrab with a stylised tree, dating to the Samanid period from Afrasiab (see Chapter Three, **Figs. 48-49**). We found this panel partially covered with a picture, so perhaps the image is not quite acceptable, however it seems from a purely formal perspective, that the image of the tree has just been moved out of the sacred space of the mihrab, to just above it. The faithful are still facing in this direction at prayer. It is also possible that this has become pure decoration, and the memory of an ancient idea. However the fact that particular living trees are still considered sacred today in Tajikistan with rags tied to them for prayers might suggest otherwise.

³⁸⁵ [http://www.travelthewholeworld.com/traveling-tajikistan/dushanbe/#prettyPhoto\[slides\]/27/](http://www.travelthewholeworld.com/traveling-tajikistan/dushanbe/#prettyPhoto[slides]/27/) (Accessed 2/11/2014).



Figure 106: Stucco panel above mihrab, Obburdon Mosque, Zarafshan Valley, 2011.

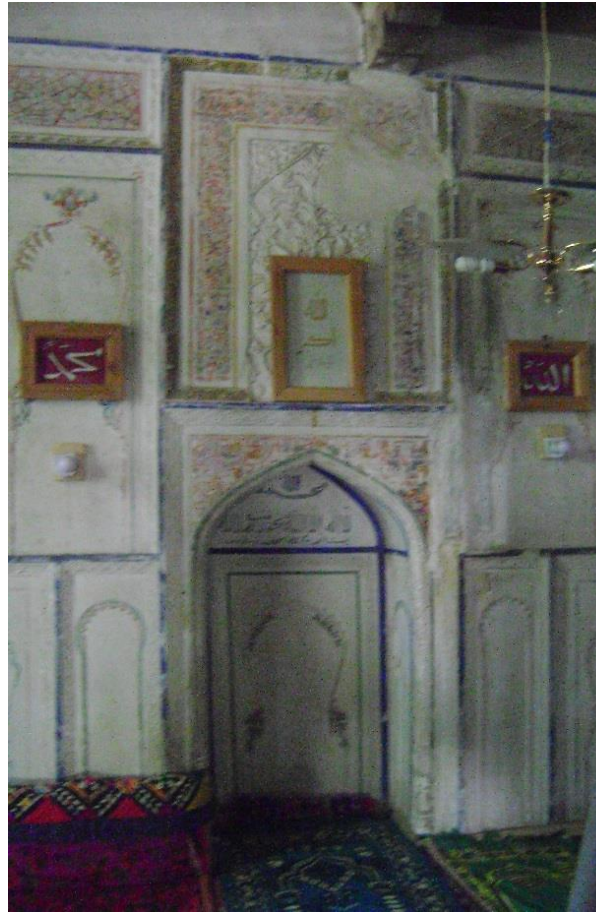


Figure 107: Mihrab Obburdon Mosque, Zarafshan, 2011.



Figure 108: Mihrab, Obburdon mosque, detail, swastikas in the spandrels of the mihrab.



Figure 109: Zoroastrian symbol³⁸⁶ and 'Aryan' on a modern building in Qurghonteppa (2010).

The founders of the Aryan project are from the South, Tajiks with a secular and ethno-national orientation (Shozimov 2005), which would link to the sign above being found on the Qurghonteppa building (**Fig. 109**). The Aryan project aspires to replace the stern dualism between atheism and Islamism and create a space for coexistence of different approaches within a joint Tajik identity; and moreover, to create an ethno-national nucleus that could be the basis for Tajikistan's political unity".³⁸⁷ However, the main challenge is not national but religious identity. This was one reason that Rahmon created The Year of Abu Hanifa in 2009 (see below).³⁸⁸

³⁸⁶ The winged sun disk is an ancient symbol, reused by the Persians and possibly representing Ahura Mazda, this motif, without the figure is also seen on the frames around the busts on the Botanical Gardens entranceway.

³⁸⁷ <http://old.cacianalyst.org/?q=node/3437> (accessed 02/08/2014).

³⁸⁸ Imomam Azam, the founder of Hanafi School, one of the four Sunni schools of jurisprudence. This was to calm Sunni religious leaders in Tajikistan, Pulat Shozimov pers comm. Dushanbe October 2011.

Islam, nationalism and the museum

Just after independence, Rahmon's nation-building projects excluded Islam from playing a role in current Tajik identity formation,³⁸⁹ either creating a pre-Islamic landscape focused around the Aryans/Zoroastrianism, or by prioritising the Samanids who, although Muslims, were arguably more secular than religious, (however see Chapter Two and Appendix A). All these identity projects were particularly conceived to stop any perceived fundamentalist ideas gaining hold over the population. Islam in post-independent Tajikistan had been seen as a supranational phenomenon which could pose a challenge to ethnonational distinctiveness. However, this has changed and Islam is now seen as something to be embraced by elites, as "a cornerstone of this nascent national identity. The reason for this endurance may be sought in the intermingling of Islamic beliefs and traditions with pre-Islamic local traditions. This mixture is kept alive by Central Asians as the heritage of their ancestors. Preserving a link with the past is at the core of self-definition among Central Asians" (Akbarzadeh 1997:77-78). A specific form of Central Asian Islam remains central to people's cultural and ethnic self-identification (**Fig. 110**) even though individuals may know nothing of its tenets. Like its culture, Central Asian religion is a complex layering of historical influences. Thus, the binary of Islam as globalising and nationalism as liberal and local can in some ways be seen to be called into question.

³⁸⁹ This is still true in history textbooks, where Islam, (unlike Zoroastrianism which is seen as indigenous and connected to Tajikistan's Aryan heritage), is relegated to 'internal Other', and mostly ignored or presented negatively. This seems politically motivated (Blakkisrud and Nozimova 2010:175).



Figure 110: Stamps showing mosque architecture, 2002.

The current Sufi revival is more a reimagining of Central Asian Sufism, where Central Asian Islam weaves Sunni Hanafi Islam with Sufism, specifically the Naqshbandiyyah and Qadiriyyah schools³⁹⁰ and popular folk practices. These seemingly inconsistent practices are part of Tajik society as it is lived today (Gunn 2003).³⁹¹ At the beginning of the millennium, Central Asia was characterised as a potential battleground between fundamentalist Afghani and Iranian Islamic beliefs and more moderate autochthonous Central Asian Islam, but that has largely not happened, Central Asia remains wedded to its own version of Islam.³⁹² However, this does not stop various presidents using fundamentalist

³⁹⁰ Naqshbandiyyah is the most famous Central Asian *tariqa* (Sufi school). Others are Qadiriyya, Yasawiyya and Kubraviyya schools. Sufi tombs are important Central Asian pilgrimage sites.

³⁹¹ In the pre-Islamic period, much of the population practised Zoroastrianism. This was not the same as believed or practiced in Iran, and had elements of Buddhism, Hinduism and other beliefs.

³⁹² Just as during the Soviet period, Central Asian Islam was local in character and emphatically not pan-Islamic; Muslims from other parts of the world were not included (Khalid 2003:579-580).

Islam as a bogymen in order to increase their power and autocracy. Akiner divides Central Asian Islam into three strands: traditional, government sponsored and radical (Akiner 2002).

Tajikistan is the only country in Central Asia with an officially recognised opposition³⁹³ and the only official Islamic political party: the Islamic Renaissance Party (IRP), this party has also sought to define Tajik identity, seeing Islam as a central, if mainly cultural force (Lynch 2001:54). However, the IRP has little power today, and is seen as democratic window dressing. It is under ongoing pressure from the government, with the IRP Party's offices near Dushanbe torched in 2012³⁹⁴ and a local IRP leader dying in Tajik government custody in January 2014.³⁹⁵ With Islam's increasing popularity, Rahmon could no longer ignore it and the government began to include selective references to Islamic heritage (Epkenhans 2011:81). Rahmon portrays Tajikistan's Islamic nature to internal and external actors, because he does not want the Islamic opposition party to have a symbolic monopoly of Islamic beliefs. Rahmon even gave himself legendary predecessors in an attempt to bolster his image (Horák 2009).³⁹⁶ The year of Abu Hanifa in 2009 (**Fig. 111**) celebrated the medieval creator of the Hanafi School, one of four Sunni schools of jurisprudence. In the literature accompanying the celebration it was said he was "undoubtedly" born to a "Tajik family" in the eastern part of Khurasan.

*"Such a high status of the Hanafiyya assisted in that national traditions, customs, commendable values and principles of the Tajik traditional society came to be spread in historically important regions of the world."*³⁹⁷

³⁹³ Update: until September 2015, when the government of Tajikistan banned the party, not long after declaring it an extremist group <https://www.rferl.org/a/qishloq-ovozi-demise-of-tajik-islamic-party/27227509.html> (accessed 21/10/2015).

³⁹⁴ <http://www.eurasianet.org/node/65773> (Accessed 10/09/2012) also see Heathershaw & Roche on the armed conflict in the Kamarov Gorge (2011), between the Tajik government and a local 'mujohid' group in 2010. This is not connected to a global confrontation between Islam and secularism, but a centre-periphery conflict of political control and lootable resources, but in the end militant Islam was not supported by the local community.

³⁹⁵ <http://www.rferl.org/content/tajikistan-islamic-party-member-dead/25235931.html> (accessed 20/06/2014).

³⁹⁶ The court ideologues also interpreted a dream of Rahmon's neighbour, believing Rahmon's succession to be sanctioned by Islamic saints (Horák 2009).

³⁹⁷ http://www.khovar.tj/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=3465&bsb_midx=8

(Accessed 12/08/2011 and no longer available). Hanafi's birthplace is contested however, see Kabiri et al 2009 for the opposition viewpoint.

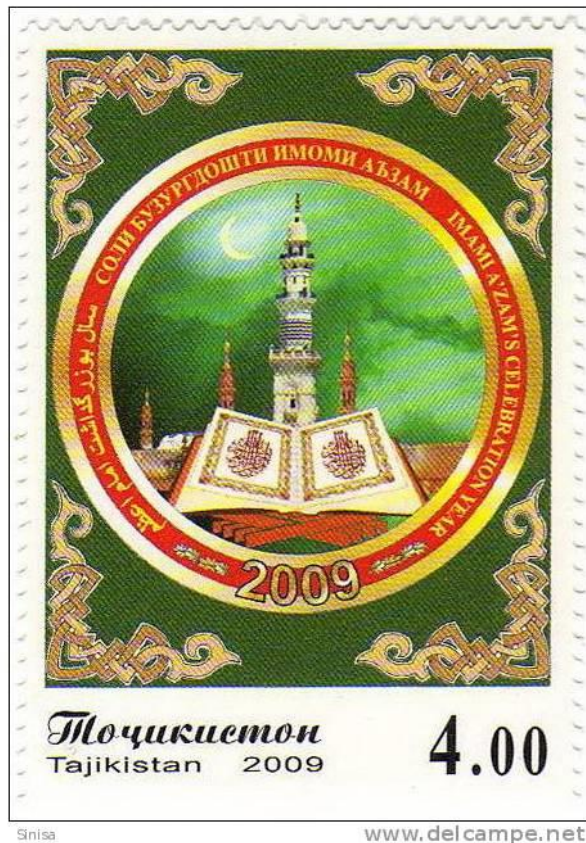


Figure 111: Abu Hanifa stamp, 2009.

Islamic rites and ceremonies which propagate identity are not reflected in many Tajik museum displays, which are still often connected to Soviet display methodologies. Central Asian Islam is predicated on practise and sacred place, a private practise as well as collective action as *ziyarat* to a *mazar*. Calligraphy is rarely seen in the museum,³⁹⁸ and there is no attempt, or desire in museums to suggest the original context of mihrabs, for example the Asht mihrab is displayed on a wall halfway up a staircase in the National Museum of Antiquities, with no accompanying information on the mosque. The mihrab's original function, in any case, is null and void in the museum, no longer marking the qibla direction. It is really in the sacred space, both natural, trees, rocks and water, and the *mazars* of holy men and (a few) women rather than in the accompanying objects, that Islam is felt in Central Asia. However, whether this is because few displays have been changed since the Soviet period, or because there is a continuing wariness of Islam is uncertain? Where Islam is arguably characterised as an 'internal other', the Uzbeks are quite definitely the 'new old enemy' and 'external other' (Blakkisrud and Nozimova 2010:174ff.).

³⁹⁸ Babur's boundary stone from Obburdon is one notable exception in the National Museum of Antiquities.

Conceptualisation of identity against the Other: Tajiks and Uzbeks

In order to legitimise power, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan elites have constructed separate political, national and ethnic identities, projecting back a desired ethno-nationalist present, visualised in national history museums and supported by national history writing.³⁹⁹ This divides up what had, up until that point, been a shared cultural heritage and a multifaceted and ethnically diverse past. Tajikistan and Uzbekistan's territories in the heartland of Central Asia's settled zones share a deeper historical past than any two other Central Asian countries.⁴⁰⁰ We are reminded that ethnic groups only exist in relation to others (Barth 1969). Today, the two cultures are mutually defining opposites, representing both alterity and mimesis in their actions and reactions to one another: Tajikistan both defines itself against the Uzbek Other as well as adopting and internalising other aspects of its material cultural heritage (cf. Harris 2004:197). However, today, instead of seeing themselves as part of a joint Islamic heritage, "[a]t one level 'Turk' and 'Persian' [are] increasingly recognised as being conflictual ethnic-political-moral categories, rather than the source of some homogenous Islamicate culture" (Marsden 2012a:342). Turko-Persian identity is not "an expressive means to express their interests" (Canfield 1991 in Marsden 2012a:342),⁴⁰¹ as had been thought twenty years ago. Tajikistan and Uzbekistan have been in a state of 'invisible war' since independence (Dagiev 2013:28), flames which have been fanned by historians, projecting this animosity and otherness deep into the past:

The Tajik phenomenon is that ability of the Tajik nation, and namely its timeless essence expressed in its language and culture, to survive the absence of political sovereign statehood, despite the conquests of barbarian nomads (i.e. Uzbeks), while also performing a civilizing mission in the region, whereby the uncultured conquerors would adopt the language and culture of the conquered peace-loving Tajiks (Negmatov 1997 in Suyarkulova 2013:14).

Thus the relationship between Persian and Turkic speakers has been projected back as being in constant conflict,⁴⁰² 'nomadic Turks against settled Persian speakers' and that there was no cultural

³⁹⁹ Tajik school textbooks practically ignore Timur, who gets two oblique mentions (Blakkisrud & Nozimov 2010). Uzbeks as pan-Turkists or jadidists are presented as aggressors in the national border limitations of the 1920s. See also Laruelle 2010:107ff. for the controversy on the Ethnic Atlas of Uzbekistan published by the Soros Foundation in 2002.

⁴⁰⁰ Also, this includes parts of Turkmenistan. Although Tajik and Uzbek languages have different roots they have adopted grammar and vocabulary from each other over time, see <http://www.iranicaonline.org/articles/turkic-iranian-contacts-i-linguistic> (accessed 21/07/2014).

⁴⁰¹ This is dangerously close to orientalisng tendencies which see the Muslim world as unchanging, even after rapid Soviet modernization, and on Soviet departure reverting to timeless traditions and customs (Marsden 2012a). However, Islamist militants do reference 'Khorasan' as a geographical (and historical) entity as a way of transcending the nation-state (Devji 2009 in Marsden 2012a:340). For a discussion of transregionalism in Central Asia see Marsden 2012a:352ff.

⁴⁰² For an internet comment expressing such views where the Tajiks and not the Turks are seen as *the original source of all achievements of Central Asia civilization.... The renaissance of Central Asia would only be possible if*

fusion, is seen here to be false, de La Vaissière has eloquently outlined the Turkic-Sogdian fusion, at least among the elites in the pre-Islamic period (2005: especially 199ff.), and there is no reason to believe that this did not continue, in certain ways. Especially once, through the work of the Samanid missionaries and *ghazi* warriors, both Turkic and Persian speakers shared the same Muslim faith. The Banijurid dynasty who ruled Khulbuk were also “probably of Iranian but conceivably of Turkish origin” (Bosworth 2012: online). Thus, in the past, communities bilingual in Tajik and Uzbek lived in the intercultural space of the settled oases and were known as *Sarts* (see Appendix D). There was a great amount of intermarriage between the two groups, as well as bilingualism which produced a shared culture, to some extent. The definition of *Sarts* was abandoned by the Soviet conquerors, which is a pity, because, as Shozimov says “to an extent the Sarts also integrated the sedentary and nomadic patterns of life in Central Asia, building cultural commonalities that offset the effects of geographical separation” (2011:279). In having a cultural rather than an ethnic identity, resurrection of the term ‘*Sart*’ (which is unlikely) could provide one useful way of negotiating Central Asia’s complex history.

We might imagine that Turks and their cultural contributions have been left out of Tajikistan’s museums,⁴⁰³ just as they are becoming less visible in all areas of Tajik public life, in spite of 15% of the population, a sizable minority, identifying themselves as Uzbek.⁴⁰⁴ It has also been argued that Tajikistan is manipulating census figures on the Uzbek minority firstly creating new entries in the Dictionary of Nationalities specifically in order to split the Uzbek group, and secondly by manipulating data to make Uzbeks seem underrepresented (Ferrando 2008:510). There is certainly little written about the early Turks, Qarakhanids or Ghaznavids in post-Soviet Tajik museum displays.⁴⁰⁵ Two pre-Islamic anthropomorphic stone funerary stelae known as *balbals*⁴⁰⁶ displayed in the National Museum

this destructive nationalistic motives are removes [sic], Samanid ideas, not the ideas of Temurlan (medieval Hitler) should be a unifying idea for Central Asia. Posted by: Sogdian | 11/25/09
<http://www.wilsonquarterly.com/article.cfm?AID=1441> responding to S Frederick Starr’s article on “Rediscovering Central Asia” (Accessed 20/10/2011 present author’s emphasis).

⁴⁰³ Just as the Uzbek language remains absent in Tajik media
<http://www.minorityrights.org/2383/tajikistan/uzbeks.html> (accessed 20/08/2014) and there are no opportunities for Uzbek speakers to study in Uzbek medium in higher education <http://iwpr.net/report-news/uzbeks-face-obstacles-increasingly-tajik-state> (accessed 20/08/2014).

⁴⁰⁴ Also 1% identify themselves as Kyrgyz and 1% Russians in Tajikistan today
<http://www.rethinkinstitute.org/politics-of-identity-in-tajikistan/> (accessed 21/06/2014).

⁴⁰⁵ The exception is the Sogd Regional Museum, see below.

⁴⁰⁶ A chance find in Kala-i Dasht village in 1970. Turkic *balbals* (and *babas*) were funerary statues erected to memorialise victories over slain enemies. Representing the enemy, they would serve the hero to whom the stele was dedicated, after death. Thus, they displayed legitimisation of power, preservation of memory and tribal identity (Merserve 2000).

of Antiquities⁴⁰⁷ are not interpreted as coming from a Turkic milieu (**Fig. 112**). No excavations took place at the findspot, so there is no further archaeological evidence (Lo Muzio 2010 Fig 5). Possibly this was because it was a Turkic sculpture, which did not fit in Tajikistan's Soviet ethnohistory. By calling them idol sculptures in the museum signage, not only do they miss their clear ethnic association, but as idol worship, they are sinful according to Islamic beliefs. This is one example of how the Turkic peoples and their rich cultural heritage have been eliminated from Tajik museums. In Uzbekistan on the other hand, in the National Museum of History in Tashkent these steles are called 'Turkic stone steles', underlining the form as an ethnic marker.

Since independence the two countries have been marked with similar features of state and nation building. Horák believes that "the establishment of ethnonational republics after the disintegration of the Soviet Union led, it seems to me, to the formation of hypertrophied nationalist ideologies that in the case of Tajiks and Uzbeks *quite logically contradict and confront one another*" (Horák 2010:66, present author's emphasis). Uzbek identity is seen to be territorial, based on the inclusion in Uzbekistan of what are the ancient settled high cultural cities of Central Asia, Samarqand, Bukhara and Khiva. Whereas Tajik claims to the past cultures are primarily linguistic, in that they share an Iranian language rather than speaking a Turkic one, seen by Tajiks as the language of the incomers.⁴⁰⁸

⁴⁰⁷ The two objects are labelled "sculpture of idol (balbal), Stone; Obi Kilik 6-7th century CE and "sculpture of idol, Stone; Jirgatal 6-7th century CE."

⁴⁰⁸ Uzbek national discourse, however, characterises Turkic speakers as some of Central Asia's earliest occupants, before the coming of the Indo-Europeans. Thus groups such as the Scythians were Turkic speakers, following Soviet era Uzbek historians such as Karim Shaniyazov (see Laruelle 2010 and references there).



Муқасссамаи санам (балбал). Санг. Чиргатол.
Асрҳои VI-VII милодӣ.

Скульптура идола (балбал). Камень.
Джиргиталь. VI-VII вв. н. э.

Sculpture of idol. Stone. Jirgatal. 6th – 7th cc. A. D.



Turk qabr toshlari. VI-VII asrlar.
Turk stone steles. VI-VII cent.
Тюркские каменные стеллы. VI-VII вв.

Figure 112: Balbals in National Museum of Antiquities, Dushanbe and signage below (left) and National History Museum, Uzbekistan, Tashkent, and signage below (right).



Figure 113: Poster of Timur and modern architecture on National Drama Theatre, celebrating 20 years of Uzbekistan, Tashkent, 2011.

Travelling to Uzbekistan (**Fig. 113**) in 2011 from Tajikistan, I was struck by the similarity of the posters celebrating the two countries' independence. They might have used different colours, (red and green for Tajikistan, blue and green for Uzbekistan), and shown different personalities, (Ismoil Somoni in Tajikistan, Timur in Uzbekistan⁴⁰⁹) and different buildings, but the sense of the two ideas seemed more similar than they were different. The two countries seem to be the two halves of the *yin yang* motif, separate and opposing, but each containing a kernel of the other, and together making a whole. However, the reality is that historians and ideologues on both sides are only serving to push the two nationalities further apart, politically, symbolically and on the level of everyday life.⁴¹⁰ Another

⁴⁰⁹ During the late 1990s President Islam Karimov related almost everything about his thoughts and actions to Amir Timur, thus the fourteenth century ruler was characterised as a strong leader, patron of the arts, fit caretaker of the Uzbek people as well as a pious Muslim (Adams and Rustemova 2009). For a description of Amir Timur http://old.ut.uz/eng/culture/honoring_the_great_statesman.mqr (Accessed 20/05/2014).

⁴¹⁰ For example the Rogun Dam (see below) is also fracturing relations between the two countries. Going to Uzbekistan, I was warned by a few Tajik friends to 'be careful'. A Tajik friend who had Uzbek family and heritage, told me that Uzbeks were not always kind!

important identity axis which also differentiates and alienates populations is Tajikistan's regional identities.

Tajikistan's regional identity

Regional identity is still strong in Tajikistan today, and was one of the causes of the civil war, along which the population of Tajikistan fractured (see Appendix D). People and architecture on Tajikistan's currency are an important visual reflection of regional identity in this important national arena (see below).⁴¹¹ Regional identity is also expressed in folk handicraft and musical traditions (Spinetti 2005, 2006),⁴¹² faith, e.g. local veneration of saints and religious customs (see above) and regional dialects.⁴¹³

Distinctions between Tajiks identified as belonging to different regional sub-sets are readily read by local actors in terms of the accent or dialect... Moreover, these dialects are also held to signify deeper and more immutable forms of distinction between Tajikistan people, something often expressed to me in terms of a contrast between humanity (insaniyat) of some and the animality (haiwan) of others" (Marsden 2012b:220).

This quotation shows the depth of feeling in this regional identity. It is also displayed in a very few museums outside the capital, most clearly in the Sogd Regional Museum in Khujand (**Fig. 114**).

Tajikistan's history and geography explain its regional fractures. Formed from the least developed area of the Bukharan Emirate and a relatively prosperous part of the Ferghana Valley, Tajik populations have also had minimal contact due to severe geographical conditions, with high impassable mountains⁴¹⁴ cutting off communities.⁴¹⁵ The Soviet period accentuated divisions between the more advanced north, with most of the country's arable land and light industry; and the south and east.⁴¹⁶ This is reflected in the Soviet era Tajik saying "Leninabad rules, Kulyab works, Gharm prays

⁴¹¹ Pulat Shozimov, pers comm. Dushanbe, October 2011.

⁴¹² Spinetti discusses musical tradition, cultural identity and symbolisation of selfhood and otherness (Spinetti 2005).

⁴¹³ "Dictionary of the southern dialects of the Tajik language" <http://khovar.tj/eng/society/5176-dictionary-of-southern-dialects-of-tajik-language.html> (Accessed 20/04/2014).

⁴¹⁴ 28 ranges divide the country.

⁴¹⁵ See Akiner 2001:5-6 on Tajikistan's topography and political affects. Khujandis sometimes talk about going 'to Tajikistan' when they set out for Dushanbe (Nourzhanov & Bleuer 2013).

⁴¹⁶ Until 2006 Anzob pass was the only link between Dushanbe and Khujand. Closed in winter, in Soviet times trade used Uzbekistan inhibiting connections. The Anzob tunnel was planned after the civil war peace agreement linking the two major Tajik cities, no longer connected through Uzbekistan. This long, dark, flooded tunnel is also a challenge. Roads between Dushanbe and Gorno-Badakhshan are very difficult, no rail links between Qurghonteppa and Kulyab, and the more developed north remains more integrated with Uzbekistan.

and Badakhshan dances” suggesting how it was part of the culture that the country was ruled by northern elites.

“Leninobodis continue to have a tacit contempt for the southerners, whom they regard as culturally backward. This has been an Achilles heel of national identity in Tajikistan” (Akbarzadeh 1996:1116). These two major groups of Tajiks each see themselves as ‘the real Tajiks’. The northern urban Tajiks believe themselves heirs to the great civilisations of their ancestors, while the southern and most especially the mountain Tajiks identify themselves as ‘true Tajiks’ having preserved blood and culture from Uzbek contact. “Thus, both groups acknowledge their kinship, but deny each other the right to regard itself as the genuine keeper of the Tajik historical and cultural heritage” (Chvyr 1993:252). This deep-rooted perception of difference is key to understanding why Samanids and other symbols are being used to formulate national unity.



Figure 114: Signage from Sogd Regional Museum, and statue of Timur Malik, ‘national hero of Tajik peoples’ Khujand, 2011.

The Sogd Regional Museum⁴¹⁷ has modern displays which show the usual Somoni and Rahmon found in most Tajik museums. However, they also include locally specific displays to the Khujandi

⁴¹⁷ This museum has few original artefacts; displays mainly consist of text panels, (a ‘book on the wall’) dioramas, and replica objects.

hero, Timur Malik⁴¹⁸, and much more unusually, the Timurid dynasty (**Fig. 114**). It is the only museum in Tajikistan, to my knowledge, which takes the viewer systematically from ancient history to the present day, including the rule of the Turkic speaking dynasties, as well as displays on the Aryans and their contributions to world history. This is for a number of reasons; Khujand is an ancient city,⁴¹⁹ and unlike Dushanbe, it played a role in events throughout the last two millennia. Situated in the Ferghana Valley, Sogd is also home to the greatest proportion of Uzbek speakers (nearly 30% of the population), with Tashkent a short drive away, compared to the Tajik capital. Thus, several centuries of 'inconvenient history' are not ignored and Tajikistan's present connected directly back to past perceived greatness. However, when this is done the signage still frames the narrative with what is happening to the 'Tajik people'. It is interesting that Khujand manages to follow its own exhibition agenda, to an extent, rather than that imposed by Dushanbe. Possibly because it is more powerful and further from the centre than Qurghonteppa for example, whose local displays⁴²⁰ support rather than subvert Dushanbe's central message.



Figure 115: 2006 stamp celebrating 2700 years of Kulob showing the Hamadoni shrine (right).

Regional identity (*mahalgari*), is enforced by strong, informal patron-client and kinship relationships. Tajik elites appoint members of their regional networks to influential positions. Although regional factionalism was one of the civil war's causes, and along its axis opponents were aligned, regionalism continues to be a force. This is top down, as many talk of 'Kulobisation',⁴²¹ based on Rahmon's roots in Dangara near Kulob with the main jobs going to a tight coterie around him. The celebration of 2700

⁴¹⁸ Timur Malik defended the city from Mongol detachments sent by Ghengis Khan's sons Chaghatay and Ogedey (Soucek 2000).

⁴¹⁹ Possibly founded by Alexander as Alexandria Eschate, or "the furthest".

⁴²⁰ For example, about the Wadi Vakhsh, a canal built by the Soviets.

⁴²¹ See Akiner 2001:64ff. By 2006 all former opposition leaders in political positions had been removed from office and in many cases tried and imprisoned (Heathershaw 2009 Note 1). The Kulobi elite fill the important positions of four of the most powerful ministries as well as Ministry of Health, National Bank, the Council of Justice and mayor of Dushanbe, Mahmadsaid Ubaidulloev (Abdullaev & Akbarzadeh 2010).

years of Kulob (**Fig. 115**) symbolised the Kulobi powerbase centred on the President and its domestic support (Abdullaev and Akbarzadeh 2010). The use of the Hamadoni shrine links this region to past great men and ancient architecture, to legitimise the present government. Thus, Tajikistan is characterised as a neo-patrimonial state (Buisson 2007:137 & 145ff, Dagiev 2013). Regional identity is most clearly depicted on Tajikistan's coinage.

Tajik paper currency

Paper currency, unlike flags, crests and monumental architecture needs constant updating; not just because of inflation but also to stay one step ahead of potential forgers, thus it is able to show a contemporary and changing approach to national identity construction (Hymans 2004). The currency's use also defines a national territory, which shares the same images on their banknotes.⁴²² Thus postcolonial currency, whether in the medieval period or today, celebrates its independent status, and right to mint their own coins, or print paper notes. Just as in the early Islamic period, what to include on the currency might seem like 'natural' choices, but iconography is the result of political decision-making. Like any identity symbols, while these might hint at or seem to represent a 'biological' ethnic group, they are politically created to form an imagined community. However as discussed above, whether these symbols are considered by the money's users is questionable. Money is seen as part of a "banal nationalism", where images seep into the consciousness without much notice. It is important to understand that remembering and forgetting are not polar opposites, they can simultaneously be both present and absent "in actions which preserve collective memory without the conscious activity of individuals remembering" (Billig 1995:42).

Post-independence, Tajikistan was the last country of the former Soviet republics to create its own currency, and from 1995 to 2000 it used the Tajik rouble (**Fig. 116**). We see here, that post-independence the emphasis has been placed on the Tajik flag, flying over the parliament and the new Tajik crest, both symbols of independence.

⁴²² Whereas stamps are another window on state identity, designed to represent the state to external as well as internal audiences, they are designed to be more personal, arriving on a letter rather than a public poster.



Figure 116: Tajikistan rouble, with emphasis placed on new Tajik state symbols of flag and crest, 1994.

The new currency, the somoni, was introduced on 30th October 2000. Somoni himself was on the highest denomination note, the 100 TSM (**Fig. 120a**). However now, since the introduction of new notes in 2011, Rudaki, who had previously been omitted from the currency's ideological canon is now on the highest denomination, 500 TSM (**Fig. 121a**), however his tomb was pictured before that (on the 5 somoni note, **Fig. 118b**).⁴²³ Even though the figures on the higher denomination notes might be seen to have been ascribed higher prestige, this is fairly abstract compared to the people appearing on the lower denomination notes. The latter are more likely to be used in normal people's everyday life, thus are more likely to seep into public consciousness.

⁴²³ Shozimov explained that Rudaki was previously omitted as he is said to have been blinded by Nasr II, potentially hurting the Samanids' image today. However, in a press conference in 2000, the National Bank deputy chairman explained his omission, saying they did not want to put a blind man on the currency, as it was "improper to show him to the public" (2004:146), which does not say much for their attitudes to the disabled.

Tajik paper currency focuses on people (all men!)⁴²⁴ from Tajikistan's history and architecture. The latter includes mainly buildings in Dushanbe, both from the Soviet era, such as the National Bank (**Fig. 117b**), the Parliament building (**Fig. 117d**) and Presidential Palace (**Fig. 120b**), and also post-independence architecture, including the National Library (**Fig. 120d**) and the Palace of Nations (see below and **Fig. 121b**). The Samanid Mausoleum is also pictured, as if it was in Tajikistan, together with the dynastic founder Somoni, in the 100 TSM note (**Fig. 120a**). Other architecture includes the tomb of Mir Sayyid Hamadoni in Kulyab (**Fig. 118c**), Hissar Castle (**Fig. 119b**) near Dushanbe⁴²⁵ and the modern tomb of Rudaki (1958) (**Fig. 118b**).⁴²⁶ Mir Sayyid Hamadoni from Kulyab is an important religious shrine and personage. This post-independence architecture is discussed in detail in the next chapter and its inclusion on the currency sends these images of Tajik history, modernity and national pride all over the national territory. Chaikhana Sino (**Fig. 119d**) is in Isfara (50 somoni), the religiously conservative town in the northern Sogd province. Not only does this banknote show a Central Asian institution, but it also represents an area where government control is weak, possibly as a sop to their pride.

Most of the men pictured are 'Heroes of Tajikistan',⁴²⁷ poets and politicians carefully chosen to reflect different areas in this fiercely regional country (see above).⁴²⁸ Thus the group of notes between them presents the regions to each other and shows them as part of the 'Tajik family'. Babajan Gafurov (50 somoni note) (**Fig. 119c**) comes from what is now known as the Sogd province (formerly Leninobod), Shirinsho Shotemur (1899-1937), one of the main organisers of the creation of the Tajik SSR and the accession of Khujand to Tajikistan is on the 3 somoni note (**Fig. 117c**). He was also important in Tajik education and came from Porshinev village in Shugnan, Badakhshan. He represents the Ismailis but is also a hero of the entire Tajik nation, not just the Pamirs (Mastibekov 2014).⁴²⁹ Hamadoni (10 somoni) is from Kulyab (where his tomb is located) (**Figs. 118c and 118d**). Mirzo Tursunzoda (**Fig.**

⁴²⁴ Rabe'eh, a female contemporary of Rudaki, and one of the first female Iranian poets, is one historical woman who could be foregrounded, however sadly her story does not fit well into Tajik ethnohistory, as she fell in love with a Turkish slave, Baktash and was killed by her brother because of this.

⁴²⁵ Now reconstructed (see below).

⁴²⁶ See below for this shrine. The one which resembled the Samanid Mausoleum is no longer extant, having been replaced with another grander building.

⁴²⁷ Aini along with Gafurov, Shotemur, Makhsum and Rahmon (!) are given the state award: Hero of Tajikistan.

⁴²⁸ Others who are left out of the canon are Nasir Khusraw, the pre-eminent Ismaili *pir* and poet (who did however appear on a stamp). There is a university of Nasir Khusraw in Qurghonteppa, a city with a large Ismaili population. This has a statue to the poet and Ismaili *pi*a outside the entrance, but there are no statues to the man in Dushanbe at the centre of power.

⁴²⁹ <http://www.asiaplus.tj/en/news/celebrations-mark-110th-anniversary-shirinsho-shotemur-be-held-year> (accessed 20/07/2014).

117a) is a poet and politician⁴³⁰ from the city now called Tursunzoda after him (formerly known as Regar), in the west of Tajikistan near the Uzbek border (1 somoni). Sadriddin Ayni (Aini), poet, novelist and leading figure of Soviet Tajik literature⁴³¹ (5 Somoni) comes from near Bukhara (**Fig. 118a**) but can be seen to reflect the town on the Upper Zarafshan that bears his name (see Chapter Four).

Nasratullo Makhsum (200 Somoni) from Garm, was the Head of the Tajik socialist executive committee and on the USSR executive committee (**Fig. 120c**). He led the forced resettlement of people from highland Garm to the valleys. It is interesting that he has been reinstated by the Tajik state, having been killed in 1937 for anti-Soviet politics. In 1930 Makhsum was rebuked for being part of this forced resettlement,⁴³² with 40% out of 10,000 households⁴³³ violently relocated (Kassymbekova 2013). However, there has been no revisionism by post-Soviet Tajik scholars, for whom this is not a deportation but rather a necessary part of a national modernising project (Kassymbekova 2013:351ff.). Perhaps it is Makhsum's nationalistic stance which is now popular in Tajikistan, because he stopped Uzbek-speaking experienced cotton growers being resettled in Tajikistan. The inclusion of Makhsum on such a high denomination (which few Tajiks will see or use, unless inflation brings the 200 TSM note into normal use) is part of a contemporary nationbuilding agenda. It is also important that he is from Garm, today one of the poorest, most religiously conservative and unsettled regions least under central control.

Tajik numismatic iconography suggests that the State gives importance to all the regions with their individual identities, but the reality is different, as is well-known. Men and women from Kulyab, specifically Dangara where the president is from, are prioritised, as they were on the winning side in the civil war. This shows us how empty these political symbols can be. It also warns us about taking symbols at face value, as if they were to survive in the archaeological record, lacking any other historical documents, some future time might believe in this identity construction, where all regions of Tajikistan are equally recognised. Both architecture and people reference the Soviet era, and so here there is no revisionism⁴³⁴ Paper currency is not able to show the president, depicted like a king, but

⁴³⁰ See <http://khovar.tj/eng/culture/2285-tajikistan-marks-the-100th-anniversary-of-mirzo-tursunzoda.html>, <http://news.tj/en/news/tajikistan-marks-100th-birthday-anniversary-mirzo-tursunzoda> (accessed 20/07/2014).

⁴³¹ <http://www.iranicaonline.org/articles/ayni-sadr-al-din> (accessed 20/07/2014).

⁴³² Tajik resettlements were part of ethnic identity formation and top-down governance, largely connected to Soviet leaders' external ambitions vis-à-vis other Iranian speakers in Iran and Afghanistan, and to form a loyal and secure frontier against them. The Soviets characterised this as moving people from overcrowded highlands to relatively unpopulated lowlands to grow cotton. It was much easier to control people there than in inaccessible mountains, cf. Ustrushana in early Islamic times.

⁴³³ A 'household' included married sons' families, so c.15 people (Kassymbekova 2013:350).

⁴³⁴ Uzbekistan has two modern buildings; Alisher Navoi Opera and Ballet Theatre (1 som) and Palace of the Friendship of Peoples, Tashkent (100 som), the others are medieval architecture. They do not have people on

there is no such interdiction on posters, the body of the president is an important trope endeavouring to unite the country. Stamps and posters are other visual means of state communication and propaganda and are illuminating windows on state state imaginary, showing not only what it wishes to honour and display but how it would like to seem and be seen to seem. Images of native flora, fauna and country scenery also contribute to the nation building project, albeit in a more subtle way. Stamps and posters have different roles based on their appearance in private and public space. The imagery seems more personal arriving on a letter, than on a poster made to be seen in public. Stamps may be aimed at an international audience, whereas the posters are more likely to be produced for the internal population. These latter are also seen by foreign visitors, however.⁴³⁵ Although not discussed directly due to constricts of space, stamps have been used as illustrations here, as they depict the ideals that the state would like to convey.

their notes, though Amir Timur and Alisher Navoi, the poet, are shown by their statues. This possibly displays the more territorial rather than linguistic identity, which characterises Uzbekistan (see below).

⁴³⁵ Few in Tajikistan rely on traditional postal services however, relying on friends and family to carry letters and parcels so that they reach their destination safely.



a) Mirzo Tursunzoda (1911-1977), map of Tajikistan and a globe.



b) National Bank of Tajikistan, Dushanbe.



c) Shirinsho Shotemur and an open book.



d) Majlisi Oliy Tajik Parliament building, Dushanbe.

Figure 117: Tajik currency notes one (a and b) and three somoni (c and d).



a) Sadriddin Ayni (1878-1954) with pen and inkwell on a table.



b) Modern shrine of Rudaki (1958) – earliest shrine (see Chapter Six).



c) Mir Sayyid Amid Hamadoni (1314-1384) with pen and inkwell.



d) The Tomb of Mir Sayyid Amid Hamadoni in Kulyab.

Figure 118: Tajik currency notes five (a and b) and ten somoni (c and d).



a) Ibn Sina (c. 970–1037).



b) Hissar Castle (renovated), Hissar.



c) Bobojon Gafurov (1908-1977) and his book *The Tajiks* (Moscow, 1972).



d) Chaikhana Sino, Isfara.

Figure 119: Tajik currency notes twenty (a and b) and fifty somoni (c and d).



a) Ismoil Somoni and the Samanid Mausoleum.



b) Presidential Palace, Dushanbe.



c) Nusratullo Makhsum and a Soviet flag for Tajikistani freedom.



d) National Library building, Dushanbe.

Figure 120: Tajik currency notes one hundred (a and b) and two hundred somoni (c and d).



a) Abū 'Abdollāh Ja'far ibn Mohammad Rudaki (c.859-940/941).



b) Palace of Nations, Dushanbe.

Figure 121: Tajik currency five hundred somoni (a and b).

Samanid heritage sites

Tajikistan is heavily restoring many of its Samanid era historical sites, such as Khulbuk and Khoja Mashhad.⁴³⁶ Here we can see tensions between archaeologists and art historians on the one hand with those responsible for fostering not just the incipient tourist industry but more importantly creating sources of real local pride.⁴³⁷ Young couples are photographed outside historical sites such as Khulbuk and Khoja Mashhad on their wedding day, surrounded by their family, friends and neighbours. This may be more than just finding an suitably impressive and beautiful backdrop, and

⁴³⁶ These are not the only ones, the monumental entrance of Hissar fort, which is a popular daytrip from Dushanbe.

⁴³⁷ As supposed to the late 19th-early 20th century documented removal of baked brick from old buildings for reuse, leading to partial or complete destruction, e.g. Shahrukh mosque in old Merv. Some buildings only survive in photographs and notes from Western and Russian travellers (Mamedov & Muradov 2013).

can be seen variously as a way of blessing their marriage, expressing continuity, longevity, honouring the past and bringing the past into the present.⁴³⁸ Many of these sites are also seen as sacred sites, where Sufi saints were buried. As such these sites are still the focus of pilgrimage and worship, which can be upset by both by restoration and/or archaeological investigation.

Khoja Mashhad

This mausoleum-madrassa complex near Sayyod village, Sharituz, southern Tajikistan,⁴³⁹ dates from 9-12th century (**Figs. 122-126**). One of the oldest extant Islamic buildings in Tajikistan, it is thought to be an early surviving example of a madrasa. The eastern dome is thought to be older than the western dome that houses the mihrab. As a mausoleum, it is seen as early precursor of the Samanid Mausoleum, presaging its virtuoso brickwork in its simpler rhombus shapes⁴⁴⁰ (Khmel'nitsky 1992:146-156). Today, Khoja Mashhad has a new *iwān* entrance, which has been completely rebuilt, which I saw when I returned in 2011 (**Fig. 123**). There is also a new sign with a quotation by Rahmon (**Fig. 126**), underlining the building's importance in the nationbuilding project. There is also an informal display explained by the helpful and knowledgeable *mutawalli* and guide, Muhammad Yusuf Asimov.

In the *iwān* in 2008 I saw the small entrance into a room which was used as a *chillakhane* (where Sufis go to meditate for forty days) according to the *mutawalli*. By 2011, post-restoration, it can be seen in the photograph that this room and its doorway had sadly been bricked over, by order of the Ministry of Culture, apparently to stabilise the walls. Thus, we see that reconstructions are destroying the historical record. However, this building has been extensively studied, and thus there are references to its state as seen in the second half of the twentieth century (Khmel'nitsky 1992:146-156). Restoration does have to take place, obviously, just as most cultures restore significant buildings. Whether this work conforms to best practice in the West is questionable, however, as you cannot tell the original brickwork from the new.

⁴³⁸ This practice is critiqued in artist Yerbossyn Meldibekov's work, "Mutations" (2010) see Chapter Six, where the people outlive the modern monuments they are photographed in front of. However, these ancient monuments are still standing, in spite of degradations of history, although their architecture may be changed by later renovations.

⁴³⁹ Khmel'nitsky 1992:146-156.

⁴⁴⁰ See Chapter Three.



Figure 122: Khoja Mashhad without the reconstructed iwan, 2008.

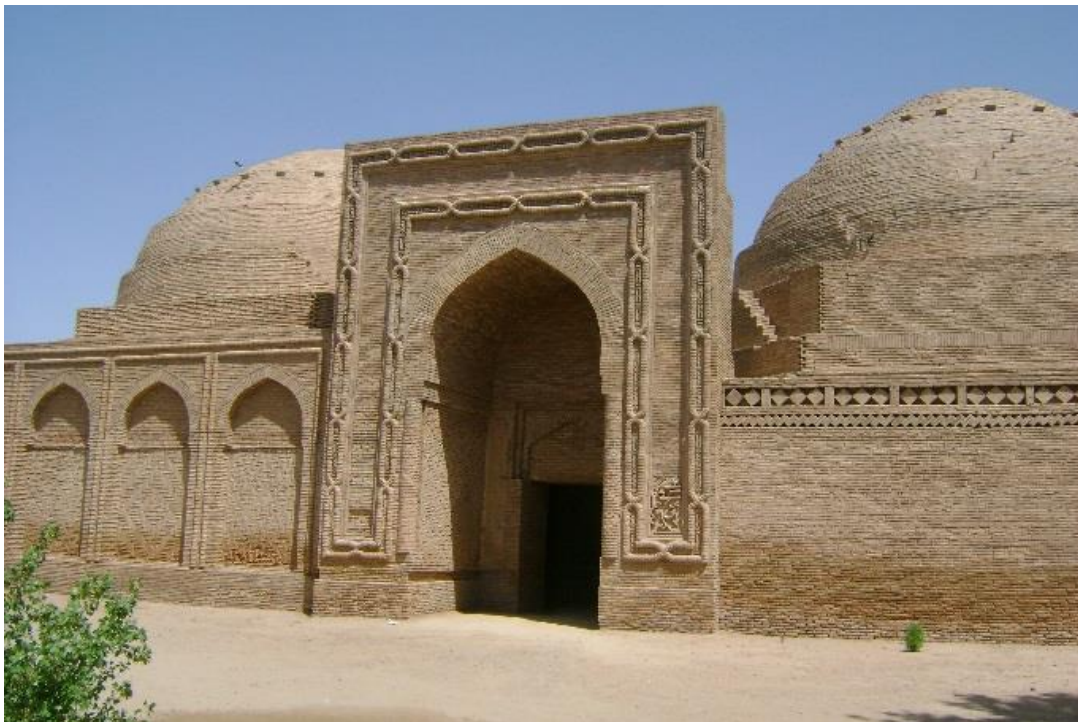


Figure 123: Khoja Mashhad with reconstructed iwan, 2011.



Figure 124: Mihrab, Khoja Mashhad, western dome.



Figure 125: Mihrab, Khoja Mashhad, detail of upper section.

Quadripartite motifs perhaps resembling swastikas can be seen in the mihrab of the 9-11th century Khoja Mashhad madrasa and mausoleum (**Figs. 124 and 125**), when I visited in Summer 2008 these were eagerly pointed out to me by my guide as a sign that during the Islamic period the old beliefs lived on.⁴⁴¹

The *mutawalli* told us that a local hunter asked for a blessing before a hunt. When he returned successful, he gave the goat's horns to put on top of the arch in gratitude. Today even after the reconstruction there are some goat's horns which have been placed inconspicuously on the building. However, when I mentioned this to the local museum director in Qurghonteppa, she was angry that

⁴⁴¹ Compare the mihrab from the 'Samanid palace' at Samarqand (Chapter Three) and the Asht Mihrab (see Chapter Four) and the mihrab in the modern mosque at Obburdon (see above) which also have pre-Islamic elements.

these cultural traditions (viewed by her as superstitions) were still visibly being followed.⁴⁴² This practice was noted by the architect Adler in the 1940s:

Huge ram's horns⁴⁴³ were fastened to the vaulted walls. In the courtyard behind the twin-cupolas, some trees were covered by narrow linen strips to such an extent that their branches could hardly be seen. These linen strips are also offerings for the deceased. (Adler 1944:44)



Figure 126: Sign, Khoja Mashhad, “Revival of memories of history for the future nation”, 2011.

Sometimes the various contemporary functions of a site come into conflict, for example at Khoja Mashhad many religious people were upset when the graves from the eastern part were moved to a nearby cemetery. They had been accustomed to collect the earth from around Khoja Mashhad's daughter's grave to treat warts and eczema, as it was considered to be holy (Muzaffari et al 2007:88). Musafar Azizov of the Ministry of Culture⁴⁴⁴ believes that many ancient sites like Khoja Mashhad are more likely to be of interest to people religiously, than inspiring cultural historical tourism. Mazars and

⁴⁴² Pers comm. June 2011.

⁴⁴³ Ram's horns are still found on many Central Asian religious buildings today.

⁴⁴⁴ Musafar Azizov, Ministry of Culture, 2nd October 2011.

mosques are a source of pride to their local areas, and people come to pray in Khoja Mashhad, and at many shrines and mazars across Tajikistan, each which are the source of local histories and lore.

Khulbuk (Hulbuk)

Khulbuk was the regional palace and administrative centre of the Khuttal region between the 9th and 11th centuries (**Figs. 127-129**). Today, its walls are modern reconstructions, along with a new, reconstructed monumental entrance and corner towers (**Fig. 127 and 129**). The new entrance has been reconstructed from a large fragment in the museum (**Fig. 128**), which shows both swastikas and the Kufic lettering of a Quranic inscription, supposedly the Bakarat blessing, sura 255. However, there does not seem to be any historical reason to reconstruct blue tiles on the 11th century corner tower. It seems to be a desire for Tajikistan to have its own blue tiled architecture to rival neighbouring Uzbekistan. Unfortunately, these new structures have interfered with the ongoing archaeological excavation.⁴⁴⁵ The site has an excellent museum attached, with a good collection of artefacts, including outstanding 11th century stucco work excavated from Khulbuk. This museum was closed for restoration when I returned in 2011.

⁴⁴⁵ Baimatowa 2011

http://agakhan.fas.harvard.edu/icb/icb.do?keyword=k69205&pageid=icb.page410717&pageContentId=icb.pagecontent900912&view=watch.do&viewParam_entry=46791#a_icb_pagecontent900912 (accessed 23/03/2014).



Figure 127: Khulbuk, Khatlon region, reconstructed walls and corner tower, 2011.



Figure 128: Fragment of monumental entrance iwan, Khulbuk, 10th century, now in Khulbuk site Museum.



Figure 129: Reconstructed monumental entrance, Khulbuk, 2011.

When I asked Jamat Gulnova Gulbak,⁴⁴⁶ head of the women of the local *hakkumat* what she thought of Khulbuk, she responded that they are very proud of the reconstructed site of Khulbuk and how it is able to attract Tajiks and foreign guests to their town. In her view, Khulbuk allows them to reach out to the world, be famous and enter into collaborations with different groups. She told me that many people go there to have their wedding photos taken. Previously, however, they would have gone to Hamadoni in Kulob with its golden dome, but now that the walls are reconstructed they come here. When I asked whether they were happy that the reconstruction was done, they said “*Albatta* – of course” She told me that they have other development plans once they have finished excavating, then it will be even better.

Zarafshan minarets as heritage sites

Other Samanid period sites have not been restored,⁴⁴⁷ such as the Zarafshan minarets (see Chapter Five, **Figs. 80-83**), although protected from the weather (Aini and Fatmev). Little seems to be being done to interpret them to the public, for example by providing signage. Mosques in Tajikistan do not often have minarets (Abdullaev & Akbarzadeh 2010:239), thus it might be as well that the minaret is seen as a foreign form, and not entirely within Tajik architectural and cultural traditions.⁴⁴⁸ Certainly there was nothing around them which indicated a sacred space, for example rags on nearby trees, the Fatmev minaret was in a graveyard filled with rubbish, which looked like no care was taken over it. The Aini minaret fared best, in the town centre and next to the mosque.

Equally the minarets have not in any way been included in the government’s state formation around the dynasty.⁴⁴⁹ This could be for varying reasons, firstly their location in mountain villages in the Zarafshan, where there are few people travelling there from outside the region, secondly their state of repair, arguably they are only of interest to specialists or those with an interest in history. The minarets are not spectacular enough to command interest from the general population. Thirdly and perhaps most importantly, the Tajik government today, because of present concerns (see above) would like to downplay the Samanids’ religious fervour (if that is what it was), and the minarets as ‘symbols of Islam’ do not fit current Tajik focus on Samanids’ secularism. While the minarets might be a symbol of Islam in some places, here they do not seem to be the focus of pilgrimage or somewhere to pray, as in mazars and mosques. Thus, they seem to be abandoned monuments, unable to speak,

⁴⁴⁶ Meeting May 2011.

⁴⁴⁷ Architectural historians would usually prefer conservation rather than total rebuilding.

⁴⁴⁸ Which might also support it being built by Ismail Samanid as a symbol of power (see above)?

⁴⁴⁹ Aini and Fatmev minarets have been protected from the elements, but not Rarz minaret.

whose meaning is curtailed, with no audience, either nationalist or religious. Other sites, such as Hazrati Shoh, in Chorku near Isfara (see above) are preserved in mosques, and thus there is adequate protection, although no interpretive explanation given to visitors.⁴⁵⁰

Public perceptions of the Samanid Mausoleum

Tombs (*turba*, *qabr*, *qubba*, *gunbad*, *mazar*),⁴⁵¹ were more likely to survive than palaces, which were competing symbols of contemporary dynastic power. Thus, tombs were less likely to be destroyed by subsequent dynasties, keen to make their own mark and build over the secular residences of rulers that they conquered, (Necipoğlu 1993a,⁴⁵² Scott-Meisami 2001). Palaces as houses of living rulers, had no purpose once these rulers were gone, and items of value carried to new locations. Tombs along with other religious buildings, were important foci of popular religion, often maintained by *waqf* endowments. A tomb's function, it is argued, as well as its sanctity protected these monuments for the future, as they continued to hold the body of the deceased, although they were sometimes rededicated to new occupants. New graves were sited near particularly holy mausolea, as it was believed that the *baraka* or blessings and prestige increased the closer you were buried to the original holy incumbent. The cemetery surrounding the Samanid Mausoleum (**Figs. 9, 11, 27-33, 35-36 and 130**) was no exception. Early photos of the Mausoleum show it half hidden and protected by gravestones (e.g. Hillenbrand 1994 Fig. 199). It is one of the few tombs to secular rulers, however, rather than holy men or women, which has kept its connection to its original incumbent and continued to be the focus of pilgrimage or *ziyarat*.

The first publication of the Samanid Mausoleum in 1911 ascribes the building to Ismail Samanid, due to popular traditions, and describes his tomb as having a *tokh*⁴⁵³ the highest honour, which relates to the incumbent's services to Islam, rather than social standing. It also had a stand with four small earthen bowls where candles are lit for Islamic festivals especially Ramadan⁴⁵⁴ (Olufsen 1911:409),

⁴⁵⁰ Isfara in the Ferghana Valley is certainly not on the (Western) tourist trail, the area is subject to unrest, religiously conservative and where anti-government sentiment is strong.

⁴⁵¹ See Hillenbrand 1994:253 ff. for a discussion on the form and function of mausolea, along with the meaning of the various early Arabic/ Persian terms.

⁴⁵² This religious emphasis also stems from the traditional view that material culture of the Islamic world was primarily shaped by religion (Necipoğlu 1993a:3).

⁴⁵³ Olufsen describes a *tokh* as a (black or white) Pamiri yak oxtail, hung on a pole over the grave. None of the Bukharan emirs had a *tokh* placed over their grave (Olufsen 1911:410).

⁴⁵⁴ Bowls or earthen lamps (*chirak*) placed on the grave are a further mark of distinction of the deceased which Olufsen ascribes to the Parsee or Avesta religion. (Olufsen 1911:410).



Figure 130: Samanid Mausoleum, interior of arch over entranceway, 2011.

both indications as to the honour in which he was held in popular and religious thought a millennium after his death, prior to the coming of the Soviets.

It is suggested that because of the richness of the interior decoration, the tomb was designed from the outset to be visited and seen from the inside (**Fig. 130**). There are also folk stories about Ismail granting wishes to those who pray at his tomb.⁴⁵⁵ The Mausoleum continues to be the focus of prayer and pilgrimage, during my research I encountered many groups of both locals from Bukhara and from further afield who had come there to pray (**Fig. 131**). It is also depicted on many tourist souvenirs, including ceramics (**Fig. 132**). The Samanid Mausoleum continues to be held in importance by many Tajiks, at least at state level, shown by models in Tajik museums as well as being pictured on the currency (see above). The Samanid Mausoleum, I would argue, is a material metaphor symbolising the loss of these predominantly Tajik speaking urban areas of Bukhara and Samarkand to Uzbekistan. Tilley has written on metaphor and material culture where he describes metaphor as “comprehending some entity from the point of view or perspective of another” (1999:4). It is important to note that metaphor concerns the reader, and how the object is seen, and is a way of mediating between concrete and abstract thoughts.

⁴⁵⁵ E.g. Olufsen 1911:413. See Chapter One.



Figure 131: An Irani mother and child who had come to pray at the mausoleum and the female caretaker (left) and a group of young men visiting the tomb (right), 2011.



Figure 132: Samanid Mausoleum tourist souvenir, 2011.

Displaying the Samanid era in Tajikistan's museums

How do Tajikistan's museum collections contribute to current Tajik identity formation, especially regarding the Samanid period? Here again, objects and their interpretation are placed through a series of transpositions, as they are of interest for themselves, but also what their display and interpretation can tell us about curatorial and government concerns. Tajikistan's Samanid era collections are seen in museums around the country.⁴⁵⁶ Some objects are on display and these artefacts are accompanied by interpretative panels on Samanid history, map of empire and dynastic family tree.

Besides the Samanids, other historical eras which feature in Tajik museums nationwide include the Soviet past. This is not forgotten and omitted from museum displays, with events such as The Great Patriotic War (World War II) continuing to feature, just as they are proudly remembered in commemorative days and war memorials countrywide. Many displays are becoming more nationalist however, focussing on the President, Emomali Rahmon. For example, the enormous photograph that greets visitors in the atrium of the new National Museum of Tajikistan which was also seen in its forerunner the Bekhzod Museum. There is also a massive painting of the President in front of a waterfall, symbolising Tajikistan's precious water resources, linking the image of the president to bringing fruitfulness to the land. This is based on an ancient idea also recollected in early Islamic poetry and imagery (see Chapter Three above).

Museums run by the Tajik Ministry of Culture

It seems that in some cases Samanid importance has been inflated beyond the limits of historical truth in some museum signage in museums run by the Ministry of Culture on both a national and regional level.⁴⁵⁷ This can be seen in the new National Museum displays, for example in comparing

⁴⁵⁶ Most important Samanid collections are in National Museum of Antiquities, Dushanbe and the National Museum of Tajikistan, Dushanbe. The Regional Museum of Penjikent has finds from the nearby site of Penjikent, an important site in the pre-Islamic and Samanid periods; the Regional Museum of Sogd, Khujand has a few Samanid pieces but mostly it corresponds to 'a book on a wall', with few objects. Its interpretation, however, is excellent and the museum looks quite modern. The Khulbuk site museum has objects found by archaeological excavation, some which date to Samanid era, and some to the subsequent Ghaznavid period. A few simple objects can also be seen in the museum connected to the Rudaki Mausoleum in Panjrud near Penjikent.

⁴⁵⁷ Like the image of a Ghaznavid period incense burner on a stamp celebrating the Samanids (see above). The difference of approach between the museums run by the Ministry of Culture and Archaeological museums dates

the map in this museum (**Fig. 133**) with its equivalent in the old Bezhzod Museum (**Fig. 134**), the Samanid Empire seems to have grown exponentially, taking in Fars up to the Persian Gulf and even westwards as far as the territory of Iraq,⁴⁵⁸ deep into the heartlands of the caliphate. However, the Samanid Empire in its heyday only reached as far as Rayy (near modern Teheran).



Figure 133: Samanid Empire map, new National Museum, © Ed Lemon, 2013.

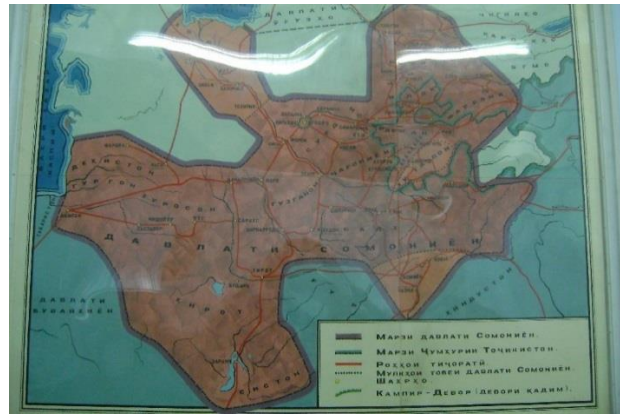


Figure 134: Samanid Empire map (Davlati Somoniyon), Bekhzod Museum, 2010.

Again, in the new Qurghonteppa Samanid displays below (**Figs. 135-137**), the signage also includes photographs of architecture, none of which dates to the Samanid period (on the left of the sign). This is based on a stylistic consideration because there is no information as to where these buildings are. The bottom photograph shows the reconstructed walls of the Khujand fortress which does not date to the Samanid period.

back to the Soviet period. Archaeological research was overly ideological and was initially part of the Academy of Sciences, and later done through 'Archaeological Expeditions' which were semi-independent institutions under the umbrellas of Academies. Archaeological research was not designed to influence the masses, as it did not filter much beyond the Academy, with print runs of a few hundred. Thus, the link between archaeology and education was minimal. "So you can argue that museum work and archaeological work were different in institutional level. While the museums were the institutions of 'culture' (hence with excessive ideology) the archaeology was under the institutions of 'science' "(Jorayev pers comm. 14/11/2012). This difference can still be seen today in Tajikistan in that the National Museum is run by the Ministry of Culture and the National Museum of Antiquities is under the auspices of the Academy of Science (see below), it has less overtly nationalistic or ideological displays.

⁴⁵⁸ It is true coins were minted at some cities in West Iran such as Shiraz, Qazvin and Hamadan, but this seems to have been only during Nuh b. Nasr's reign and that of his successor (mid 10th century) (see Appendix A).



Figure 135: Interpretation sign about the Samanids, Qurghonteppa Regional Museum, 2011.

In general, it seems that there is an interpretation layer highlighting the Samanid period in most Tajik museums displays, apart from the National Museum of Antiquities, run by the Academy of Science (see below),⁴⁵⁹ this usually focuses on a picture of Ismail Somoni, a family tree, map of their empire and possibly some information about the dynasty and its achievements. Map and family tree are present whether or not museums have objects⁴⁶⁰ dating from this era. The Ministry of Culture was involved in all the redispays of the museums, whether national or regional; for example the Ministry worked with the local Hakkumat in Qurghonteppa to decide on the new museum's exhibition design.⁴⁶¹ Thus the Tajik government maintains centralised control on its exhibitions and displays through the Ministry of Culture, which controls museums' messages.⁴⁶²

Where there are Samanid objects in Tajik museums, in the most part these do not seem to have merited politicised connection to the nation-building project. One notable exception, however, is on

⁴⁵⁹ It is not run by the Ministry of Culture but the Academy of Science, see above.

⁴⁶⁰ For example, the Regional Museum in Qurghonteppa.

⁴⁶¹ Meeting, Mrs Safarmo, Museum Director, Qurghonteppa, 25 May 2011.

⁴⁶² There are exceptions to this as noted above, the Regional Museum of Sogd, Khujand, and possibly the Regional Museum in Khorog.

the Khujand Somoni mosaics, which display images in mosaic of the Khulbuk stuccos, Samanid epigraphic ceramics and beams from Hazrati Shoh, alongside the central panel from the Iskodar Mihrab (see below, **Fig 180**). However, Samanid museum objects are not the only ones highlighted in these mosaic panels, which also depict images of the Sogdian stuccos from Penjikent (Fig. 178), and the skeleton of the 'Princess' of Sarazm lying in her grave. The reason that museum objects are not more highlighted in the nationbuilding project is because these collections do not relate to the Samanids themselves as objects that they might have used or commissioned, but to local dynasties who maintained a regional powerbase during the Samanid Empire.

The Samanids have left no unequivocal material culture record⁴⁶³ of themselves in Tajikistan's territory, beyond of course, the coinage. In part, this is also because, with the exception of the Iskodar Mihrab which may well date to the Samanid era (see Chapter Four, above), museum collections in Tajikistan, while fascinating and of great interest in displaying Tajik history are not seen to contain many items believed likely to inculcate identity today. The Urmitan and Kurut columns on display in Penjikent Museum have not been given an extra interpretation layer to connect them to the Samanids and current Tajik identity formation.⁴⁶⁴ Museum collections also include a few whole ceramics and many large fragments, some metalware and glass. Arguably, the only other museum pieces that caused general excitement among many Tajiks were not Samanid at all, they were the 'Big Buddha',⁴⁶⁵ and the 'Princess' of Sarazm⁴⁶⁶ (mid 4th millennium BCE). These were special, due to their size, their great age, the richness of the finds, and their unimpeachable historical value. These artefacts are also important as they are easy to connect with by modern audiences, having a human or sacred value.

⁴⁶³ Apart from Ismail Samanid possibly burning down Kalai Kahkhaka in his conquest of Ustrushana.

⁴⁶⁴ Urmitan and Kurut columns were in Penjikent Museum in 2011. The Fatmev column was not yet on display in Khujand Museum (2011).

⁴⁶⁵ The Buddha in Nirvana from Ajina Tepe, 12.85 m long, reclines on its right side with its head resting on a cushion and the left arm is stretched along the body. It is one of the largest Buddhas extant in Central Asia, since the Taliban destruction of the Bamiyan Buddhas in 2001 (see Flood 2002). This suits Rahmon, as its great size adds to its importance in his eyes. Displaying the Buddha also underlines the differences between Tajiks and Afghans to a world audience, portraying Tajiks as moderate modern Muslims, able to appreciate other religions and their material heritage (especially as Buddhism is not contested simply because not practiced here today). However, it is questionable whether the Buddha in Nirvana is desacralised as Flood (2002) suggests through being in a museum. On my first visit in 2008 two young Tajik Pamiri women asked me if I wanted to touch the Buddha to make a wish, (my museum's training made me refrain!). Appadurai has much to say on Indian audiences and how sacralised objects and spaces generate specialised modes of viewing and interaction which are "likely to be rooted in historically deeper modalities of seeing as a cultural practice" (Appadurai and Breckenridge 1999:416).

⁴⁶⁶ This is due to the burial's great age, and the richness of the finds found with the female incumbent, including gold necklaces in the shape of a rosette, lapis lazuli, cornelian, steatite, silver beads, stone seals and marble buttons as well as stone ceremonial maces and a bronze mirror (Masov et al. n.d.). This site shows the ancient and rich culture of Tajikistan. Sarazm itself is Tajikistan's only UNESCO World Heritage Site, a source of great pride.

Notable exceptions are the objects depicted on the stamps (see below, **Fig 143**) commemorating the Samanid period. However, it can be noted that the 30-dirham stamp with the Khulbuk incense burner, now in the National Museum of Antiquities, Dushanbe, is more likely to date from 11th century. Thus, here again, objects are being appropriated for the nation-building project because they look good on a stamp rather than any real link to the Samanid dynasty.



Figure 136: Samanid Empire map, Qurghonteppa Museum, 2011.



Figure 137: Picture of Somoni and family tree, together with list of viziers and poets and thinkers, Qurghonteppa Museum, 2011.

The new National Museum contains the artefacts from the Bekhzod Museum, as well as other chosen pieces from museums around the country. The new displays (**Fig. 138**) are much more polished than the ones in the old Bekhzod Museum, with more reproductions of objects, to supplement what was a rather poor national collection.

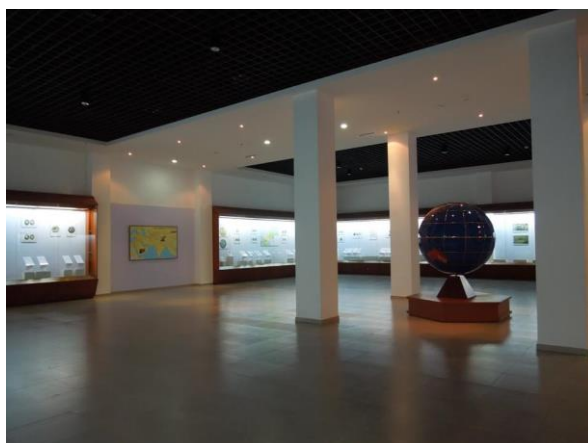


Figure 138: New National Museum of Tajikistan, Gallery, © Ed Lemon, 2013.



Figure 139: Map of trade in 9-10th centuries, new National Museum of Tajikistan, © Ed Lemon, 2013.

There is also a large map of the Silk Roads and other trade routes at that time (**Fig. 139**), which is one of the few maps in the Museum which shows the whole of Central Asia and its location within the wider region. It is interesting that they chose to highlight the Silk Roads connections in the Samanid period, as it was in use long before their dynastic heyday.



Figure 140: National Museum signage, © Ed Lemon, 2013.

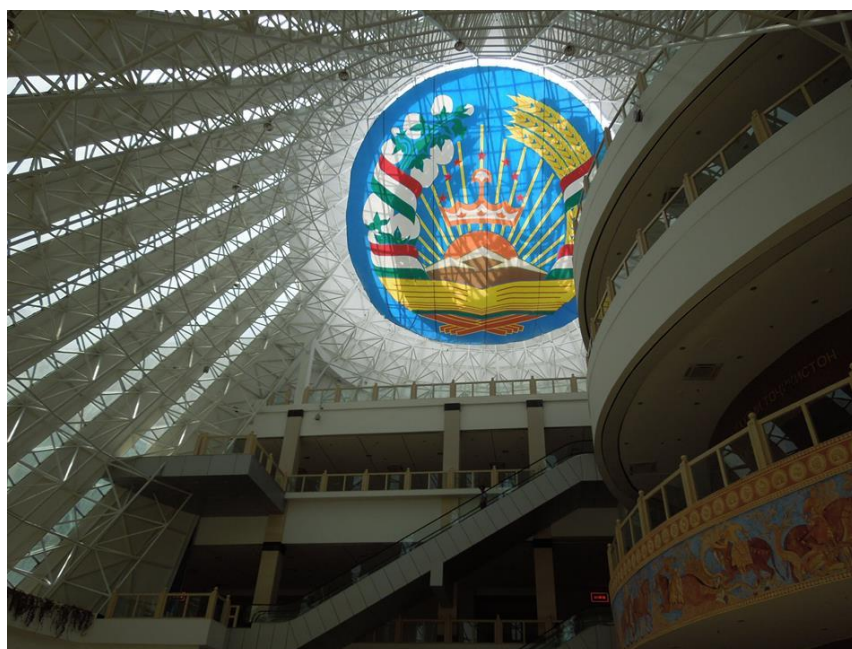


Figure 141: National Crest in roof skylight of National Museum, © Ed Lemon, 2013.

In its signage (**Fig. 140**), the new National Museum highlights once again the Samanids, history is divided into Stone Age till the 8th century, and from the Samanids to the present, underlining how the dynasty have led to the present day. However, everything is subsumed under the vast national crest (**Fig. 141**), which can be seen from all over the museum, as well as from outside.

Found by excavation, what is noteworthy is that all the artefacts come from within the territory's⁴⁶⁷ boundaries. They have neither been appropriated from elsewhere through war or other means, nor bought on the art market. As such they reflect the country's material culture, bearing in mind that

⁴⁶⁷ A fact they are proud about, as I was told it in person, as a comment on the British and the British Museum, whose objects come from all over the world, it is also noted in the NMA catalogue (Masov et al. n.d.).

some of the best pieces are now displayed in the Hermitage Museum⁴⁶⁸ in St Petersburg, there is no talk of returning these to Tajikistan.

National Museum of Antiquities, Dushanbe (NMA)⁴⁶⁹

This museum has excellent Samanid era material from the regional sites of Bunjikat, Khulbuk and Sayod. Displays are organised by find location, allowing visitors to construct a regional picture of Tajikistan's history, making comparisons between north and south. There are no overt messages in this museum as befits an institution of science, run by the Academy of Science rather than public instruction, as the museums run by the Ministry of Culture. It is here that Tajiks may gain the richest experience of artefacts from the early Islamic period. Bunjikat in the Zarafshan (see Appendix C) and Khulbuk in southern Tajikistan were regional capitals with their own dynasties, and in some cases the material culture reflects a local style, as well as their different spheres of influence, Khulbuk for example is more closely connected to Balkh and areas south of the Amu Darya. Their ceramics, metalware and stuccowork are recognisably connected to the wider Samanid Empire, however. The site of Bunjikat, capital of ancient Ustrushana (Bobomulloev & Yamauchi 2010, 2011) bridges the pre-Islamic and Islamic eras, as Islam only came to Ustrushana in the 8th century (see Chapter Four). From Bunjikat there is the charred semi-circular wooden tympanum⁴⁷⁰ on display. The wall paintings were burnt when the palace was set on fire at the end of the 9th century, possibly by Ismail Samanid. There is also a 9th century fire altar showing evidence of Zoroastrianism, supporting what we know from historical texts (see Chapter Four). Samanid period ceramics are on display from this site, with Arabic inscriptions, the famous black and white ware. Thus, the collections reflect what might have been the reality in the palace of Bunjikat, which we may imagine using 'Samanid' ceramics at the same time as looking at their wall paintings and tympanum with the image of Zahhak.

⁴⁶⁸ Most famously Penjikent's pre-Islamic wall paintings; the ones which remain in Tajikistan are smaller and less well-preserved. Equally, Tajikistan was probably the provenance of the British Museum's Oxus treasure.

⁴⁶⁹ The museum website is <http://www.afc.ryukoku.ac.jp/tj/tajikistanEnglish/index.html> (accessed 20/05/2014). There is also museum guide in Tajik, Russian, French and English (Masov, Bobomulloev and Bubnova n.d.).

⁴⁷⁰ Dated 8th-9th century, 292 cm wide, 143 cm high, made up of three panels (see Appendix C, **Fig 201**).



Figure 142: Dish, 9-11th centuries, (left) and aquamanile 10th century, Bunjikat, Shahrstan (right).

This almost complete dish (**Fig. 142 left**) resembles the Iraqi pseudo-lusterware design with a semi-lunette border, and peacock's eye motif against a stippled background. The design in olive green slip shows four pomegranates between four trees, possibly cypress trees around a central nine petalled rosette, whose dynamic design suggests movement, the 'flower of the whirling sun'. The aquamanile (**Fig. 142 right**) is depicted on the stamps celebrating 1100 years of the Samanids (**Fig. 143**), underlining its supposed Samanid provenance.

Another gallery has artefacts from the Islamic site of Khulbuk,⁴⁷¹ which dates to the Samanid and Ghaznavid periods (see below). There is an architectural model of the gateway as it has been reconstructed, of which the original fragment is in the Khulbuk site museum (see above **Fig. 128**). It shows an Islamic Kufic inscription⁴⁷² together with swastikas, which the Khulbuk Museum Director

⁴⁷¹ Khulbuk (Khojaev 2010, Simeon 2008, 2012) was the capital of the Khuttalan region (which gives its name to the modern region of Khatlon), and an important trading centre in what is now southern Tajikistan, however it had stronger links with Bactria and Tokharistan i.e. to areas south of the Amu Darya. The site was excavated from 1950 under Professor Gulamova. The capital was ruled in the 9-10th centuries by the Banijurid dynasty, who Bosworth notes could conceivably be of Turkish origin, although they were probably Iranian (Bosworth 2012). This is interesting, as this mingling of Turks and Persians that was possibly taking place during the early medieval period is not reflected in the later histories written today, which seem bent on projecting ethnic differences and animosity back into the past. The palace walls have been reconstructed since 2002 (see below).

⁴⁷² The inscription is the Bakarat blessing, sura 255.



Figure 143: 1100 years of the Samanids stamps showing museum objects co-opted into the nationbuilding programme

Khojaev understood as the continuing importance of the Zoroastrian cultural heritage in the Islamic era (see above).⁴⁷³ This site is also the provenance of some of the best examples of Samanid ceramics found in Tajikistan, however compared to the highest quality from Samarqand and Nishapur these are clearly more 'provincial' in craftsmanship, or at least those left in Tajik museums are.⁴⁷⁴ The ceramic dish below (**Fig. 144**) can be compared to Cat Gb 12 and Cat Gb 13 (Watson 2004:227-228) where he notes provenance reportedly from Afghanistan. This would fit well with this coming from Khulbuk, which was in the sphere of influence of Balkh to the south. Stuccos from Khulbuk are also displayed, showing lions among other motifs, as the ruler the Khatlonshah was also known as the Shir Khuttalan or 'Lion of Khatlon'⁴⁷⁵. Painted and carved stuccowork is also arranged in complex lattice panels.

⁴⁷³ Pers comm. Khulbuk, May 2011

⁴⁷⁴ Arguably, because the 'best' artefacts were carried off to Russia, outstanding ceramics may well have been among them. I was not able to study the Islamic collections when I was in the Hermitage as they had sadly just shut for redisplay (Winter 2010). Thus, we see colonialism destroying a culture's ideas about its own past.

⁴⁷⁵ Following Sasanian titulature, these royal titles are not seen to be anti-Islamic (Tor 2012).

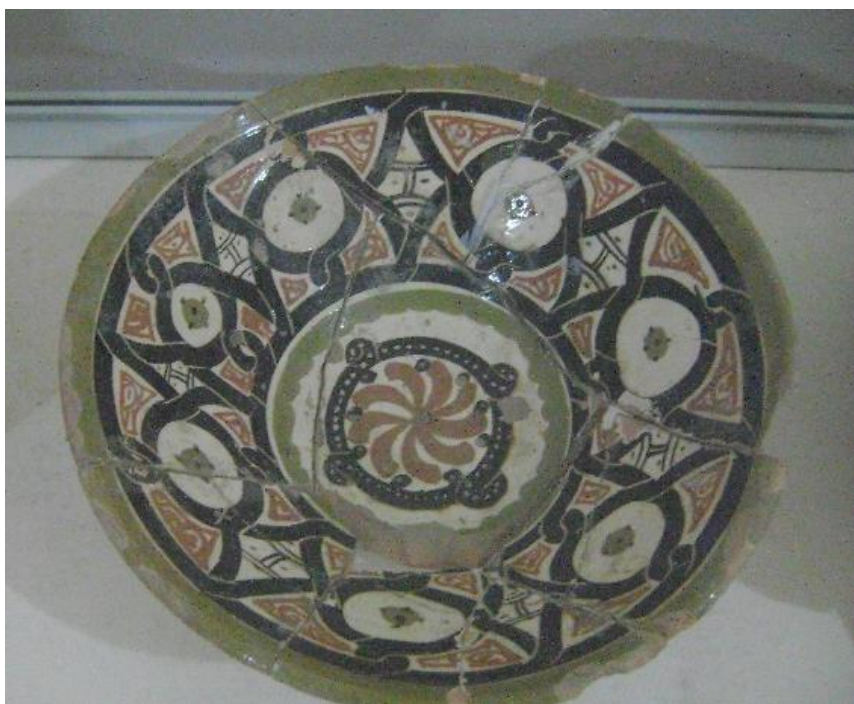


Figure 144: Khulbuk 10-11th century, National Museum of Antiquities, Dushanbe.

Green and white ware

This regional Samanid style, here called ‘green and white’ ware, is seen in both Tajik museums and Uzbek museums (**Figs. 145 and 146**), where some of the ceramics have been included for comparison. There are a number of these ceramics, flat dishes with similar shade of blue-green on cream slip. They show whirling rosettes, vegetal scrolls with leaves and quadripartite designs. The latter from the Bekhzod Museum resembles a chahar bagh with a pool in the middle with four paths creating four equal flowerbeds with green vegetation (see Chapter Three). The background is made up of dotted sections. This group does not seem to have been much discussed in publications on Samanid ceramics, suggesting more work needs to be done on understanding regionalism within Samanid ceramic production.



Figure 145: Green and white ceramics with stippled background, Left Bekhzod museum, 9-10th century, Right Penjikent museum, 9-10th century.



Figure 146: Two ceramic dishes, Samarqand, 10th century, Samarqand Museum.

“Pre-Islamic heritage in Tajik culture” exhibition (2008) and the Iskodar Mihrab

The Iskodar Mihrab (also see above Chapter Four, **Figs. 57-58 and 60**) was displayed as part of the exhibition “Pre-Islamic heritage in Tajik culture” which opened on 30 January 2008 in Dushanbe’s Bekhzod Museum, exploring the concept of Zoroastrianism in Tajikistan. What follows is the contents of the interpretation panel together with a discussion. This is the only Samanid museum object which has been directly and extensively co-opted into Tajikistan’s identity programme, apart from the objects

depicted on the stamps (**Fig. 143** above). However, although it is important that the Mihrab dates to the Samanid era, what is key to its ascribed meaning today, at least in this permanent display, is how it shows the continuity between past and present, and how pre-Islamic Zoroastrian culture is being adopted in the Islamic period. Note the anachronistic use of the ethnonym “Tajiks”, projecting this national ethnic group back into the past.

First of all [the Iskodar Mihrab] serves as a historical fact of the great Tajik culture and allows us to observe the continuation of pre-Islamic traditions.⁴⁷⁶ In spite of the Arabic legislative limitations in fine arts, the master of the Iskodar mihrab successfully expressed the pre-Islamic worldview of the Tajiks. The mihrab also proves that the time of the Samanids were [sic] indeed a cultural revival of the Tajik nation.

Unique features of the Iskodar Mihrab – some elements have close analogy with the pre-Islamic culture of Central Asia:

1. *There are two types of swastika on the mihrab: the one on the right side has arms pointing clockwise, while the other one on the left side has arms pointing anticlockwise. In Zoroastrianism, everything is in contradiction with each other and they stay in an indissoluble unity and constant fight. If the swastika on the left side signifies the rising, spring sun, light, happiness and good, then the one on the right side, signifies the setting, autumn sun, dark, evil and unhappiness (Yakubov).*

I would suggest that the fact that swastikas⁴⁷⁷ have been carved on the Iskodar mihrab with both arms pointing clockwise as well as anticlockwise would suggest that this monument was designed or commissioned by people who had an understanding of the meaning of this motif, rather than it simply being a cultural marker left over from pre-Islamic iconography, made by people for whom the actual meaning was becoming lost or altered. The swastika motif is found repeatedly in Upper Zarafshan mosques today (**Fig. 108** above), whose ceiling struts are sometimes laid out in a swastika shape⁴⁷⁸ and it still seems to be considered important by Tajiks as a marker of their assumed Aryan heritage (see below).⁴⁷⁹ This motif is also seen in the Jame Mosque in Isfahan which also has both clockwise and anti-clockwise swastikas.

⁴⁷⁶ Present author's emphasis, the exhibition allowed the restoration and new interpretation of the Mihrab.

⁴⁷⁷ Swastikas are dynamic symbols capable of multiple meanings over their long history, associated with agriculture and points of the compass, however most meanings connect it with a solar wheel with rays (Cirlot 1971). It is also found in Indian and Chinese Buddhist art.

⁴⁷⁸ The swastika was also incorporated in the early Indian stupa's groundplan (Rowland 1953 in Trubner 1959).

⁴⁷⁹ <http://www.rferl.org/content/article/1064129.html> (accessed 10/02/2014).

2. *Within the circular ornament of the niche, six fish can be seen. Furthermore, in every smaller circle along the line of the arch, three fish are carved in a stylised manner (Sharipov)*

Living creatures displayed on a mihrab are incredibly rare, however there is a niche with royal figures dating to 12th century, the niche of Sinjar (al-Janabi 1982 Pl. 164) which has been interpreted as a mihrab due to the fact that it was found in a probable madrasa with a *turba*. Also, the 13th century Jami al-Nuri mihrab in Hamas, Syria, has a frieze of animals and fantastic beasts with human heads.⁴⁸⁰ Flood (2002) mentions these naturalistic examples but not that of the Iskodar Mihrab, where the forms are undoubtedly more abstract. These fish resemble those found on the Kurut and Urmitan columns. Khmel'nitsky also does not mention the fish in his paper on the mihrab (1993). These are elements, I would argue which were designed to be ambiguous according to the eyes of the beholder.⁴⁸¹

Figural iconography in mosques and around mihrabs is generally avoided around the prayer niche, but even here exceptions exist (Flood 2002 notes 24-27).⁴⁸² This is especially unusual, as hadith either allowed for an image's recontextualisation so it was clearly not being worshipped, or alternatively decapitation, becoming inanimate, or devoid of a soul. Thus, to be actually kneeling and praying in the direction of these animate forms as would have been the case in the Iskodar Mosque is very rare indeed. However, it seems it is not unique in Tajikistan, there is a stucco niche aligned to the qibla which the excavators have interpreted as a mihrab from a private mosque in the palace of Khulbuk which also shows fish carved in stucco (Khojaev 2010 Figs. 48 & 49). This mihrab also has what looks like the Sasanian spread wing motif as seen on the Asht mihrab.⁴⁸³

3. *Representation of the trefoil like plants has roots in the pre-Islamic culture- symbolizing the sacred plant haoma⁴⁸⁴ (Yakubov)*

These can be found in many places including around the outer border and around three sides of the upper central panel with golden boss and Solomon's knot. Trefoils also appear elsewhere, for

⁴⁸⁰ See also Herzfeld 1943:45 Fig 17.

⁴⁸¹ See above, Chapter Four.

⁴⁸² Flood thinks Anatolia better represented than other areas in this respect, but he does not mention the Zarafshan material or Hazrati Shoh (2002).

⁴⁸³ The results of the Khulbuk excavations, including stuccos and painting fragments are poorly published. I am not sure of the current whereabouts of the mihrab.

⁴⁸⁴ Also known as soma (Sanskrit).

example on Chinese vine scrolls (Bush 1976 Fig 26c) which are not dissimilar to those here. They are also found on Samanid ceramics e.g. fragment from Nishapur MMA 40.170.559 (Wilkinson 1974:141).

4. *The form of the arch with its rounded inner niche and the pointed outer line, is typical of the entrances of the cave temples in India. These types of 'Indian' arches were quite well spread in the early Islamic architecture of the 9-10th centuries (Khmel'nitsky).*

This keel shaped arch is compared to Shir Kabir (see above Chapter Four). What is being highlighted here, though not specified, is the Aryan connection with India.

5. *The rough medallion in the centre of the rectangular panel above the niche and the interlacing star and flower ornament around it refer to the ancient symbol of the sun (Khmel'nitsky)*

Six petalled flowers can be seen in the Nishapur panel now in the Metropolitan Museum (37.40.40). At the two upper corners of the circle are another trefoil design which resembles the trefoils in the four corners of the two 'cosmogrammes' on the Samanid Mausoleum. It can be seen that the tentative attribution in a scholarly article (Khmel'nitsky 1993)⁴⁸⁵ has become a statement of fact in the interpretation, as it fits their story. The sun is also linked to Aryanism and the Hittites in Turkey (Shaw 2007).

6. *On the border of the mihrab, Kufic inscription can be seen which shows resemblance with inscriptions from the time of the Samanids (Khmel'nitsky)*

The interpretative sign is not just discussing the pre-Islamic iconography seen in the Mihrab, but also its Islamic orientation. This also gives an important, if subtle link between the Samanids and the Aryan beliefs (see above). Thus, the interpretation sign does not mention the open-door motif, or how the Samanid era might be negotiating these pre-Islamic beliefs. Neither does the sign discuss the meaning of the hadith in this context.

Signs of Zoroaster by Jamshed Kholikov (Fig. 147)

The Iskodar Mihrab was displayed together with contemporary art to show how Zoroastrianism has continued to inspire Tajik arts and culture to this day.⁴⁸⁶ A photograph taken of people in the

⁴⁸⁵ "Ein rundes solares (?) Zeichen in der Mitte der Nischenkonche und die Hakenkreuzmuster an den unteren Pilastern, ebenso auf dem Saulen, gehören wahrscheinlich zum vorislamischen Symbolvorrat" (Khmel'nitsky 1993:246).

⁴⁸⁶ <http://news.tj/en/news/pre-islamic-heritage-tajik-culture-exhibition-open-tajik-capital-tomorrow> (Accessed 1/10/2010).

form of a swastika by the artist Jamshed Kholikov, was part of a photo series called Signs of Zoroaster. However, it seems clear that it was not cultural superiority or politics that Kholikov was trying to portray but a meditation on present Tajik identity.⁴⁸⁷ Georgy Mamedov, Project curator and Programme Director, has this to say

What can contemporary artists add that is new, interesting and original to this discourse [Aryan past of the Tajiks] and why do artists who a priori are free of ideological dogmatism turn to this topic? In this project we did not try to highlight governmental or ideological relevance, but were striving for a more life-like and value-oriented approach...

The heritage of our pre-Islamic past finds its expression in our daily lives in traditions, in contradictions and compromises within society who we are, first of all; in the relationships to our neighbors and in our aspirations to view the world through the prism of past and not of the future or at least of the present...

*How can something new, interesting and original find its space in this project? Is it possible at all, considering the flow of ideology-oriented products? It is probably possible only if the artist finds the strength to overcome the barriers of praising hymns, exaggerated delight of great past and the heritage of ancestors and turns his attention not to the past but to the future.... Our goal, within the museum space, is to look to the future while preserving the past and reflect our relationship to the present.*⁴⁸⁸

Thus, this project is trying to be 'free of ideological dogmatism' such as surrounds the foregrounding of the Samanid period, but whether this is ever possible is debatable. The project's museum exhibition was supported by the Ministry of Culture, and thus their aims, if not the artists', were firmly political. Compared to this top-down focus, it is noteworthy that many young people I spoke to in Iran (on a trip there in Summer 2008) wore Ahura Mazda pendants and were interested in finding out more about their Zoroastrian heritage (e.g. Sarkhosh-Curtis 2009 pers comm.).

⁴⁸⁷ Meeting Antoine Buisson, 18 November 2010.

⁴⁸⁸ <http://www.bactria.net/exh2008september.html> (Accessed 3/5/2010), present author's emphasis.



Figure 147: Signs of Zoroaster, Jamshed Kholikov photo © Jamshed Kholikov.

Kholikov⁴⁸⁹ reminds us that it is people that are important, and it is they who create the symbols which are important to them, which they do in their own way, in their daily lives. Two out of the four figures are wearing jeans, a symbol of modern dress. They are not just lifeless remnants of a dead history, or blindly following a top-down approach. We next turn to how other Tajik contemporary artists have displayed identity in post-Soviet Tajikistan.

⁴⁸⁹ Many thanks to the artist, Jamshed Kholikov for our discussion and providing me with this photograph October 2011.

Other voices: Contemporary art and identity

Walking with a Tajik friend down Rudaki Street on a sunny Sunday afternoon we wondered if we were the only people in the city. The only thing disturbing the balmy lassitude was the President's convoy, driving past in black cars taking up both sides of the road. Other cars had been dramatically cleared off the streets by a frantic waving of the policemen's batons. He was telling me that Tajiks must find their own way to understand how meanings and symbols shape their language and culture, and be like an artist; "who are the interpreters?" He believes that they need home-grown interpreters to interpret their own reality.⁴⁹⁰ This section is designed as a counterpart to the section on Samanid ceramics in Chapter Two – bringing identity production from below – compared to the top down state sponsored architecture and coinage.

Culture according to Dodkhudoeva and Bashirova is a place of encounter between past, present and future. They see a key mission of Tajik contemporary art as being the preservation of the old historical image and the "cultural memory" of the people. However contemporary art should still provoke and be provoked by society in the present⁴⁹¹ as well as imaginining possible futures. Contemporary artists in Central Asia are dissecting their identity along various axes: these include the heritage of the Soviet legacy, their national and ethnic identity, including Zoroastrianism in the case of Tajikistan and the modern globalising world.

Common in the works of many of the selected artists are regional-ethnic subjects, archetypes, nomadic and Sufi traditions, sacrifices, pagan rites, etc. However, there is no attachment to the authenticity of any narratives created. They serve as tools for constructing new methods, meanings, and relationships that could last or be immediately destroyed as a resolution for something else (Ahmady 2006:51-52).

According to one Swiss Development Corporation contemporary art curator, Mutarra Bashirova,⁴⁹² identity is an important topic for Central Asian artists,⁴⁹³ as it is a reflection on contemporary Tajik society in its post-socialist context.⁴⁹⁴ Tajiks are trying to question and display their identities in a

⁴⁹⁰ MS 4th May 2011.

⁴⁹¹ Situation Analysis in the Sphere of Fine Arts, Handicraft, Design, and Museum of Tajikistan by M. Bashirova and L. Dodkhudoeva Soros Centre for Contemporary Art Kazakhstan 2001-2002 <http://www.scca.kz/en/tajart.htm> (Accessed 1/09/2010). This useful report is no longer online.

⁴⁹² Pers comm. Meeting with Mouttara Bashirova, Swiss Development Corporation, 18th November 2010.

⁴⁹⁴ <http://www.soros.tj/en/news/613-reimagining-the-new-man> (Accessed 20/05/2014).

visual way.

Bashirova noted that there were good artistic pieces on issues which affect Tajiks today, ranging from freedom of speech and the limitations of it, as well as on such diverse and salient topics as bird flu, migration, brain drain and disabled people. Thus, identity is not monolithic, but artists are focused on problems and complex challenges linked to it. Artists are creating art which speaks to common regional problems as well as unity and diversity, all of which comes under the identity rubric. They are dealing with issues such as corruption, migration and access to water, where rivers are a symbol of regional unity but also varying access to water, which for example in the Ferghana Valley is a divisive issue.

Tajikistan's regions differ from each other in many aspects, in living, thinking, traditions, rituals, dialect and the colours and ornamentation of traditional clothes. Bashirova thinks that these cultural differences are exciting, where artists have many different styles and a rich culture to draw upon. She believes that this issue of Zoroastrianism and a pre-Islamic revival is coming more to the forefront of some artists' practice, for example Jamshed Kholikov (see above). Although these artists are Muslim, Zoroastrianism is an important part of their cultural heritage. In this, Tajikistan is unique in the Central Asian region, and is similar to Iran (see above, Chapter Five). Zoroastrianism is embedded in Tajik culture and many young people believe that these Zoroastrian rituals are a part of Islam, as they are such an ancient part of their culture, for example some people in Sogd conduct fire rituals and make a circle round a fire, which people think is Islamic.⁴⁹⁵ Bashirova also believes that the Islamic religion is seen as being opposed to modern visual arts in Tajikistan. However, there seems to be little desire to connect with contemporary Islamic artists from the Middle East and Iran, all of whom are making contemporary art within an Islamic milieu.⁴⁹⁶

The government supports folklore, and traditional arts such as dance, music, craft and architectural crafts such as wood carving and painting on buildings. Regional folk art continues to be made and used in regional centres of Khujand, Kulyab and Kanibadam and especially in Badakhshan (Dodkhudoeva 2007b, Masov & Dodkhudoeva 2009). However, their cultural products rarely reach Dushanbe. Folk art has sometimes been substituted for folklorism and turned into kitsch, presumably in order to commercialise it for tourists. There is little evidence of any attention paid to the folk art of

⁴⁹⁵ Zoroastrian beliefs are alluded to in state symbols, MZ believes that the seven stars in the Tajik flag and crest represent the Amesha Spentas, although this is not publicly discussed (see above).

⁴⁹⁶ This might be connected to the fact that Central Asian Muslims not only have had a separate and segregated recent past from other Muslims, but also because Central Asian Islam is seen as different from other strands of Islam found elsewhere (see above). But probably more connected to the closed nature of Tajik and other Central Asian society over most of the twentieth century.

ethnic minorities, and thus preservation of their cultural inheritance is still at risk, although "attention to the culture of ethnic minorities promotes unity of the whole society raising mutual cultural interest" (Dodkhudoeva and Bashirova 2002:no page no.). Thus, again we see that ethnic minorities remain invisible or barely visible in the national culture. Ancient and medieval art are however seen as important (see above).

However, Tajik contemporary artists face many challenges: Tajikistan is comparatively isolated from the global artistic community, even compared with their colleagues in the rest of Central Asia – especially Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan. Equally, there is very little government support for contemporary arts.⁴⁹⁷ This is because contemporary arts might stimulate public debate, seen as a negative by the Tajik government. Instead, most Central Asian governments are seeking to promote silence, or the absence of debate which is seen as stability.⁴⁹⁸ Thus, increasingly, many Tajik artists practice self censorship, and do not engage with themes which are seen to be problematic.

Equally, perhaps because of the civil war, the brain-drain or the state of the arts in Tajikistan today, the absence of an audience for visual culture, as for theatre or even literature is lamented. Thus, according to Dudkhudoeva and Bashirova

Practically, this is an exclusive circle: galleries and museums are attended by artists, their colleagues, relatives and friends, art students or foreigners. There are hardly any art lovers or connoisseurs left with the exception of experts: this proves the low level of aesthetic education in the country, its poverty and insufficient professionalism of artists. All this is happening because children never visit museums, they are not introduced to drawing, music and other kinds of art at the nursery and school level for the same reason of lack of art teachers, funds and material base (Dodkhudoeva and Bashirova 2002:no page no.).

Perhaps, at a time when everyday life is so challenging on many levels, it is unlikely that many people would be interested in contemporary art. It is also important to remember the rural nature of Tajik society, which was exacerbated as a result of the civil war. Many of the Russian-speaking, urban intelligentsia left never to return.⁴⁹⁹ However it is also about understanding the country's visual language. Tajiks, in general, do not have paper-based art on the walls of their homes, which are covered in carpets or left bare in a way that we are unused to in the West. Even the humble poster is seen in the West as a means of individual self-expression, as well as decoration of the domestic environment. Bashirova also thinks that values are changing and becoming more negative to

⁴⁹⁷ Contemporary art projects in Tajikistan have only been going for seven years. Larisa Dodkhudoeva is one of the few contemporary art critics.

⁴⁹⁸ <http://www.cap2013.net/en/about/about> (accessed 20/05/2014).

⁴⁹⁹ In 2002, a figure of 72% of Tajikistan's population was rural, and of the urban dwellers, many of these had recently moved to the cities, especially Dushanbe, as a result of the civil war. Thus, these populations brought with them their local traditional and rural customs (Dodkhudoeva and Bashirova 2002). When staying with a Pamiri friend in an apartment block in 82nd microrayon, Dushanbe, she told me that people threw soiled nappies out of windows and built fires outside the apartment block as if they were still living in their villages.

contemporary art compared to Soviet times. So, some people might have negative reactions to art displayed on the walls at home. Thus, contemporary art is not seen as 'Tajik' by traditionalists.⁵⁰⁰

Thus, there are many challenges in making contemporary art in Central Asia in general, where there are few established official and private cultural policies. It is also more difficult now that Central Asian artists must operate in the market, instead of being state supported, as they were in Soviet times.

There is a tension between artists who are now independent, to create art in a way which they were not allowed to in the Soviet period, where they operated under ideological constraints, while complaining about lack of financial support by their national governments (Ahmady 2006:14ff.).

One arena where Tajik artists may exhibit their artworks in a wider international context is the Venice Biennale, where they have displayed work at the Central Asia Pavillion since 2007. The Swiss Development Corporation (SDC) has also been bringing experts to Central Asia as there is an interest in contemporary art.⁵⁰¹ Art critics and practitioners believe that these challenges can also be positive. "Oddly enough all these retrospective fields of influence provide a vast pool of visual, verbal and documentary material that can be used, recycled or re-evaluated within the various technologies, strategies and methodologies of contemporary art making and circulation" (Madra 2009:8). The impact of the Soviet period and the common historical heritage is reimagined and questioned in a transgressive and humorous manner using surrealist concepts. The museum space is also being claimed by contemporary artists such as Jamshed Kholikov. Kholikov, together with fellow-artists and local residents of Taboshar, Sugd Province attempted in the *Artist and / in community* project to preserve that 'future in the past' in the form of the local memory museum that he created in the town's culture house.

*The museum is nothing like a conventional local history museum with the formal account of local achievements and ideological crap, but a multimedia installation inspired by personal stories and local mythology collected by artists in interviews and informal conversations with the residents of Taboshar. The installation-museum is named Town-Box. During the Soviet time, Taboshar and many other similar settlements were not marked on public maps and instead of the name were called mail box #...*⁵⁰²

⁵⁰⁰ In her view the civil war served as a beating down of the intelligentsia, after which social problems took over, and many people had to survive a very hard to mouth existence, which left no room for art. Many Russians also left Dushanbe, which has become more mono-cultural.

⁵⁰¹ The development of contemporary art in Tajikistan is not as far ahead as in Kyrgyzstan, Kazakhstan and even Uzbekistan. This is partly because the art scenes of their neighbours were developing during the cultural stagnation/ retreat in Tajikistan during the Civil War. There is also a problem in Tajikistan with a lack of arts education.

⁵⁰² Mamedov 2012 <http://universes-in-universe.org/eng/content/view/print/35871> (Accessed 20/05/2014).

The new museum is seen by artists and their local collaborators “not only as the space for preservation and conservation of memory, but as an active public space in a way returned to the local community”.⁵⁰³ The lead artist, Jamshed Kholikov plans to continue this project by starting regular residency program for artists, curators and other creative workers in collaboration with the local culture house. Thus, this also indicates how museums are viewed, as political, top-down institutions, “full of ideological crap”, which are not able or willing to subvert the government’s story.

A project at the Bactria Cultural Centre, Dushanbe called Public Art in Dushanbe (**Fig.148**),⁵⁰⁴ created art pieces such as benches and signposts to be public street furniture, however they were not able to put them on the street. They were not considered suitable by the City authorities, the Dushanbe Hakkumat, thus part of the exhibition was the photoshopped images onto real Dushanbe street scenes, as the art was not allowed to leave the gallery. Thus, we see the government controlling the urban space, and only allowing the permitted ‘Tajik’ culture it thinks suitable, especially in a year where the twentieth anniversary celebrations were taking place.

⁵⁰³ Mamedov 2012 <http://universes-in-universe.org/eng/content/view/print/35871> (Accessed 20/05/2014).

⁵⁰⁴ “Public Art in Dushanbe”, June 2011: 11 contemporary art works created by nine Tajik artists in collaboration with US artist Kendal Henry.
http://www.bactriacc.com/index.php?option=com_content&view=category&layout=blog&id=27&Itemid=56&lang=en (accessed 21/06/2014).



Figure 148: Public Art in Dushanbe, exhibition at Bactria Centre, Dushanbe, June 2011, together with photoshopped images of the works in front of Dushanbe street scenes.

Two Tajik artworks allude to the Samanid period; *Mirage* by Murod Sharipov⁵⁰⁵ (**Fig. 149**) and a calligramme by Mirzo Muhiddin (**Fig. 150**). In the first, we still see the figure of Lenin, visibly photoshopped and pointing the way forward to a Communist future, standing in “Somonis” arch of the post-Communist era. Is the artist suggesting, that in people’s minds Lenin is still there, as a mirage of collective unconsciousness that eliminates Somoni by replacing him with the ‘real’ Tajik foundation figure? Is it history that is a mirage, or the present? It is interesting that he raises his right arm, rather than his left as he did in the original statue. People’s collective memory is in the process of forgetting, and details being changed of an important statue which was part of many people’s daily lives until twenty years ago.

⁵⁰⁵ Murod Sharipov (b.1984) has a studio in Dushanbe, he graduated from M Tursanzade State Institution of Art in 2006.

Mirage, Murod Sharipov, 2008

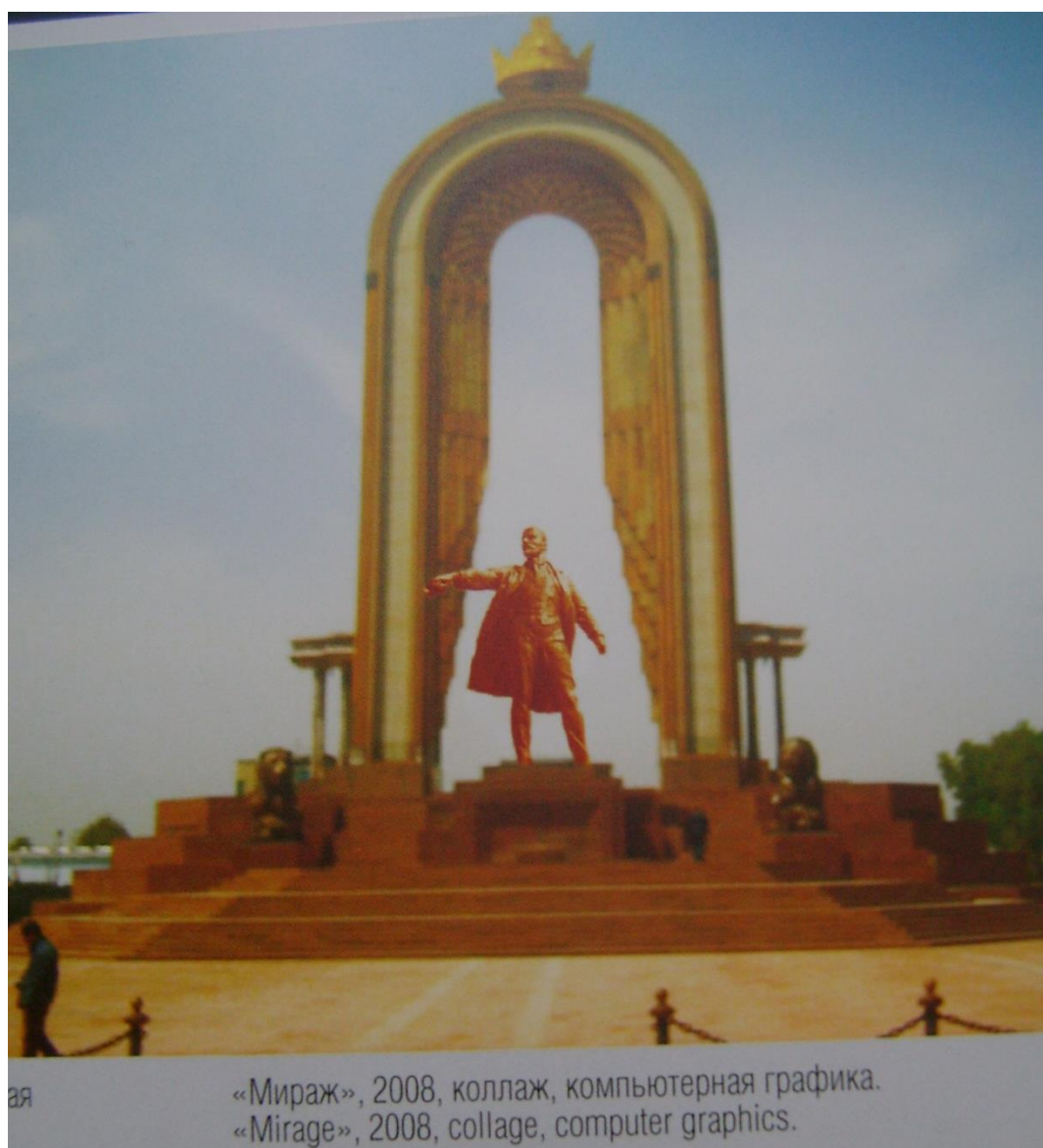


Figure 149: Mirage, Murod Sharipov, 2008.

Mirzo Muhiddin, Qumsangir

An artist and calligrapher from Qumsangir in southern Tajikistan created a calligramme out of the arch and other elements of the Somoni statue, spelling the names of Ismoil Somoni, Imam Ali (the Prophet Muhammad's son-in-law) and Emomali Rahmon (the President of Tajikistan) in Arabic calligraphy. However, despite these isolated incidences the foregrounding of the Samanids remains a top down

phenomenon in contemporary art. Possibly because the state has monopolised the representation of the Samanids in the public sphere, nothing is left over for individual contemplation.



Figure 150: Mirzo Muhiddin and his calligramme of the Somoni statue, Qurghonteppa May 2011.

Chapter Five: Summary and conclusions

The symbolic has contributed to state formation in a number of ways, Tajikistan's rich past provides the present and future with a number of different identity axes. These axes, along which Tajik identity is seen to fragment, or alternatively seen - be enriched by regionalism, Islam, Uzbek-Tajik and Zoroastrianism/ Aryan project. These axes are still important to Tajikistan today, along with the Samanids. There seems to be an acceptance of the status quo and present borders, the 'shape of the nation' is literally displayed on posters and car number-plates around the country. There is continuing regionalism in Tajikistan, which does intermittently break out into violence.⁵⁰⁶ This regional identity continues to be displayed culturally, in music, folk traditions and craftsmanship, linguistically and

⁵⁰⁶ Violence broke out in the Pamirs in summer 2012 <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-asia-18965366> (Accessed 10/08/2012).

politically, where the Kulobi group which surrounds the President continues to get the cream of the political posts and contracts.

Both Zoroastrianism and Aryanism were tried out for size, but while the former has contributed to the deep bedrock of culture across Central Asia, it seems difficult to get acceptance from an almost totally Muslim society. The Aryans on the other hand seem too amorphous and inaccessible in the archaeological record. However Greater Iran, and the Achaemenid Empire has an ancient high culture which Tajikistan can connect itself too, seen most clearly in the National Museum (see Chapter Six). The Uzbeks act as new external 'Other', whereas Russia, the old Soviet masters are still identified with, and continue to be seen as the "external self", by Blakkisrud and Nozimova, who characterise Islam as the "internal other" (Blakkisrud and Nozimova 2010:173). The Soviet countering of *jadidism* and pan-Islam can be seen to have worked. Museums in Tajikistan have been slowly changing their displays since independence in 1991, this rate of change accelerated around the time of the twenty years of independence celebration, and just after it. Just as there was money to be spent on architecture (see Chapter Six) museums also came into funds to renew buildings and build collections. The size and grandeur of the new National Museum is seen to be an attempt to make up for the relatively poor patrimony of the collections. There are interpretation signs and maps of the Samanid Empire in museums across the country, run by the Ministry of Culture. These are firmly part of the nation building project, and are sometimes of dubious historical accuracy, firmly designed to inflate the dynasty's importance, by increasing the size of their empire or connect them to architecture which does not belong to the period. It could be argued, however, that Samanid era objects in museum collections might provide a more nuanced view of the period, than that provided by the Tajik government, simply because they are for the most part not ideologically interpreted as part of a nation-building exercise. This is probably because these objects cannot be incontrovertibly connected to the dynasty and are not substantial enough to be included in the national identity programme, apart from the Iskodar Mihrab, which has been co-opted into the Zoroastrian conception of identity rather than the Samanid one. These objects such as columns, ceramics, metalware and glass allow the viewer to bring their own interpretations to this varied material. With the exception of Iskodar Mihrab, it is not interpreted in the museum, beyond attributed maker's date, material and object type. Samanid era architectural heritage has however for the most part been included in the current characterisation of national identity, shown by the rebuilding or restoration of Khulbuk and Khoja Mashhad. These sites are part of Tajikistan's built heritage, with information signs to this effect. While one is a secular and one a religious monument, both are symbols of local public pride in their history and enable local populations to connect to others on a regional basis, for example around the Nasir Khusraw conference held at Khoja Mashhad. By contrast, the Zarafshan minarets seem completely forgotten as monuments.

"When thinking of Central Asia, most people think of its history. They say at one point it had a marvellous culture. Yet Central Asia is living, producing, creating in the present" (Ahmady 2006:14). Contemporary art is another way in which Tajiks are able to reflect on and interpret the world they live

in, partly this may involve a quest for identity but the Samanids are not seen to be interesting here, as they are too much connected to a top-down government directive, which they would prefer to critique or avoid. Mirzo Muhiddin is not a contemporary artist as such, working far from the metropolitan centre, he was proud to include the name of the president Rahmon as well as Somoni and Imam Ali as part of an old tradition of Islamic calligrammes. The only contemporary artist that I saw referencing Somoni, did it only obliquely, removing him from his arch to reinstate Lenin as the true founder of the Tajik state.

Today over a decade after the Samanid Celebration in 1999, this invented tradition is seen as successful: a self-fulfilling prophesy. These ideas are cemented in the creation of monuments and buildings, which like the Tajik language today which is the New Persian language of the Samanids, written in Cyrillic script, architecture also uses the Soviet forms stemming from their recent history. “This image of the Tajik nation resulted in an elaborate use of symbols that gave a legitimate character to the state’s control over its subjects. Such symbolism was expressed through gigantic architectural structures built by Tajik authorities”. (Chatterjee 2002:21). It is these gigantic structures and memorial culture that we will turn to in the next chapter.

CHAPTER SIX – Post-independence Tajikistani architecture and memorial culture

The culture of the past is not only the memory of mankind, but our own buried life, and study of it leads to a recognition scene, a discovery in which we see, not our past lives, but the cultural form of our present life

Northrop Frye *The Anatomy of Criticism*

Young is the one who plunges into the future and never looks back

Milan Kundera

Architecture, national identity and the city

Cities are engines of aspiration, social progress and the locus of modernity, they are also the focus of much scholarship on postmodern and postcolonial urban forms.⁵⁰⁷ Cities are immense human artefacts, each with their individual history, but exemplifying certain similar patterns. “The most basic of these is the interpenetration of past and present” (**Fig. 151**) between the visible city of streets and buildings and subconscious city, arising in the minds of its inhabitants (Pike 1996:243). Most cities are characterised as being the result of the work of a myriad of planners and architects, public and private. But this is not the case of a city like Dushanbe, built in the Soviet era, which was centrally planned by state agencies and government planners (for an outline of architecture in Soviet Dushanbe, see Appendix E). Following the Bolshevik Revolution in 1917, in the early Soviet period there was an urbanisation drive framed by a general ideology of progress across the USSR, including Central Asia.⁵⁰⁸ Soviet architecture was one of the ways of communicating new revolutionary ideas across vast areas to a population who were still largely illiterate, just as Russian was the language of inter-ethnic communication. Thus theatres, cinemas, public libraries and art schools were built as *kulturträgers* across urban Central Asia along with the government buildings, zoos, circuses and botanical gardens for the new leisure time. Especially since the 1930s, Central Asian cities provided a

⁵⁰⁷ E.g. Kaika 2010, Lindner 2006, Liu 2007, Patke 2000, Paskaleva 2013, Pike 1981, Stanilov 2007, Turner 1995, Varma 2012, Wheatley 1969 and 1971.

⁵⁰⁸ At the time of Tajik SSR's establishment in 1924 only 10% of the population was urbanised, but by the start of the 21st century, this is true of more than 30%, due to rapid urbanisation in the second half of the twentieth century (Abazov 2006).

cosmopolitan contrast to traditional and indigenous rural life; for example most of Tajikistan's Russians, Germans, Armenians and Jews lived in Dushanbe and the second city, Khujand.⁵⁰⁹

Monumental planning, which has left us with the world's great cities and urban landscapes, is easier in an authoritarian state, as there are fewer permissions to ask or democratic processes to follow. To Ford's four components of urban planning,⁵¹⁰ Adams adds two more that he believes to be exemplified in Russia; architecture intended to legitimise state power and architecture deliberately designed to reshape society in its own ideology (Adams 2008:281). Arguably both these components can be seen in Dushanbe today. There is a question of intergenerational equity, however, past populations suffered to create cityscapes enjoyed in the present, where resources might have been diverted from housing, sewers or schools.

Both St Petersburg and Moscow were the focus of sustained centralised and autocratic urban planning which has fundamentally shaped their cityscapes. Nicholas I insisted that all other secular buildings should be a *sazhen*⁵¹¹ lower than the Winter Palace, to symbolise the difference between Tsar and subjects. Stalin tore down the Cathedral of Christ the Redeemer in 1931, the USSR's largest place of worship and a national icon,⁵¹² to site the Palace of the Soviets, intended to be a new imperial, communist symbol (Adams 2008). The message he sent was clear, and his power was made manifest in being able to carry out the deed. In the post-Communist period, Russia resurrected the building, causing conflicting attitudes about the form this should take (Haskins 2009). However, in the end an exact replica of the Cathedral was rebuilt in concrete, closing off other paths and reflections on contested memory. This is characterised as the ultimate restorative nostalgia (Boym 2007). As archaeologists, we can read much into the placement of these two buildings, like the siting Samarqand palace built by the Muslim, Nasr b. Sayyar over the destroyed pre-Islamic temple in the 740s.⁵¹³

⁵⁰⁹ Many left as a result of the civil war. Soviet Dushanbe was more cosmopolitan and multi-ethnic than today (see also Marsden 2012b).

⁵¹⁰ These are (1) comprehensive conceptions of legible urban form, (2) iconic buildings, (3) integrated urban transportation hubs, and (4) planned downtown and midtown redevelopment projects (Ford 2008 in Adams 2008:281). While Dushanbe is working on the first two points, the second two seem very far down the list of priorities.

⁵¹¹ A fathom or 1.83 metres.

⁵¹² The cathedral, built to celebrate victory over Napoleon, the iconic building symbolised the unity of the nation, the Orthodox Church and the people (Haskins 2009).

⁵¹³ Karev 2004.



Figure 151: Hotel Tajikistan past and present © Komron Sharipov.

The importance of national architecture, not just for expressing who you are, but also who you are not (cf. Barth 1969) is evident. For example, in the years before World War I, the Slovaks, led by the architect Dušan Jurkovič, aimed to foster national consciousness by asserting their Slavic heritage and the divide between them and their Hungarian overlords. “The choice of specific architectural moments from the past became a means of articulating present-day intentions” (Long 2002:521). We can read the placement of the Achaemenid double headed protomes capitals on the National Museum of History’s façade in this way (see below). Equally, where Serbia focused on its Byzantine

architectural heritage, Croatia prioritised its Roman, Gothic and Romance architectural history, looking west instead of east (Long 2002).⁵¹⁴

Arguably, the architecture of independence in Tajikistan could be characterised as 'post-Soviet', as it is informed by a different spirit and blend of national forms with internationally recognised ideas, than inspired Soviet era architecture. However, there is no absolute break: Dushanbe and the nation's Soviet architecture continues to inspire that designed and built today, even if (some of) it is being taken down to make way for large building projects (see below). The focus of this chapter is Dushanbe as the capital city,⁵¹⁵ as not only did it contain the majority of the government and cultural buildings, it was also a city founded by the Soviets, as is well known.⁵¹⁶

Architecture and urban planning in post-independence Dushanbe

There is a body of literature on the economic and political changes which have taken place in Tajikistan post-independence; including the causes, course and outcomes of the civil war (see Appendix D), and political symbolism for national identity formation. However, there has been much less focus on the built environment and changes there, it is seen instead as a consequence of social restructuring, with minor influence on the success of reforms,⁵¹⁷ even though in reality these may have profound implications on the lives of Tajikistani citizens: for example economically, through the use of resources and environmental assets or in social integration (or segregation). The other reason why the post-Soviet city has garnered less scholarly attention, is because of the time it takes to change most urban environments, cities such as Ashgabat and Astana notwithstanding, (see Alexander, Buchli and Humphrey 2007 and Humphrey, Marsden and Skvirskaja 2009). "The built environment of a city is much more enduring than its social structures...even the most rigid institutions rarely outlast the physical setting which they inhabit" (Stanilov 2007:4). Thus, Dushanbe

⁵¹⁴ He is discussing architectural history as taught in universities and other higher education establishments (Long 2002).

⁵¹⁵ Dushanbe is situated in the centre of Tajikistan, at the confluence of the Varzob and Kafirnigan Rivers, south of the Hissar mountains, seen rising above the city to a height of 4000 metres.

⁵¹⁶ The Soviet city of Dushanbe was built on several small villages; one, called Dushanbe after its Monday market, traded in goods from Samarqand, Bukhara and Afghanistan. The other two nearby villages were called Sari Osiyo (Pers. Sar-e Asia) and Shohmansur (Şah Manşur). Designated a city, it became the 'capital' of the Autonomous Socialist Republic in 1924, and was known as Stalinabad from 1929-1961, after which it reverted to its original name. This quintessentially Soviet name was given a local gloss by its Persian suffix (Atkin 1996).

⁵¹⁷ Stanilov discusses the situation in Central and Eastern Europe (Stanilov 2007), however arguably this is equally true for Central Asia.

can be compared to other Central Asian capitals, each of whom are negotiating similar issues and concerns, in their search to display their own unique ethnohistory (**Figs. 152-154**).



Figure 152: 2004 Tajik stamps with Dushanbe buildings.

However a city is not just about the built environment; Alexander and Buchli remind us that with the demise of Soviet ideology, the way that people live in post-socialist cities is changing, with changed property rights restricting access, the 'blurring' of rural and urban and the emergence of new sacred topologies among other social, material and cognitive transformations mean that citizens need to reformulate what it means to live in a modern city (Alexander and Buchli 2007:3). Dushanbe became a city in the Soviet period, thus it does not have, like Bukhara,⁵¹⁸ Samarkand or even Tashkent, an ancient city centre of traditional *malhallas* onto which the Soviet section has been bolted. People do not talk about the old and new parts of Dushanbe, nor can the city mediate different parts of Tajikistan's history through its structure and zoning, where the traditional *malhallas* could symbolise the Islamic moral order and the new urban spaces a symbolic commitment to liberalism and democracy (Marsden 2012b). Although new urban spaces, I would argue, are more likely to be designed to symbolise a modern country at ease with operating on the international stage, through

⁵¹⁸ For Bukhara see Humphrey, Marsden and Skvirskaja 2009.

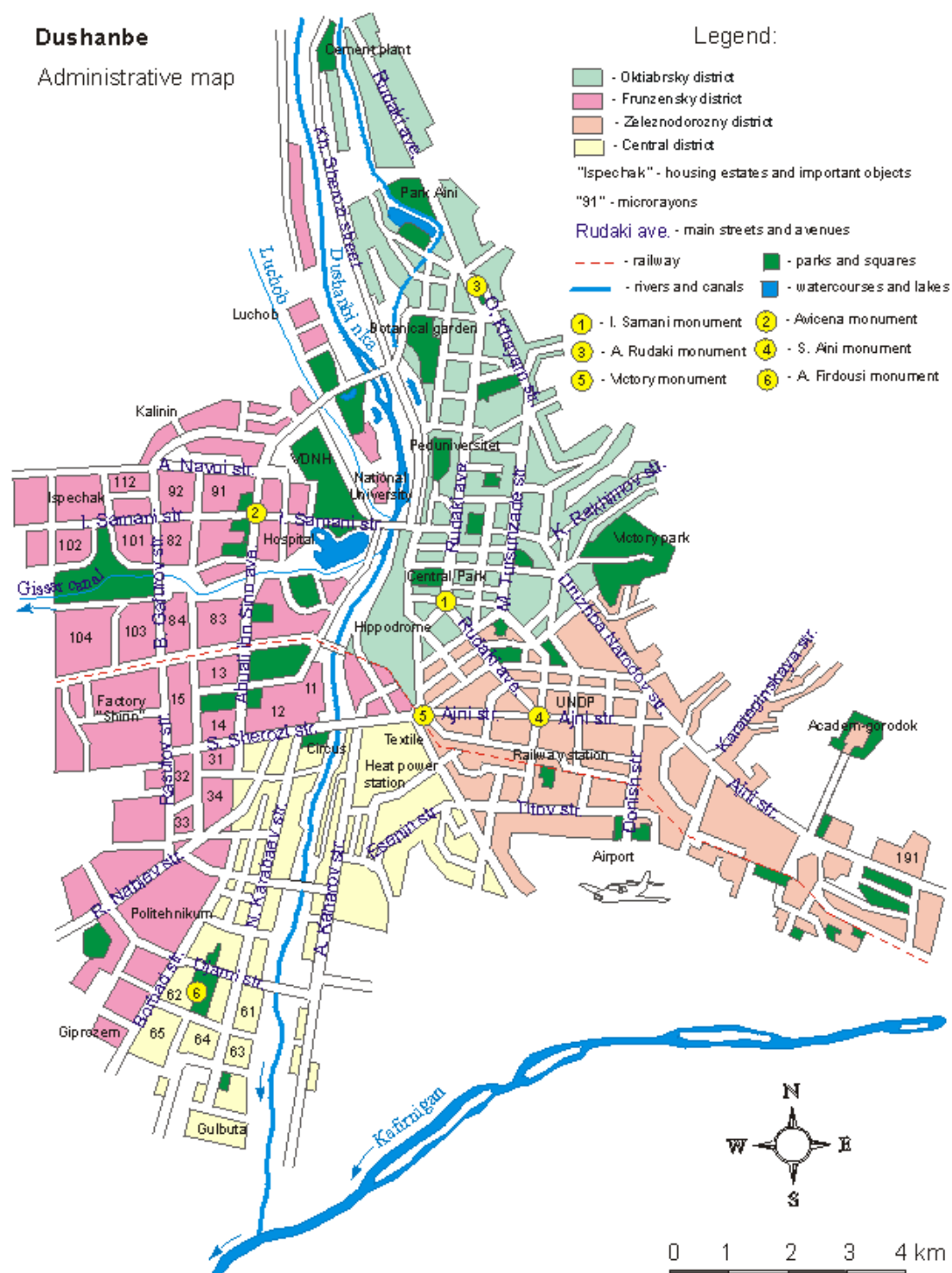


Figure 153: Dushanbe, post-independence administrative map, with monuments marked.



Figure 154: Dushanbe from the air, Rudaki Park looking south to the Rudaki National library © Timura Burkhanova.

using an international style of concrete blocks, rather than a demonstrable liberal or democratic agenda.

Today, as in the Soviet period, Dushanbe is a city bisected by its main thoroughfare, Rudaki Street, which runs from the almost disused railway station in the south to the Soviet-era cement factory in the north of the city. Rudaki is a wide tree-lined boulevard which has share taxi routes, minibuses (*marshrutka*), buses and trolleybuses rattling up and down it. Dushanbe's artery, although not completely straight, was used as a *magistrale*, for Soviet military parades. Today post-independence, it is used for Independence Day parades, with soldiers, ordinary people and flag-waving. The road is also part of the President's 'protocol highway', where traffic is closed off on both sides of the road when in use. The main commercial and government offices are all either on this street or with easy access to it, as are all the rest of the city's main sites. While there are some low rise residential areas close to this street, for example I lived for six months in a family home with garden and courtyard (*havi*)⁵¹⁹ just by the Pedagogical Institute, most of the population of Dushanbe live in Soviet blocks a bus ride from the centre, around areas such as Tsirk (**Fig. 155**), or down in the south by the vast Kurbon market. City residents still seem to divide the city into Soviet era microrayons, one contact I stayed with lived in hashdododo (the 82nd district). Also, on or just off the main thoroughfare are two centres of Central Asian traditional life, a tea house (*chaikhone*) Rokhat

⁵¹⁹ Tajik domestic architecture consists of urban apartments and *havi*s (courtyard houses) in more rural locations (but also found in cities) lived in by an extended family. They have spatially demarcated ideas by gender, which follows Islamic traditions. The *memonkhone* (guest room) is the most richly decorated room.



Figure 155: City centre dream: Dom Pechat on Rudaki Street, © Rustam Khalikov, 2012



Figure 156: Suburban reality: Soviet era housing in Dushanbe behind Tsirk, where I stayed, 2010

and the main city mosque of Khoja Yaqub. Thus, the city seems to separate into the area around Rudaki and Ismoil Somoni Street where most of the money is spent and the foreigners live and work, and the crumbling high rise blocks where most Dushanbe residents live, sometimes with no running water. The city is in the process of transformation, with many sturdy Soviet era, low-rise, pastel-coloured, neoclassical apartment buildings being pulled down and taller buildings taking their place. Residents have been moved to apartment blocks, often in distant suburbs. There is little compensation for people's homes being taken away. These new buildings (**Fig. 156**) with a large amount of glass are seen as 'flashy' by many commentators, and are often empty, Tajik residents are unable to afford their high rents. However urban planning worldwide has often meant the removal of the population: in admiring Hausmann's designs in Paris, few remember that these meant the removal of 350,000 of the city's poor to make room for the wide boulevards, straight tree lined vistas and strategically placed monuments of his model city (Patke 2000).⁵²⁰ Marsden has compared these coloured glass buildings to those found in cities elsewhere in region such as Peshawar and Kabul, and believes they "appear to derive as much from a Dubai-inspired post- 9/11 construction boom as they do from any simple distinction between traditional and modern" (Marsden 2012b:237 Note 7). These building styles are seen as both modern *and* Islamic and as such display an acceptable interplay between modernity and tradition, such as in Dubai and Qatar. Elsewhere architecture which is built predominantly of glass is seen to symbolise political transparency⁵²¹ which arguably the Tajik government would not mind also seeming! This rapid construction boom is unpopular with many Dushanbe residents, however (see below). Many see it as way to hide government corruption by awarding contracts to cronies enabling them to embezzle money. Equally the replacement of tall sycamore trees lining many of Dushanbe's streets by mature chestnut trees at a cost of 22 million TSM, was equally puzzling to many Tajiks, who wondered who was profiting from this?⁵²²

The pace of new construction has been at its fastest during the months leading up to the twentieth anniversary of Tajikistan's independence in 2011. To celebrate the occasion, authorities commissioned 1,412 so-called "jubilee projects", including administrative buildings, cultural centres, libraries, theatres and monuments. This also gave President Rahmon a chance to travel the country opening these buildings, which was much reported on in the press,⁵²³ although many buildings were not finished in time for his inauguration. For example the new museum in Qurghonteppa was superficially ready in time for Rahmon's visit, but then much more work was

⁵²⁰ This took place between 1853 and 1870.

⁵²¹ <http://www.eurasianet.org/node/61718> (Accessed 12/04/2014).

⁵²² <https://eurasianet.org/tajikistan-is-an-arbor-boondoggle-growing-in-dushanbe> (Accessed 12/04/2014).

⁵²³ <http://www.eurasianet.org/node/64115> (Accessed 9/09/2011).

needed to finish the job properly.⁵²⁴ Officially, the state spent \$212 million on anniversary preparations, an amount equal to 10 percent of the national budget, and six times the annual assistance the United States Agency for International Development gives Tajikistan. However even after the twenty years of independence celebrations, buildings are still being knocked down, especially if they are on the President and other senior officials' 'protocol highway', on which they drive to work.⁵²⁵

Discussing Astana in Kazakhstan, Alexander and Buchli suggest the reasons behind these multi-coloured new buildings, is that they symbolise confidence on the international stage.

This new urban landscape of shiny new buildings in their bright colours and titanium cladding is intended to demonstrate a multicultural Eurasian modern capital free of interethnic conflict that assures investors and governments that this is the best place to do business in Central Asia. This is the style that local architects call 'international' as identikit shopping complexes and apartment blocks shoot up in the major cities (Alexander and Buchli 2007:31).

With its vivid pastel colours, the new block Dom Pechat (2011), which towers 22 storeys over Dushanbe, could be seen in this vein. Nicknamed for a nearby printing house, it is now Dushanbe's tallest building. I have heard it being called by some of the local population, somewhat ironically, *Dushanbe's Twin Towers*. The building could be seen to reference the city's heritage in its neo-classical style, with both Ionic and Doric columns. However, it is neoclassicism mediated by international postmodernism. The shape of the building is firmly postmodern, with two towers with curved corners, mirror images of each other, built in tiers like a wedding cake. Like Dushanbe's Soviet architecture, it is painted in pastel colours, and the glass lift shafts are a nod to modernity. A new office building on Rudaki, not far from Dom Pechat, is T-Cell Plaza which is the first in Tajikistan to have an automated building management system.

The Palace of the Nations is sited in green space along the Dushanbinka River, now called Rudaki Park, along with many of the buildings and memorials discussed here, including the Somoni and Rudaki statues, the Rudaki Library, monumental flagpole and the National Museum of Tajikistan. This nexus of administrative buildings and monuments is characterised here as a 'capitol complex' (cf. Vale 1992) by creating a sacred site of Tajik national identity and governmental power in the heart of the capital, shifting the emphasis from the Soviet government buildings on Rudaki Street to those built post-independence being sited in a green space. In my view although these monuments still seem

⁵²⁴ When I visited in October 2011, many of the exhibits were still under wraps.

⁵²⁵ <http://www.eurasianet.org/node/65340> (accessed 12/04/2014). Even if this is not the reason why these buildings are under threat, the fact that it is believed to be so is noteworthy.

based on Soviet perceptions, the area in which they are set, with fountains and gardens have a more Central Asian, Islamic sensitivity, fountains and gardens besides being pleasant places for city dwellers to rest after work are important elements of sacred sites or *mazars*, with their emphasis on holy springs and sacred, shade-giving trees. I argue that either consciously or unconsciously, this link of the statues to the abundance denoted by these natural elements gives them a special aura in the minds of people and connects these objects to a collective memory of sacred spaces. Just as in Samanid era Bukhara, gardens were important symbols of royal power, seen especially in the *chahar bagh* form (see Chapter Three). This may lack the strict symmetrical formality of the *chahar bagh*, but it is argued here that the green space around the buildings is equally actant.

Palace of Nations (*Qasri Millat*) (2008)

At first glance the architecture of one of the Dushanbe's first monumental post-Soviet buildings, the Palace of Nations (**Figs. 157-158**), with its faux-Doric columns and dome, continues to be in the neo-classical style while endeavouring to project a new era with its sheer size and spectacular location, as it can be seen from many points in the city, like Bentham's panopticon (see Chapter One). *Qasri Millat* is translated "Palace of Nations" also the name given to the UN building in Geneva (with slightly more accuracy) so the name has an illustrious history. The building is depicted on the highest denomination note to date, 500 TSM (see Chapter Five), underlining its pre-eminence in the nation building project.



Figure 157: Palace of Nations, Dushanbe © Globerovers.com

The name is illuminating, as it is not *for* the internal nation, but to proclaim Tajikistan's new independent status to all nations, as it takes its place within the international pantheon of states. The building with its 32,000 m² of roofed area⁵²⁶ was completed in 2008 for the Shanghai Cooperation Summit and comes into its own when Dushanbe hosts infrequent international summits, or important guests such as Hillary Clinton (who visited in autumn 2011). The building is often empty however, in spite of seemingly being designed for the President's residence, the most important ministries including the relevant offices, the assembly chambers for the government and all the state rooms typical of a centre of government.

⁵²⁶ See http://www.sauter.sk/fileadmin/Sauter/Referenzen/public_dushanbe_en.pdf - who calls this building "Pharonic"!



Figure 158: Palace of Nations, the world's tallest flagpole and the National Museum of Tajikistan in the background

Thus, it seems that no expense was spared to design the Palace of Nations to be admired by external, international audiences, ostensibly as a way of getting state-led investment into Tajikistan (Wikileaks 2011a), which was never followed through. Employing local firms where possible might have been a better way to support the national economy. Roberto Bertocchini was the project manager for the Italian firm, Rizzani de Eccher which built the Palace. It cost around \$300million (around 10% of the country's GDP, and this during the ongoing humanitarian crisis).

The Palace of Nations is surrounded by a large park, which was created by pulling down residential areas, and Tajikistan's last remaining synagogue, built in 19th century.⁵²⁷ We know from Wikileaks that when US Embassy staff were shown the building, the architect pointed out vast conference rooms and an immense 60 foot high chandelier hanging in a vast atrium.

The entire building will be decorated in the style of an "Italian villa," said Bertocchini, with 90% of all materials imported from Italy. Parquet floors of the best quality, tiling everywhere, gold trim. The only material from Tajikistan is the structural cement. We asked why there was no sign of Tajik culture or history in the decoration plan. "He likes Italy," Bertocchini said. The

⁵²⁷ Most of Dushanbe's Jewish population left during the Civil War. However, there was still opposition to the destruction of the synagogue.

interior paint will be from Italy and will be of "top top quality." We asked what was "top top quality" about the paint; "the price" said Bertocchini and added that the same went for everything else in the place. Bertocchini said the floors and walls would be covered in 32,000 square feet of carrera marble, wood paneling (again of "top quality,") and gold leaf.⁵²⁸

The Tajiks are not the only new nation to want to use neo-classical designs; discussing the new presidential palace in Tblisi, Georgia "In every country, the presidential palace symbolizes the authority of the state and this is why we specifically chose a mix of classic architecture, the Greek-Roman style with elements of the Italian renaissance," according to the Italian architect Michele de Lucchi.⁵²⁹

Undoubtedly the building was designed both to fit with Dushanbe's neo-classical Soviet architectural heritage and, like the Georgian Presidential Palace, it was designed to speak to the contemporary modern world in an international architectural language. But, the Tajiks have a further reason for prioritising this design. According to a government advisor I met at the Academy of Sciences,⁵³⁰ it also references the country's Hellenistic heritage by harking back to their own Greco-Bactrian past, most importantly seen within the borders of Tajikistan at Takht-e Sangin.⁵³¹ Hellenistic finds which were excavated in the territory of Tajikistan have pride of place in the National Museum of Antiquities.

This link with the antique classical world may be opaque to many viewers, either Tajik or international. One reason is that Takht-e Sangin is not often visited today as a permit is required, due to its location on the border with Afghanistan, near the confluence of the Panj and Vakhsh Rivers. There are no specific iconographic elements from Takht-e Sangin which can be seen on the Palace of Nations, but the latter has neo-classical forms including portico, dome and columns. These may be seen to emphasise not only the territory of Tajikistan as the locus of an ancient 'universal civilisation' but also possibly suggest that the Tajik government is alluding to its Greco-Bactrian ancestors as being civilised Eurasians, and Tajiks as their direct heirs. Thus, the architecture may be seen to be seeking to portray a deep-rooted Indo-European heritage and the ancient Eurasian nature of Tajikistan's past (older than what Uzbekistan has to offer, see below) rather than just an imposing façade.

Rizzani de Ecchi is the same firm that built the Ismaili Centre in Tajikistan (2009, see below), as well as countless projects in the Soviet Union and Russia. The difference in ethos between the two

⁵²⁸ https://wikileaks.org/plusd/cables/08DUSHANBE186_a.html (Accessed 20/02/2015).

⁵²⁹ In an interview with television station Rustavi-2 in 2009. The predominance of glass in new Georgian buildings symbolises a new political transparency, ridiculed by some observers, as is the fact Georgia "seems to be following the post-Soviet trend when national leaders act as chief urban designers and cities have to accept their tastes" <http://www.eurasianet.org/node/61718> (Accessed 24/04/2012).

⁵³⁰ Meeting Academy of Sciences, 10 October 2011.

⁵³¹ Takht-e Sangin is the probable source of the Oxus treasure, now in the British Museum (See Litvinskiy and Pichikiyan 1981, Litvinskiy 1994a, Litvinskiy 1994b).

buildings, as well as their relationship to their own past, is striking. We are reminded of the same craftsman who possibly made the medallions of Rukn al-Dawla and Mansur ibn Nuh (see Chapter Two), showing in both cases the power of the commissioner to create objects or buildings in very different styles. In Tashkent, it is the Timurid and Shaybanid past which is being referenced in Uzbekistan's post-Soviet architecture and its political and religious agenda (Paskaleva 2013). It is argued here that Dushanbe always has what Uzbekistan is doing in view, and the city's architectural pretensions are always striving to better those realised by their Uzbek neighbour.

Somoni statue and *Vahdati Milli* (National Unity) Complex (1999)

Dushanbe's Somoni statue is situated half-way up Rudaki Street, on a square that was named *Maydoni Azadi* (Freedom Square) but now is called the less revolutionary and more uniting *Maydoni Dusti*, (Friendship Square). It was erected as the central piece of the Samanid Celebration in the *Vahdati Milli* Complex marking 1100 years of the Samanids on 9th September 1999, the eighth anniversary of Tajik independence (see Chapter Five). As the Mayor of Dushanbe explained, its inauguration "underscores the unity of the Tajik nation and all peoples living in Tajikistan, and is yet another testimony to the rallying of the people around the course conducted by the country's leadership headed by the President of Tajikistan Emomali Rahmonov" (quoted in Nourzhanov 2001). It is notable here that the different groups living in Tajikistan are explicitly included in the nationbuilding project, which has become increasingly rarer in Tajikistan's public discourse.

This space around the statue (**Fig 159**) is charged with power and symbolic capital, opposite the Tajik parliament building (*Majlis*) and in front of the Rudaki Library. The space and objects around it, in turn, display both internally to citizens and externally on the international stage the kind of nation Tajikistan would like to project. Thus, it is the layout of the space around the monumental architecture that also displays power, as well as the architecture itself (see Chapter One). This central space is populated by citizens and visitors who use and relate to it in various ways.⁵³² All distances to Dushanbe are

⁵³² The planned destruction of the area around Rudaki Library and Palace of Nations will make way for a Service of Communications (where the Central Post Office was), a new Ministry of Culture building (where Kohi Jomi was) and also a Committee of TV and Radio broadcasting building (built on the site of the 'Safina' building) <http://news.kob.tj/news/35058/80> (Accessed 20/02/2013). <http://www.eurasianet.org/node/65340> (Accessed 19/02/2013).



Figure 159: Space around Somoni Statue, Rudaki Statue and National Library, Palace of Nations and Majlis, Google Maps.

measured to the spot of the Somoni statue, as the location of the old Lenin statue, so this point is literally *in the centre of* as well as *central to* the capital. This space is the locus of power and authoritarianism controlled by the government, for example Independence Day spectacles take place under the watchful eye of the medieval ruler, in much the same way that Soviet parades did under Lenin. There is also a strong police presence here. However, this square like others worldwide (from Trafalgar and Tiananmen Squares to Tahrir Square) is also a space of dissent. It was here in Dusti Square where people started demonstrating before Tajikistan's civil war, pulling down the Lenin statue on 10th September 1991, the day after the country had declared its independence. It was the first Lenin statue in the whole of Central Asia to fall (Middleton and Thomas 2008). It is notable that however the Lenin statues are removed, it is very different from the celebrations with which they were erected (Cummings 2013b). Rudaki Street was once known as Lenin Prospekt. In the place of the Lenin statue, a statue of the 10th century poet Firdowsi was erected, symbolising the new nation's acknowledgement of its pan-Iranian heritage (see Chapter Five). This statue stood here until 1999, when the nationalising heritage of the Samanids was prioritised through the new *Vahdati Milli* complex and Somoni statue (**Figs. 10 and 160-161**).

Indeed "monuments and memorials exist as a means of fixing history. They provide stability and a degree of permanence through the collective remembering of an event, person or sacrifice around which public rites can be organised" (Rowlands & Tilley 2006:500). However when inhabitants of Central Asia have seen a number of different memorials on the same spot, through time, each supposedly representing a 'perpetual remembering', this idea has less traction; people often last longer than the supposedly permanent memorials.⁵³³ Cummings discusses how memorials' design and placement are usually the result of elite decisions and jostling for hegemony (2013b), the public do not seem to be invited to play a part in how monuments should look.

⁵³³ This idea is expanded upon in the Kazakh artist's Yerbossyn Meldibekov's work, "Mutations" (2010). http://universes-in-universe.org/eng/nafas/articles/2011/yerbossyn_meldibekov (Accessed 20/04/2014). Meldibekov is interested in how political power communicates with the public, through a transformation of the urban environment. Although his images are from Uzbekistan, they might equally well relate to Tajikistan. People are photographed in the same place at different times, in front of different monuments, which have changed. People might have sought something "epochal and stable" by being photographed in front of historical monuments, connecting their micro-narratives to historical macro-narratives. However
"[i]n a world devoid of eternity, permanence and stability are only acquired in oneself or in the closest relatives and friends, while the monumental granite and marble giants are no more than decorations, a temporary and easily removable milieu... Sometimes these pedestals have lost their statues of leaders or other ideologically significant people altogether and are turned "into avant-garde sculpture par-excellence - abstract self-referential objects" (ibid.)

Once you see monuments to various political personages come and go, just as street names change, and flags and other symbols torn down to be replaced by something else, you realise the world is impermanent and mutable, inducing possible feelings of anomie. The past which is meant to anchor you, is as shifting as the present.



Figure 160: Somoni statue, detail of figure, 2008.

I would argue that this is because, like the Tajik *ethnie*, the form and placement of the monument is designed to be seen as 'natural' and 'authentic' rather than contested and multivocal. The monument, like the Tajik people itself, rising from the ground. The 11-metre-high bronze statue of the Islamic ruler Ismoil Somoni (r. 892-907) has a close-cropped beard and wears the pre-Islamic stepped crown of Achaemenid and Sasanian kingship, de-emphasising his Islamic faith. Very few Islamic rulers have

been venerated in the Islamic world in monumental public statues,⁵³⁴ due to the fear that images may be worshipped, contra Islamic edicts. Thus the very nature and form of its depiction, as a statue⁵³⁵ certainly has more to do with the Soviet view of the nation than how Ismoil Somoni would have depicted himself, for instance, he is described as having a big beard (see Chapter Two), a portrayal which would make him far too Islamic for today's sensibilities, where men with long beards are placed under extra scrutiny from the authorities.⁵³⁶ The statue also has no correlation with the only known portrait bust of a Samanid ruler, that of the medallion of Mansur ibn Nuh (961-976 CE) (see Chapter Two, **Fig. 17**). Although there was some discussion that the face of Somoni resembles Rahmon (e.g. Buisson 2008), the present author could see no resemblance between the two, and neither now could Buisson, when I interviewed him in 2010. The figure of Somoni wears a long-belted robe with a cloak which billows out behind him, we can imagine, in the winds of his putative success as a uniting leader and dynastic founder. According to the monument's architect and commissioner,⁵³⁷ Bahovadin Zuhurdinov, 'The enlightened Amir is not put on a high pedestal; on the contrary, he is placed as close as possible to the people ... The noble arc ... is a signpost, symbol, an image of the nation.'⁵³⁸

In his right hand the figure holds aloft a golden sceptre with a semi-circular finial whose design suggests the sunburst seen in the Tajik crest, the sceptre is topped by seven stars. This is seen as both a symbol of power and knowledge as well as national unity and revival in Tajikistan.⁵³⁹ The design also displays Somoni's strong right arm, an overt reference to physical force.⁵⁴⁰ However the left hand is held, palm outstretched, in a conciliatory and peaceful gesture. This gesture is a distant echo of the Lenin statue which once stood there, whose left arm was raised in his characteristic haranguing pose, well known from many other Lenin statues across the region.⁵⁴¹ Lenin's coat often

⁵³⁴ Notable exceptions are Saddam Hussein (Iraq) (Khalil 2004) and Assad dynasty (Syria) (Wedeen 1999). The toppling of Saddam Hussein's statue during the Iraq War in April 2003 (as well as the brief covering of his face with the American flag) became a symbol of American occupation and the Iraqi President's defeat. In March 2013, Syrian rebels also tore down Hafez al-Assad's statue in Raqqa's central square. <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/middleeast/syria/9909176/Syrian-rebels-tear-down-statue-of-Bashar-al-Assad-father-in-Raqqa.html> (accessed 12/05/2014).

⁵³⁵ There is a general consensus in the hadith forbidding all representations which cast a shadow (Wensinck in Flood 2001), however even on religious monuments, this did not always hold true (see above).

⁵³⁶ http://www.rferl.org/content/Tajikistan_Launches_AntiBeard_Campaign/2196546.html (accessed 23/05/2014).

⁵³⁷ Bahovadin Zuhurdinov is an Architecture and Construction State Committee Chair (Abdullaev & Akbarzadeh 2010:408).

⁵³⁸ Quoted in Nourzhanov 2001 (online).

⁵³⁹ Again, these may have a variety of meanings dependent on context (see above), since 2000 the seven stars represent the seven socio-cultural areas of Tajikistan rather than the seven regions of the Aryan people described in the Avesta (Buisson 2008).

⁵⁴⁰ For example, in the modern period, see Saddam's Victory Arch, whose paired right hands hold swords, famously modelled on Saddam Hussein's own (Khalil 2004).

⁵⁴¹ The Lenin statue in front of the St Petersburg's Finland Station first assumed this characteristic pose, a kind of *ad locutio* gesture (Cummings 2013b:606).

blows in the breeze (of history) like Somoni's cloak. Somoni's left hand maintains a pose which is also not unlike that of the Bronze Horseman, the famous statue of Peter the Great in St Petersburg, however Somoni's pose is more of a benediction, with palm and fingers slightly raised. Thus these elements recall the Russian and Soviet iconographical traditions, but they are not of it, this is an idealised Persianate king rather than a real person.



Figure 161: Somoni Statue, Dushanbe, detail, hands and lion.

The Lenin figure may have been replaced by Somoni, here in Tajikistan just as elsewhere in the ex-Soviet world he has been replaced by other national heroes. 'However this return to tradition or pre-Soviet origins is actually in the spirit of typical post-modern nationalism, invented more or less from scratch in its principles and its rituals in the context of which Islam is relegated to a role of decorative background' (Mascelloni in Ahmady p8-9)" or perhaps it is simply absent.

The figure is flanked by two seated lions (*lions couchant*) and surmounted by a golden arc,⁵⁴² the latter could be seen as suggesting a dual message, symbolising Somoni's victory over swathes of Central Asia as shown by the map behind the statue (see below) as well as the nation united in the contemporary period by Rahmon after the civil war, referring to the monument's name, but stopping short of being an actual victory monument for the president. In this way the monument may speak to other victory arches worldwide, proclaiming the Tajiks' historical power in creating "Greater Tajikistan".⁵⁴³ On top of the arc is another, larger gold crown, emphasising the Tajik ethnonym, also topped by seven stars. Anecdotally, the crown contains 10 kg of Tajik gold. Unlike the statue of Tamerlane in neighbouring Uzbekistan, Somoni does not have the mien of a conqueror riding into battle, instead he is on foot, the good prince able to unify the nation.

The two lions are not rampant or aggressive but tamed. Lions have garnered multiple meanings, evolving over time and space. As the 'king of the animals', lions are a visual symbol of royalty by many cultures worldwide, ancient, medieval and early modern. They also symbolise political and military power.⁵⁴⁴ The presence of lions as a symbol may be read in various ways as linking back to specific Islamic, Iranian,⁵⁴⁵ Indian⁵⁴⁶ or Western prototypes, depending on the message that needed to be conveyed and its audience. In Islamic art, a standing bearded caliph is portrayed above two lions in Khirbet al-Mafjar on the bath porch façade and also on a silver plate, where the ruler is standing on a lion pedestal from Qazvin (Soucek 1993, Figs 1 & 9 Grabar 1987: Fig. 81).⁵⁴⁷ Interestingly, both these royal figures appear within an arc, as does Somoni. However, both these early Islamic artefacts were designed to be appreciated privately, neither of their settings are

⁵⁴² Victory arches may reference Classical Roman arches, for modern examples see Arc de Triomphe, Paris or the Brandenburg Gate, Berlin.

⁵⁴³ However, see Leisten 1996 for victory monuments in the medieval Islamic world, which were ephemeral rather than statist and nationbuilding. Somoni himself would not have built this!

⁵⁴⁴ This motif has an ancient history, lions are often paired with and slaying a gazelle or bull. They are also depicted in the royal hunt, an ancient motif also seen on Samanid ceramics from Nishapur (Wilkinson 1974) and on a gold *akinakes* sheath from the Oxus treasure (Litvinskiy and Pichikiyan 1981). See Hartner and Ettinghausen 1964 who discuss Roger II's cloak made in Palermo (1133-334 CE) and the lion and gazelles mosaic at Khirbet al-Mafjar (724-743 CE). See also Behrens Abousief 1997.

⁵⁴⁵ Paired lions supporting a throne or dais are often seen on Sasanian silver (Grabar 1967, figs 12 & 14).

⁵⁴⁶ Such as on the Ashoka Steles in India, such as one from Vaishali, India c. 279 B.C.E. - 232 B.C.E.

⁵⁴⁷ The second piece is dated to 8th or early 9th century, Soucek links the appearance of these figures with the lion-protected throne of Solomon (1993).

monumental or public displays of royal power. The lion was the main element of the Tajik coat of arms between 1992 and 1993, shortly after independence. This was changed by Rahmon as it was seen as being too closely connected with the lion and sun emblem of ancient Iran,⁵⁴⁸ thus the lion is transposed here, as an oblique reference to Tajikistan's pan-Iranian heritage, similar to the Firdowsi statue that Somoni replaced.

The lions underline, if that were necessary, a very different belief system to the Soviet; the statue and its schema are governed by a royal and national rather than a religious or a communist ideology. They go some way to belying the Soviet form, suggesting instead a more international and royal iconography. Musafar Azizov⁵⁴⁹ believed that the symbolism of Somoni as standing between two lions was not connected to history. Could we see this as linking to how the rulers showed themselves with tame lions either side such as Nasr ibn Ahmad when he received the Chinese Envoy (see Chapter Two and Appendix A). While the arc is unique to the Dushanbe statue, lions continue to be an important part of the design of Somoni statues countrywide, as they appear in others, including those seen at Qurghonteppa and Khujand (see below).

⁵⁴⁸ See <http://www.iranicaonline.org/articles/flags-iii> (Accessed 10/05/2014), see Chapter Five above.

⁵⁴⁹ Musafar Azizov, Head of the Department of Historical Reconstruction, Ministry of Culture, 2nd October 2011. He also said that students got confused about Somoni and the wall of Bukhara and thought that he built a wall to protect the people of Bukhara, which would be the obvious thing to think, if there was just a vague memory about a wall.



Figure 162: Map behind Somoni Statue, 2008.

Most importantly, as shown by the map behind his statue (**Fig. 162**), Somoni united Central Asia after a period of unrest following the Arab invasion in 7-8th centuries. Rahmon seeks to resonate with this medieval ruler, having brought peace to Tajikistan following the Civil War. The Samanid Empire was the last time such a great area (including the present countries of Tajikistan, Uzbekistan, and parts of Kyrgyzstan, Iran, Afghanistan and Turkmenistan) was under the control of a Persian-speaking dynasty. The Empire included the high cultural centres of Samarkand and Bukhara, the capital. These cities especially, now in Uzbekistan, are still sorely missed by many Tajiks today (see above). The map equates to “Greater Tajikistan”, which is the area of imaginary Tajikistan drawn by Tajiks in meetings with Buisson and Khusenova, which includes Merv, Nishapur, Herat, Balkh and Termez as well as Bukhara and Samarkand (2011:105). Around the map *Samanid state* and the dates are written three times in Russian, Persian and Tajik, using two languages, Russian and Tajik/Persian and two scripts, Arabic and Cyrillic, showing clearly the internal and external audiences at whom the map is aimed.



Figure 163: Samanid Mausoleum model under the Somoni statue, IAA9656 © Courtesy of architect / Marco Christov (photographer).⁵⁵⁰

Under the statue there is a model of the Samanid Mausoleum in Bukhara (**Fig. 163**), as well as some sacred earth from the city, symbolising Bukhara's continuing (but absent) centrality in Tajik identity formation. There are also writings and verses from Sadriddin Aini and Babajon Gafurov who have been elevated to the position of Tajik Heroes of the Nation (Buisson 2008, see above, Tajik paper currency). However, this space is closed to the public. "Il semble que les autorités ne soient pas allées au bout de la promotion identitaire et politique samanide" (Buisson 2008: online).

⁵⁵⁰ Reproduced with permission, see Archnet for other photos taken under the Somoni statue.

Rudaki statue and park (2008), National Library Building (2012)

The Rudaki statue (2008) (**Figs. 165-167**) and Library (2012) (**Fig. 164**) commemorate the Samanid court poet (858-941 CE), who is now seen as the 'father of Tajik literature and poetry'. This monumental library building is the largest in Central Asia, and part of the Tajik president's 'gigantomania'.



Figure 164: Rudaki Library, Somoni statue and crest of Tajikistan with fisheye lens © Timura Burkhanova.

The nine-storey building,⁵⁵¹ built by Sirodjidin Zuhuritdinov and Giproprom, was commissioned by Rahmon and on 4th September 2007 he laid the foundation stone, officially announcing that *Day of the Book* would be annually celebrated on 4th September. Thus, we see in these new celebratory days - *Flag Day*, *Book Day* and so on, invented traditions designed to unify and instruct the population. The building was inaugurated by President Rahmon on March 20th 2012 at the Nowruz celebrations, where media reported his meeting with Tajik intelligentsia representatives. The Rudaki statue and library building form a complex glorifying the written word and Tajik culture and history. The library replaces the Firdowsi Library on Rudaki Street which is now a children's library. The Rudaki Library is depicted on the 200 TSM banknote (see Chapter Five, **Fig. 120d**) and Rudaki himself is depicted on the highest denomination banknote 500 TSM (see Chapter Five, **Fig. 121a**).

⁵⁵¹ The construction took four years and cost \$40 million. The impressive white building stands 52 metres high and with an area of 44,078 m². It has 25 reading halls, 1,458 seats and 10 conference halls. It also has a canteen that seats 558 people and a café with 215 seats.

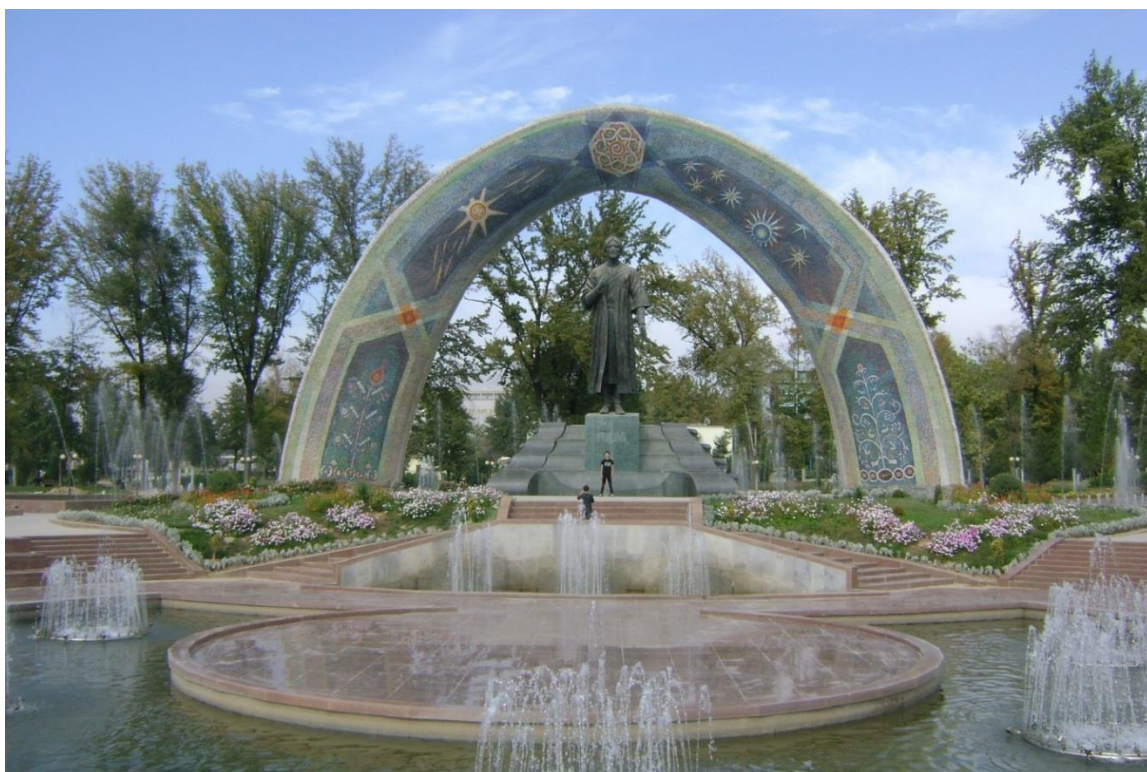


Figure 165: Rudaki Statue, Dushanbe, with photograph being taken of man in front of statue.

The new library has a capacity for 10 million books, however there is controversy as to how many it actually holds. One expert says 2.5 million⁵⁵² whereas the official figures put the items at over 6 million.⁵⁵³ The façade, like the Firdowsi library, is decorated with the busts of famous Tajik-Persian poets. However, unlike the old library, the exterior shows the spectacularisation of façade architecture, designed to impress rather than answer library-users' needs. Not having been designed to a human scale, the books are kept in halls many metres apart. The library was linked by one of my interviewees to Ismoil Somoni and the Samanids who also created a large and important library in Bukhara, she believed this was another way that the President was trying to resemble Ismoil Somoni.⁵⁵⁴ This building can be seen as a sort of *living memorial*. This idea has been elucidated by Shanken, writing about US World War II memorials, as “offering a positive alternative to traditional memorials [statues, cemeteries etc.], in which memorial practice was blended with civic projects in a search for an almost mythic sense of lost community” (2002:130). Furthermore, living memorials preserve “social ideals for future generations... drawing memorialisation closer to leisure, recreation,

⁵⁵² <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-asia-17860251> (Accessed 10/05/2014).

⁵⁵³ <http://www.iranicaonline.org/articles/ketabkana-melli-tajik>, (Accessed 10/05/2014).

⁵⁵⁴ Z interview September 2011. For the Samanid library, see Frye 1965.

and the desire for cohesive community” (Shanken 2002:32). It is seen to be better, and more in the spirit of Rudaki, to educate the population through books, rather than simply viewing his statue. Collective memory, thus seen becomes a collective experience and educational resource. However, the reality less rosy, this might be the biggest library in Central Asia, if not the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS), but it does not have enough books to fill it, and the government has requested them from scholars, teachers and students. Nasirjon Saliomov the National Library Director states that Library has been built on private and institutional donations,⁵⁵⁵ it is a library filled with books that people did not want. The country could ill afford the \$40 million the Rudaki Library reportedly cost.⁵⁵⁶ This new building has changed the configuration of the space around the Somoni and Rudaki statues.

Rudaki Statue (2008)

The Rudaki statue (**Figs. 165-167**) is situated in Rudaki park, opposite the National Library. The statue was erected (like his reconstructed mausoleum in Panjrud, see below) for the 1150th anniversary of the poet. This statue replaced the oldest statue of Lenin in Tajikistan which dated back to 1926. The bronze statue was taken down on 1st March 2008 and handed to Tajikistan's Art Holding.⁵⁵⁷ Apparently in a poll in Asia Weekly, 29% of Tajiks wanted the statue to stay, whereas 39% showed their indifference, saying that there were more important issues.⁵⁵⁸ The bearded figure of the Samanid poet Rudaki (see Chapter Three) wears a turban, boots and a long patterned outer robe reaching almost to the ground, which is open at the front. He has his right arm lifted, not in a gesture of power or victory, like the nearby Somoni, but raised to his chest reciting his own poetry, as he would have done at the Samanid court. Like Somoni, the statue of Rudaki is surmounted by an arch, this one is however not triumphal, but a mosaic parabola, showing what looks like sacred trees with astral bodies and stars, these are surmounted by the “Samanid mandala” from Astana Baba mausoleum in Uzbekistan (**Fig. 168**), and also links to Soviet era mosaics found across Tajikistan, showing figural and abstract motifs. The artists were Sabzali Sharifov and his son Murod, who created the photoshopped Lenin (see Chapter Five). The statue is situated directly in front of a large fountain, which attracts groups of Tajiks for photographs. Water is a key feature of many Iranian and Tajik

⁵⁵⁵ <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-asia-17860251> (Accessed 10/05/2014).

⁵⁵⁶ <http://www.eurasianet.org/node/65340> (Accessed 19/02/2013).

⁵⁵⁷ The Lenin statue (1926) was an exact replica of its original in St.-Petersburg by Russian sculptor Vladimir Kozlov http://tajikam.com/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=14&Itemid=1 (Accessed 5/05/2014).

⁵⁵⁸ http://tajikam.com/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=14&Itemid=1 (Accessed 5/05/2014). It does not say what the exact question was, however, and I cannot discover it.



Figure 166: Rudaki Statue, Dushanbe.



Figure 167: Rudaki statue and arch, detail of 'mandala'.

family portraits, so being able to include both history, poetry and water, makes for a powerful image. Water provision in Tajikistan is an emotive subject, as the country is seen as a water country, and control of water resources in projects like the Rogun Dam may mean material improvement to many Tajiks' lives. However, water flows in these fountains but not always in the taps of Dushanbe's microrayons, where many flats store bottles of water in case of shortage.

Many Tajiks also remember what this central park used to be like, with its shady trees, fairground rides (and prostitutes) and regret that it has been altered. Shozimov has argued that now with a greater emphasis on pan-Iranianism and links to Afghanistan and Iran, Tajikistan is foregrounding the founder of the Tajik-Persian language, Rudaki. He is now on the largest denomination bank note, 500 somoni (see Chapter Five).⁵⁵⁹ On the one hand, the buildings of Palace of Nations and the Rudaki Library show elements of neoclassicism and a continuation with Soviet architecture, although instead possibly referencing the more autochthonous Greco-Bactrian heritage, there are few hints that these buildings stem from an Islamic culture. On the other, the pastiche of the gateways in Dushanbe discussed below, display hybrid elements from Tajikistan's rich past arranged together in an endeavour, I would say, to reach multiple audiences.



Figure 168: Ak Astana Baba, Surkhandarya, Uzbekistan and detail of 'mandalas'.

⁵⁵⁹ Meeting Dushanbe, October 2011.

National Museum of Tajikistan, Dushanbe (2013)⁵⁶⁰

National museums collect, preserve and display nations' most cherished objects which form a national narration about citizens' sense of themselves. Today, they can be contested institutions, often squeezed between conflicting demands, for example those of minority ethnic groups (see Knell et al, 2011). However conflicting ethnic groups or contested history do not seem to have overly bothered the designers of the new National Museum in Tajikistan (NMT, **Figs. 169-170**). This museum is a monumental building fit for a national museum, on the same scale as the nearby Rudaki Library and world's tallest flagpole. It has 22 halls in total, In the basement are displays on Tajikistan's flora and fauna and the ground and first floors display the nation's history from prehistoric times until the present. The top floor is dedicated to Tajik fine arts, mostly oil painting and sculpture. The building has what looks like a neoclassical façade with pediment and columns between the tall arched windows. It is tiled in a dusky pink, continuing the use of colour in Tajik architecture.



Figure 169: National Museum of Tajikistan, 2013.

⁵⁶⁰ In this section I discuss the exterior architecture of the museum. The contents are discussed in Chapter Four above. The museum's website is not online yet, but they have a Facebook page <https://www.facebook.com/nationalmuseumoftajikistan> (accessed 21/05/2014).

The most prominent feature of the exterior is a massive national crest projecting a circular glass roof as a skylight over the museum's central atrium, five stories high. Thus, views of the Tajik crest, the visual embodiment of the national idea, are projected all around the museum. We are reminded that contested identity is often given a strong visual depiction. In the interior the glass panes seem designed to continue the idea of rays of sunlight from the Tajik sun in the crest. Visitors travel between the floors on escalators, so that the museum looks a bit like a modern shopping centre.⁵⁶¹ There are also in the main atrium reproduction paintings of Sogdian murals bordered by a pearl band, from Penjikent, the originals being collection highlights of the Hermitage Museum in St Petersburg.

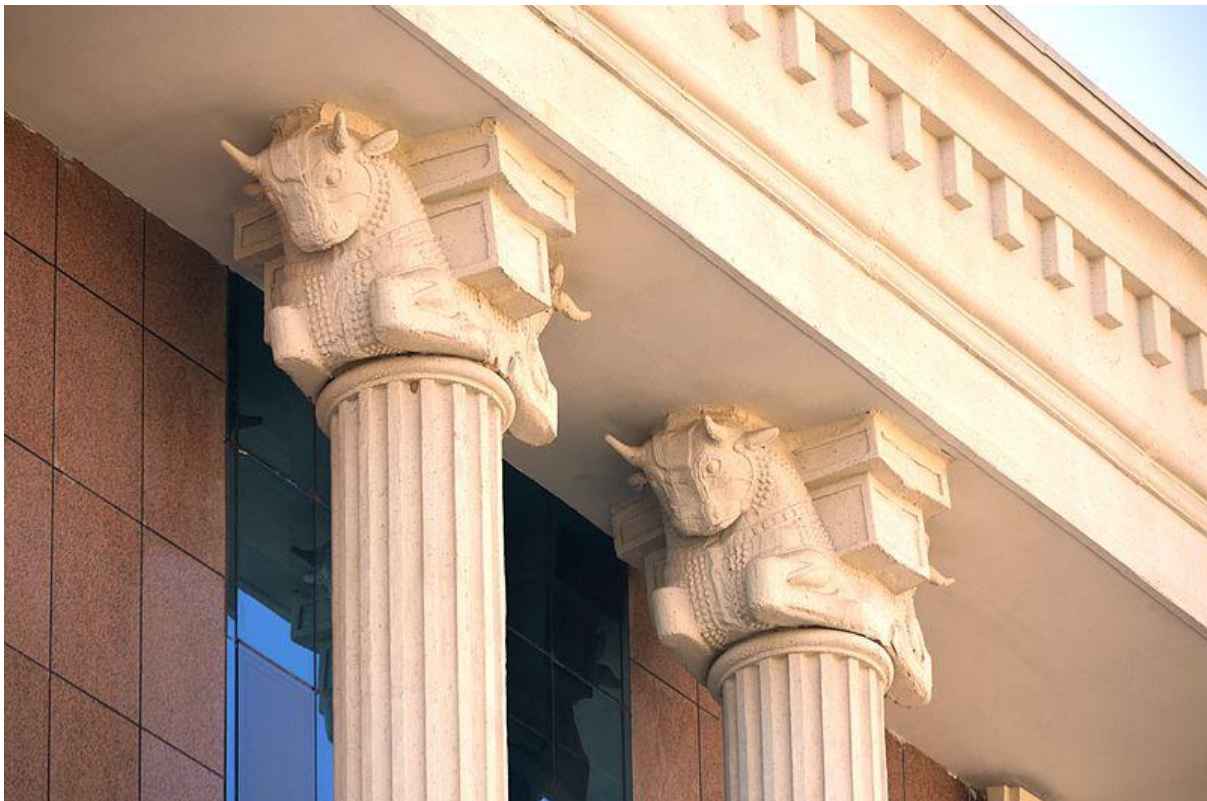


Figure 170: Doubled headed bull protomes on the new National Museum © Wikimedia commons, 2012

The column capitals are formed of double headed bull protomes (**Fig. 170**) used in the Botanical Gardens gateway (**Fig. 171**), whose prototypes are found in the Achaemenid site of Persepolis in Iran. This suggests the continuing importance of the pan-Iranian and Zoroastrian heritage to the Tajik

⁵⁶¹ The links between museums and department stores have been much discussed (see e.g. Huyssen 1995).

government and Ministry of Culture today. These protomes were rarely seen in architecture within the Tajik territory.⁵⁶² It might be thought that the NMT would be designed with purely autochthonous architectural elements, displaying ancient iconography from the territory of Tajikistan, but it has chosen instead to link itself with Greater Iran and pan-Iranian ideas.⁵⁶³ These were chosen, arguably both for their imperial Iranian nature, but also symbolising an ancient cultured civilisation, far older than anything Uzbekistan has to offer. The territory of Tajikistan, which as Sogdiana was one of the furthest satrapies in the Achaemenid Empire,⁵⁶⁴ is taking up the mantle of the centre, from Fars.⁵⁶⁵ Of course the pre-eminent objects which connect Tajikistan with the Achaemenid Empire are now stored in the British Museum, and unable to be used directly by Tajikistan to project that aspect of their identity, however like other objects that they do not possess, they have made copies of the Oxus treasure for the new National Museum. Another reason for Tajik emphasis on the Achaemenids is to reinforce their connections to Tajik-Persian culture in the face of Uzbek historians' extreme ideologising claims, including the surprising argument that the Achaemenids were originally Turkic speakers who were only later Iranianised (Askarov 2005 in Suyarkulova 2013).

These links to the Aryans and Achaemenids were reinforced in the theatre piece celebrating the Museum's opening where the characters and "deeds of Kayumars, King Jamshed, Cyrus the Great, Ismoili Somoni and other well-known historical figures" were enacted,⁵⁶⁶ thus placing Somoni in a pan-Iranian trajectory going back to the beginning of time and the first ruler on earth, Kayumars.⁵⁶⁷ The Museum also has a small Somoni statue under an arch, to underline the medieval ruler's continuing connection to the Tajik national idea. Thus, in the NMT, we see the past represented as nostalgia for a great civilisation. However not only is a dubious, if not fictive past being created, where Tajikistan are heirs to the Achaemenids in Fars, but also one that may alienate Tajikistanis, including Turkic speaking Uzbeks, which comprise over 15% of its population, who are not part of this trajectory.

⁵⁶² See Chapter Four for the double headed bull protome which in this form are exogenous to Transoxiana.

⁵⁶³ Not dissimilar to how the British Empire and America linked themselves to Rome.

⁵⁶⁴ The Sogdians most of the time were joined to the satrapy of Bactria, as was Margiana. The capital was in Bactra (modern Balkh) and another centre at Marakanda (Samarqand). However, by the time of Alexander's conquest while these border areas of Sogdiana might have owed some allegiance to the Achaemenids but in reality they were independent. "Unfortunately we cannot say when Sogdiana was a separate satrapy and when combined with the Achaemenids" (Frye 1984:141). However, the Aramaic script used by the Sogdians was taken from the Achaemenids, showing some direct links.

⁵⁶⁵ <http://www.cais-soas.com/News/2005/March2005/09-03.htm> (accessed 21/03/2014) The Achaemenids are being alluded to in joint cultural preservation programmes between Iran, Tajikistan and Afghanistan.

⁵⁶⁶ <http://www.prezident.tj/en/node/4148> (accessed 21/08/2014).

⁵⁶⁷ Cf. Gardizi's lineage which traced the Samanids' ancestry back to Kayumars, the first ruler on earth (see Gardizi 2011:53).

Monumental gateways: Botanical Gardens, Dushanbe

The gateway to Dushanbe's Botanical Gardens (**Figs. 171-173**) in the north of the city, has reliefs and column capitals inspired by the ancient Persian Achaemenid site, Persepolis,⁵⁶⁸ surmounted by an Islamic dome. The Botanical Gardens belongs to the Tajik Academy of Sciences, Department of Botany. However it is suggested that it is the History Department, run by Rahim Masov, and supported by the President who was behind the design of the entrance with its celebration of Aryan heritage.⁵⁶⁹ "In Tajikistan the interactions between the Institute of History and a presidential figure who has become increasingly involved in historical matters have focused mainly on one theme: the Aryan origin of the Tajiks" (Laruelle 2007:53).⁵⁷⁰ However here, it seems that the Iranians have been included in the Aryan idea; it is no longer a 'purely Tajik' phenomenon (see above). Scholarly research carried out in the 2000s presented Zoroastrianism as modern faith, and even the national religion of the Tajiks'. Furthermore, the cradle of Zoroastrianism was sought in Central Asia, especially Tajikistan (Laruelle 2007).⁵⁷¹ It is possible that this entrance is the visual depiction of these ideas.

In this gateway Somoni has diminished in importance (**Fig. 173**), instead of the nation's founder figure, he is simply one of many rulers from both Central Asia and Iran proper, However Somoni is shown on the outside of the gate facing the street, along with the Sasanian and Achaemenid kings, such as Cyrus the Great and Jamshed,⁵⁷² presumably the most important side. Whereas the Central Asian rulers such as Spitamen and Dewastwich are facing inside towards the gardens. The importance here of Zoroastrianism as a framing ideology is highlighted by the borders of the royal

⁵⁶⁸ Persepolis in Fars, south west Iran was founded by Darius the Great in around 518 BCE. Designed as a centre of government and power of the Achaemenid kings, it was looted and destroyed by Alexander the Great in 331 to 330 BCE. Persepolis was a mixture of neighbouring civilisations' styles (Roaf 1989).

⁵⁶⁹ This celebration of pre-Islamic Aryan roots can also be seen on the National Antiquities Museum's pediment (see Chapter Six), which has a Zoroastrian crown, a copy of that of Mehr Ahura dating to 8th century CE, found with a wooden statue of the god hidden in a cave near Aini, Upper Zarafshan valley (Masov, Bobomulloev & Bubnova n.d.).

⁵⁷⁰ Laruelle has studied the works of the Institute of History, Archaeology and Ethnology at the Academy of Sciences and believes a key element of the national identity discourse tackles the Aryan origin of the Tajiks (Laruelle 2007). See also Emomali Rahmon *Tajiks in the Mirror of History* showing the importance the president places on the Aryans and their connection to Tajiks, the first volume is entitled "From the Aryans to the Samanids" (1999) see also Suyarkulova 2013.

⁵⁷¹ Much Tajik research suggested Zoroaster's roots and the cradle of Zoroastrianism was located in Central Asia, specifically Tajikistan, rather than Iran or Afghanistan, and Avestan geography describes Tajik rivers and mountains. Rahmon maintains that the Holy Scriptures spread from the territory of Tajikistan and then were transformed into the Vedas in India (Laruelle 2007).

⁵⁷² Jamshed, Darius, Cyrus the Great (Kurosh Kabir), Vakhshounvard, Ismail Samani, Anoushiramen Adel are all busts displayed on the exterior, street-facing. Inside, facing the gardens are Spitamen, Timur Malik, Sherak, Dewastwich, Mughana, (Moqanna) and Vaase.

relief busts, each surmounted by the ancient Persian winged sun motif. The rulers are labelled in Tajik, English, and Persian in Arabic/Persian script. Compared to the Somoni map, it might be suggested that this is directed at a more international English speaking, rather than a Russian speaking audience, as well as national and pan-Iranian audiences. Moqanna, Spitamen, Dewastwich and Timur Malik all fought to protect Transoxiana from outsiders (**Fig. 173**). In Moqanna's case, the Muslims and in the case of Timur Malik, the Mongols. It is seen here that the use of these figures connects to the Tajiks' perceived struggle against outsiders – i.e. the Uzbeks, which Tajiks see as continuing today. Thus, the choice of these figural busts is an oblique visual reference to Masov's work and anti-Uzbek sentiment. Moqanna is an interesting inclusion, as he was a heterodox religious leader who saw himself as *the Mahdi*, possibly also incorporating Buddhist beliefs, thus he was far from Islamic orthodoxy.⁵⁷³ Timur Malik is a significant inclusion (see Chapter Five, **Fig. 114**), thus this shows an appreciation for a northern hero in the capital, important for post-civil war reconciliation.⁵⁷⁴

The gateway is topped with a blue tiled Islamic dome with golden finial (**Fig. 171**), the design is picked out in tiles of green, white and gold. Around the base of the dome is a cross hatched border in white, above which is a thin band of quatrefoils. Above this band is a much larger band of stylised trefoils in dark blue and green. Over each trefoil is a pointed, Islamicate trefoil arch. Under the dome, on the walls are squat bearded figures in stucco, archers and men carrying long staves in front of them, wearing Persian headdresses, based on the Persepolis reliefs (**Fig. 172 left**).

⁵⁷³ Crone 2012 <http://www.iranicaonline.org/articles/moqanna> (Accessed 14/05/2014).

⁵⁷⁴ Both Muqanna with his 'socialist' leanings and Timur Malik were written about by Sadridin Aini entitled *Isyeni Muqanna*, Stalinabad 1944 and *Qahramoni khalki Tojik Timurmalik* (Timur Malik:Hero of the Tajik people). Aini's writings elevated these figures in Tajik public consciousness as 'heroes of the Tajik nation'.



Figure 171: Botanical Gardens entrance, Dushanbe 2010.

The rosettes, placed in a border around the top of the structure, are also Achaemenid or Sasanian.⁵⁷⁵ It is noteworthy that although the schema of the Persepolitan reliefs centred on the ruler, here he is absent in the stuccowork, instead multiple rulers are represented in the line of busts. Columns with double bull protome capitals are placed either side of the domed entrance, these support the flat roof. They are similar to the later building, the National Museum of Tajikistan.⁵⁷⁶ The crest of a white winged lion on a sun surrounded by seven stars marks the entrance (**Fig. 172 right**) and is remarkably similar to the first Tajik national crest used post-independence between 1992 and 1994 (see Chapter Five, **Fig. 96**). It is a further indication of the importance of the pan-Iranian heritage as displayed in this monument.

⁵⁷⁵ The rosette is a royal and divine symbol of great antiquity in Near Eastern art.

⁵⁷⁶ These double bull protomes are one of the few elements of Achaemenid architecture for which foreign forerunners have not been convincingly demonstrated (Roaf 1989).



Figure 172: Details of stucco figures and lion and sun crest, Botanical Gardens entranceway, Dushanbe, 2010.

The whole structure thus shows an interesting pastiche of Pre-Islamic Iranian and Islamic styles, just as Persepolis itself used a mixture of motifs from other civilisations, including Greek, Egyptian and Assyrian. I would argue that this is to speak to multiple groups both inside and outside Tajikistan, proclaiming them as Islamic, but not overwhelmingly so, designed for Uzbek as well as Tajik speaking communities. However, the gateway also displays Tajikistan as part of the long trajectory of Iranian pre-Islamic heritage. This latter is arguably a desire to reach out to co-linguists in Iran and Afghanistan, as a counterpoint to other regional groupings such as pan-Turkism. It is significant that later Islamic rulers of Iran, such as the Shi'ia Safavids are not seen as part of the Tajik cultural heritage here or in the Khujand Somoni mosaics (below).



Figure 173: Various busts from Botanical Gardens entrance, top (l-r): Jamshed, Cyrus the Great and Somoni. Bottom (l-r): Spitamen, Timur Malik and Moqanna.

President's Dacha gateway, Dushanbe

The president's dacha in the north of Dushanbe city centre (**Fig. 174**) is only one of many presidential dachas erected around the country. The pastel coloured gateway is a pastiche of various styles, including a geometric patterned blue central dome between two smaller domes, referencing the country's Islamic heritage. These domes sit on an open arcade of darker blue niches on top of eight pairs of classical columns painted a vivid shade of baby blue. Arched entrances are found either side of the central dome, which is supported on two rows of four columns. The pastel colours, columns and capitals show continuity and the longevity of the neoclassical style, used by the Soviets in the early 20th century, with which this building could be compared (see above). Thus, it plays as a visual allusion that there is no absolute break with the Soviet past, in the same way that the Independence Day parades still have a communist flavour in Tajikistan. More likely however, these columns now hark back to Takht-e Sangin, the Graeco Bactrian archaeological site on the banks of the Amu Darya on the border with Afghanistan. The presidential advisor who I spoke with believed that all the current styles used by Tajikistan's post-independence state architecture are autochthonous.⁵⁷⁷ One suggestion does not preclude the other, and Greek columns could be seen to be working hard, proclaiming internationalism and linking to the Soviet past as well as Tajikistan's own national heritage all at the same time. I would argue that in this building, which is aimed at internal audiences, linking to the Greco-Bactrians is more likely, showing the territory of Tajikistan's historical links to the great civilisations of the day.

⁵⁷⁷ President's advisor, Meeting at Academy of Sciences, November 2011.



Figure 174: President's Dacha entrance, Dushanbe, 2010.

However, the dome with its geometric patterns is firmly Islamic. Arguably this building and others like it are continuing Soviet era pastiche, combining neoclassicism with a veneer of Islamic arabesques. There is a difference of degree, however, during the Soviet period, 'safe' elements of Islamic design such as the arabesque were used (see above), these were more minor parts of the decorative schema than we see here. However, "national architecture and the institutional rituals with which it comes associated play large roles in the invented traditions. In an attempt to revive the past through architectural design, then, pluralism is not well served either by denial or pastiche" (Vale 1992:54); which this building certainly is. This entrance way shows, perhaps clearer than any other construction, a pastiche of 'dictator chic', which lacks 'aesthetic coherence.' Presumably, on his dacha, the President has completely free reign, even if he does not in the design of other buildings.

Somoni statue and complex, Khujand (2011)

Khujand's Somoni complex (**Figs. 175-180**) has replaced the largest Lenin statue in Central Asia, now moved to a less prominent location.⁵⁷⁸ This complex, opened by the President on 6th August 2011 is a good example of contemporary public art, and is arguably the most developed visual expression of Tajik national identity to date, as perceived by the state. It is interesting that this is not in the capital but in Tajikistan's second city. Once most of the Tajik Soviet *cadre* came from here (see Chapter Five), but now Khujandis are often passed over for national political roles, as the region lost the civil war. This bronze Somoni statue, crowned in gold, designed by the sculptor Hojiboyev Mansurjon (**Fig. 175**), is the largest Somoni statue in the world, standing 27 metres high. Its pose and attributes are based largely on the Dushanbe statue, the right arm holding aloft a golden sceptre with sun and seven stars, but in this case the left arm is pointing down, with the hand relaxed instead of palm facing the viewer. The face seems aged, however, compared to Dushanbe's statue from 1999, as if the years of government have brought maturity, or as some people think, that the president, said to be the model for the Dushanbe statue, has aged too! This figure sports a more visible short moustache and beard than on the Dushanbe statue, thus Somoni is more convincingly Islamic. He also wears a pectoral with the image of a sun. The figure wears the same golden stepped crown of kingship, seen on the statue in the capital. At the base of the monument is a pearl band border.

⁵⁷⁸ The statue which stood there until 30th May 2011, was built in 1974 to mark the 50th anniversary of the leader's death. Its removal is not to everyone's liking, with MP Shabdaloov expressing regret that a war has been declared on Soviet-era monuments. The authorities "protect monuments of the Buddhist era, the period of the Mongol invasion but not the monuments to Lenin and prominent Soviet statesmen." <http://news.kob.tj/news/16324/70> (Accessed 19/02/2013). The monument was removed at night on May 30th 2011, under police supervision, but the event soon drew a crowd of locals. It has been placed in Victory Park on the city's outskirts. http://www.rferl.org/content/lenin_statue_removed_from_center_of_tajikstans_second_city/24210988.html (accessed 19/02/2013). However, it seems that some locals would have preferred the statue to replace Lenin to be that of Timur Malik, the local hero who valiantly fought against Ghengis Khan in the 13th century to protect the city. http://www.bbc.co.uk/worldservice/specialreports/2009/10/090930_1989_tajikstan_wall_interview.shtml (accessed 19/02/2013). There is a statue to Timur Malik in the regional Sogd Museum in Khujand as well as an information panel about him. <http://www.opendemocracy.net/od-russia/eleanor-dalgleish/goodbye-lenin-tajikistans-new-historical-narrative>



Figure 175: Somoni statue, Khujand, 2011

This statue stands between two lions, as do other Somoni statues, including the figures in Dushanbe and Qurghonteppa ⁵⁷⁹, these lions are seated like those in the capital. What it is missing of course from the Dushanbe statue is the triumphal arch, itself an image of the nation. However, this new Somoni complex has two new elements which describe more fully both Somoni, the Samanids' contribution to Tajik culture and also how the dynasty fit into Tajik history as a whole.



Figure 176: Reliefs around statue base, Somoni Statue, clockwise from top left, law, science, war and architecture, Khujand, 2011

The first new element is the group of reliefs around the statue base (**Fig. 176**). The front shows Somoni crowned and wearing a cloak and a pectoral, enthroned on a dais with arm outstretched (**Fig. 176 top left**), and in this depiction he is given a short beard and moustache like the statue itself. He is surrounded by advisors and meeting with men holding paper scrolls. Thus, on the most important side of the monument, he is shown as a lawgiver working with the *divans*. On the second side (**Fig. 176 top right**) a group of bearded men in turbans hold books, globe and skull, representing science and knowledge. It is possible that the man with the longest beard and the long stick is the poet Rudaki. Next to the men are two women, one playing a harp and the other standing by a carved column.

⁵⁷⁹ The lions in in Qurghonteppa differ in that they have wings (see below).

Although the column's design is taken from real examples, these are later than 9-10th century CE. The third panel (**Fig. 176 bottom left**) shows a group of bearded and robed men with an architectural model of a mosque and an astrolabe. The final panel shows war (**Fig. 176 bottom right**), where a group of armed men in short robes are depicted either side of a lion crest surrounded by a pearl band. It is noteworthy that this lion crest which appears on the Botanical Gardens entrance, is still being used by the Tajik state, if not as its official national crest but as a symbol suggesting pan-Iranian heritage and power. It is not clear whether the central man with left arm outstretched is meant to be Somoni himself, as he is not differentiated from the other warriors and has none of the attributes of kingship. However, all the other men in the scene are looking towards him. There is also a written sign stating that the statue was erected in 2011 to celebrate the twenty-year anniversary of independence and records Emomali Rahmon as opening the monument. This links the president directly to Somoni and the ideals represented in this memorial complex. The scenes are bordered with a curling vegetal scroll and a pearl band.

The second new element in the complex is the mosaic panels (**Figs. 177-180**) either side of the monumental steps that approach the statue. These show various elements which contribute to Tajik culture. On the first mosaic (**Fig. 177**), either side of the flag, with the seven stars over the Tajik crown superimposed on it, visitors can see cotton, electrical power, a mother and child in front of a public building symbolising culture, political order and the next generation. Next to the flag in a prominent position is a dove, a symbol of peace for a peaceful nation, following the Tajik civil war. This also links to the Tajik government's racist ideas of Tajiks as 'peace-loving' and cultured compared to the 'warlike' and uncivilised Turks.⁵⁸⁰

⁵⁸⁰ See above. The aryan discourse had its roots in Soviet and tsarist ideas, characterised by Barthold as *tajikophilily* and *ariophilily* (Laruelle 2007).



Figure 177: 'National idea', Somoni complex, Khujand, 2011.

On the left-hand side other past achievements are represented. These include space travel shown by Soviet astronauts with 'СССР'⁵⁸¹ helmets, and the Soviet mechanisation of agriculture, symbolised by a tractor and factories. Also depicted are Russian scientific achievements such as railways. Great architectural monuments from the classical and the Islamic world are displayed as photographic insets in the mosaics, as are men in turbans with an astrolabe. The classical world is also represented by architecture, including a building which looks not unlike St Paul's Cathedral in London. Also shown is the observatory of Ulugh Beg at Samarqand, a rare acknowledgement of Timurid heritage in a Tajik state monument. This may well be directed at Khujand's more Uzbek speaking audience, but I would argue that it is a mere sop to their sensibilities, compared with the glorification of the Tajik-Persian heritage on the other side of the monument.

The right side of the Khujand Somoni complex shows the cultural or dynastic progression from Aryans through Achaemenids, Sasanians (**Fig. 179**) and Sogdians (**Fig. 178**) to the Samanids (**Fig. 180**) at the top the relief nearest the statue links the Samanid dynasty firmly to greater Iran and the pan-Iranian historical dynastic trajectory. This is the visual expression of the NMT's inauguration theatre

⁵⁸¹ The Russian Cyrillic abbreviation for the Soviet Union.

piece (see above). The objects chosen to represent the Samanids are the Samanid Mausoleum, which stands in the centre of the mosaic panel, underlining its centrality to the statebuilding imaginary. Either side are ceramics including the masterly epigraphic ware, Khulbuk stucco work, the wooden beams of Hazrati Shoh and the central sun of the Iskodar Mihrab. Most of these museum objects are in Tajikistan. The border on this mosaic shows a combination of the pearl band and brickwork from the Samanid Mausoleum, while the objects are placed in Islamic medallions of eight pointed stars.

This schema's strong Aryan content might be less popular in northern Tajikistan and Khujand where the Uzbek/ Turkic presence is strongest? Depictions of Aryanism may be more divisive here than in Dushanbe or the south, the latter being where many of the founders of the Aryan project come from.⁵⁸² The Achaemenid scene shows a massive Ahura Mazda as its central motif, there is no doubt that the Zoroastrians are being referenced. The Aryans are shown with few objects, but there is fire, jewellery and fine pottery as well as the skeleton of the princess of Sarazm, and what looks like a seal from Mohenjo Daro. These objects are either side of a map showing the putative Aryan homeland as if it was real, centring on Sogd. Marked on the map are the real cities of Bukhara, Dushanbe and Khujand, as if to prove their Aryan heritage. Again, like the Botanical Gardens entrance, this mosaic programme does not prioritise the Samanids, but shows them as one of a number of key elements in Tajikistan's past. However, the most important single element is of course, Ismoil Somoni, who has become larger than his dynasty, a single foundation figure for the new state, and creator of the nation in the same way Lenin was, whose statue he has replaced.



Figure 178: Khujand Somoni complex, Sogdians mosaics, 2011.

⁵⁸² Shozimov 2005 <http://www.cacianalyst.org/?q=node/3437> (Accessed 22/02/2013).



Figure 179: Khujand Somoni Complex, Sasanians (top) and Achaemenids mosaics, 2011.



Figure 180: Samanids mosaics, Somoni complex, Khujand, 2011.

The Khujand statue is now a focus for wedding party photos, just like the reconstructed forts of Hissar and Khulbuk, as well as Dushanbe's Botanical Gardens. These reconstructions and new complexes

are packaging the past into attractive scenes, backdrops for life's important moments. These numerous family groups mark their visit and take home an image of the past, add resonance to the object itself and the space it inhabits. The Khujand statue of Somoni and the naming of a recently built Somoniyon Cultural and Recreation Centre in Dushanbe near the Arbob Lake (2012), shows that the dynasty still appeals to the present Tajik government.

Other Somoni representations

Representations of Somoni are also found countrywide and include those in Khorog (**Fig. 181**) and Qurghonteppa (**Figs. 182-183**). The Khorog statue, which stands where Lenin once stood presides over the Soviet dignitaries in a bizarre historical mismatch.



Figure 181: Somoni presiding over Soviet dignitaries, Khorog, 2011.



Figure 182: Ismoil Somoni statue, Qurghonteppa, 2010 and plaque behind statue.

The Qurghonteppa Somoni (**Fig. 182**) statue was finished in 1999 just in time for the Samanid celebration in September, it was opened by the President. While the square was designed by an architect, the monument was created by Bekassian, an Iranian sculptor. When choosing the design in the Hakkumat, various choices were mooted, but they decided on this one as it recalls Peter the Great and the Bronze horseman as well as tribal horsemen. They also wanted to differentiate ‘their’ Somoni from the statues at nearby Bokhtar and in Dushanbe. The Dushanbe Hakkumat decided the face and clothes and the sculptor sent a model.⁵⁸³ This gives us some idea as to how these regional statues were produced.

⁵⁸³ Meeting, KK Mulloev, architect Hakkumat, Qurghonteppa, June 2011.



Figure 183: Representation of Somoni in his arch, Qurghonteppa

Rudaki Mausoleum (1958, 1999, 2008)

Successively grander mausoleums (**Figs. 184-186**) have been built in Panjrud in the Zarafshan Valley to honour Rudaki one of the founders of Tajik-Persian poetry (see above), who was born (and died) within the borders of current Tajikistan.⁵⁸⁴ His likeness has famously been reconstructed by Gerasimov from the grave of the poet. It is noteworthy that both the 1958 (**Fig. 184**) and the 1999 (**Fig. 185**) mausoleums, (the latter built in the year of the Samanid celebration) closely resemble the Samanid Mausoleum in Bukhara.⁵⁸⁵ However, the latest manifestation in the form of a domed octagon, part of a growing cultural complex constructed in 2008 to coincide with Rudaki's 1150th anniversary (**Fig. 186**), is completely anachronistic, displaying Timurid rather than Samanid features. Apparently, rebuilt by Iranian sponsorship, it was meant to resemble Attar's mausoleum in Nishapur,⁵⁸⁶ and it is hard to know why this later poet's tomb was used as a model for Rudaki's tomb,⁵⁸⁷ or that the Timurid period is referenced at all, unless it is seen that blue domes, of which Tajikistan has few examples, are seen to be prized for their brilliance.⁵⁸⁸

We can see the 1999 version of the Rudaki Mausoleum rebuilt for the Samanid celebration is a very clear homage to the Samanid Mausoleum, both in the basketweave brickwork and in the four domes surrounding the central dome. The blind arcade is different here, being at the same level as the smaller domes. It is interesting to speculate why this mausoleum was not thought suitable, going into the new millennium. Possibly it was simply not grand enough to be a cult centre for a national poet.

⁵⁸⁴ And thus has unimpeachable Tajik credentials.

⁵⁸⁵ Szanto and Kadoi compare this 1958 mausoleum with that of Pope and Ackerman in Iran, both modelled on the Samanid Mausoleum; "[b]ut the two buildings represent diametrically opposing aims: whereas the Rudaki Mausoleum becomes fixed firmly in the Tajik national canon, the other building expresses the universalism of Persian art, as envisioned by Pope and Ackerman" (2014:10).

⁵⁸⁶ Sufi poet Attar (c.1145-1221) <http://www.iranicaonline.org/articles/attar-farid-al-din-poet> (accessed 21/04/2013).

⁵⁸⁷ Although Attar uses the same couplet form in his *Conference of the Birds* as Rudaki is known to have used a direct linguistic influence is impossible to prove (Attar 2005).

⁵⁸⁸ The corner tower of the Khulbuk reconstruction also has an anachronistic blue dome (see above).

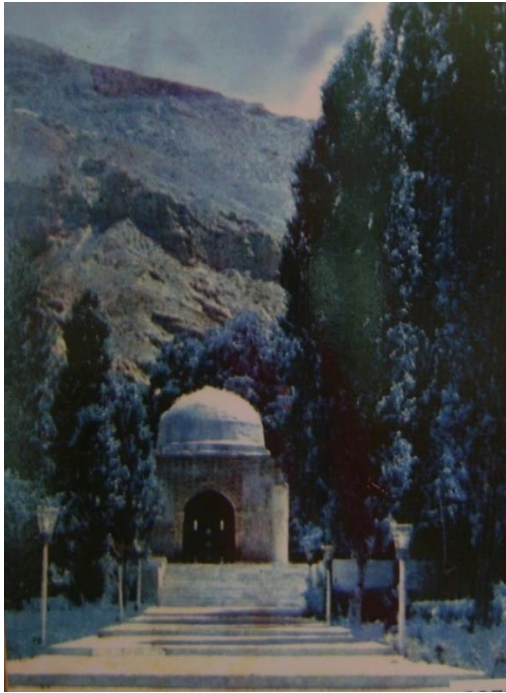


Figure 184: Rudaki Mausoleum, Panjrud, 1958.

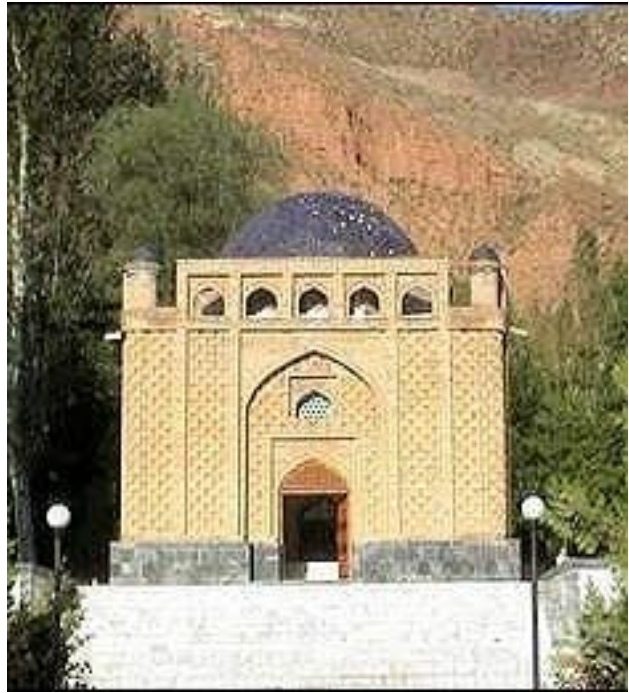


Figure 185: Rudaki Mausoleum, Panjrud, 1999.



Figure 186: Rudaki Mausoleum, Panjrud, 2008.

Ismaili Centre, Dushanbe (2009)

A very different use of the same past as the Bagh-i Poytakht (see below, **Fig. 189**), that of the historical buildings of Bukhara and Samarkand, can be seen in Dushanbe's impressive Ismaili Centre (2009) (**Figs. 187-188**) which incorporates elements of the Samanid Mausoleum's brickwork; confidently combining these ancient forms with modern functions of a faith and community centre. The Canadian architect, Farouk Noormohamed Design Associates⁵⁸⁹ did a great deal of research about Central Asian architecture, craft and artisanal traditions, and this can be seen in the finished building. The Centre's architecture is designed to educate visitors about the whole of Central Asian culture, not just Ismaili culture. It is now the location of architecture and urban planning forums, e.g. the Aga Khan Award for Architecture Seminar in October 2013.



Figure 187: Ismaili Centre, Dushanbe, 2011

In the words of the Ismaili.org website, the building is “a call on the peoples of the region to reflect on that inheritance as they shape the world of tomorrow”.⁵⁹⁰ However the architect's website gives

⁵⁸⁹ These architects built various Ismaili sites worldwide <http://fndesign.com/> (accessed 21/04/2014).

⁵⁹⁰ From the <http://www.theismaili.org/cms/841/The-Ismaili-Centre-Dushanbe> (accessed 13/02/2013).

perhaps a less nuanced and pluralistic view, “Our mandate was to bring the architectural heritage of Tajikistan to symbolize the history *and permanence* of the Ismaili Jamat”.⁵⁹¹ Another Ismaili website describes the purpose of the building:

*The Ismaili Centre Dushanbe is meant to be both representational and ambassadorial. It was built as an architectural edifice to stand as a symbol of humility, friendship, social responsibility and constructive dialogue. The design had to clearly reflect Shia Ismaili principles and philosophy in its use of space, materials and light while reflecting the richness of Shia design without transplanting it from the idioms of other locations in the Islamic world.*⁵⁹²

I learnt when I took the weekly Sunday tour of the building that the complex was made from three million hand cut bricks, which came from Samarqand. The bricks are important both as construction and decoration of the building, where they show the *hazar baf* (thousand weavings) style well known from the Samanid Mausoleum and other early Islamic architecture. The name Allah is written in Kufic calligraphy, which also links to the Samanid period, as this was the style then in use. Blue and turquoise tiles reference the great buildings of Khiva, Bukhara and Samarqand. Local *suzanis* (stitched wall hangings) decorate the walls, some reflecting the traditions from southern Tajikistan. This was pointed out to me by the guide as one way in which the Centre endeavours to speak to multiple constituencies from Tajikistan, not just the Ismailis. It is questionable however, as to whether this attempt at inclusiveness really works, and is any more than window dressing? For example, would it be likely to draw Sunni Tajiks to use the Centre?

The quadripartite complex has Administrative, Educational, Prayer hall and Conference areas, for community use. Large windows look out on an internal courtyard, with fountains and trees. This large central courtyard with a *chahar bagh* garden⁵⁹³ is situated between four entrances, which is also a continuation of Central Asian architecture, for example the early madrasa Khoja Mashhad (9-11th century) in southern Tajikistan (Khmelnitsky 1992:146-156) which had four *iwans* around a courtyard, a feature also seen in Ajina Tepe the nearby Buddhist site (7-8th century), and in Kyrk Kyz (see Chapter Three). The five towers represent the members of the Prophet’s family,⁵⁹⁴ the *Ahl al-beit*, of which the highest tower shows the prayer hall qibla.

Talking to a Tajik Ismaili friend and fellow researcher,⁵⁹⁵ he believed that although it was possibly too early to say what the Dushanbe’s Ismaili centre will mean to the country’s Ismaili population, he thought that it could be seen as more of a cultural rather than a religious *Jamatkhana*. It was a space

⁵⁹¹ From <http://findesign.com/ismaili-centre-dushanbe> (present author’s emphasis) (accessed 13/02/2013).

⁵⁹² <http://simergphotos.com/2014/03/27/ba-shokouh-the-ismaili-centre-in-dushanbe-tajikistan/> (accessed 13/02/2013).

⁵⁹³ See Chapter Three.

⁵⁹⁴ As do the five pillars in the Pamiri house.

⁵⁹⁵ AB pers. comm. 30/05/2013.

for cultural and educational civil society groups, able to host illustrious visitors like Hillary Clinton. As such it was also a means of surveillance, as he and other Ismailis could not tell if a Tajik Sunni was in the building and among them? However, he maintained that the state had not interfered openly as yet.



Figure 188: Ismaili Centre entrance hall, looking up into tower and courtyard by night, © FNDA Architecture Inc..

It can be argued, however, that just like the President's Palace of Nations, the Ismaili Centre can also be seen as intrusive to Tajik culture, even if acting in a much more sophisticated and reflexive way.⁵⁹⁶ The building is a physical manifestation of the tenets of the transnational Ismailism under the Aga Khan linking the building more closely to *jamatkhanas* worldwide, than to indigenous Pamiri Ismaili traditions, in spite of these being referenced in the architecture, for example in the *laternendecke* ceiling.⁵⁹⁷ Ismaili *jamatkhanas*, of which this is one, do not have a proscribed form, but rather forms are based on the buildings' cultural context, functions, and available materials. However, Pamiri Ismailis did not have the tradition of *jamatkhanas* before Tajik independence. The foundation ceremony of the first *jamatkhana* in the Pamirs was attended by the Aga Khan in 2008. This transnational Ismailism has standardised teaching materials (*Talim*) in the UK-based Institute of Ismaili Studies. These materials are foreign to Pamiri cultural and religious traditions, which did not conform to this centralised Ismailism prior to Tajik independence. As part of the USSR, they were cut off from their religious brethren worldwide.

However, my contact said that in his view Ismailis accept the Ismaili Centre, and that he sees it as an adventure, and they would have to see how it turns out in practice. I would argue that the Pamiris are more relaxed about accepting these huge cultural changes, due to the very real economic help given to them by the Aga Khan during the Civil War. While the architecture is made up of contrasts, this is true of much that is being built in Dushanbe in the present. According to my contact, Ismailis do not care so much about the symbolism, what is important to them is that they have a space where they can meet. Other non-Ismaili Tajiks I spoke to, however, seem to be confused about this building and the Aga Khan's role in it, with one contact reporting that they thought there might be a shopping centre under the Ismaili Centre! The building is also useful to the Tajik government as it proclaims their own tolerance to other sects, which they can reference to an international audience. Equally it is easier to control and practice surveillance on one large centre, than many smaller ones.

⁵⁹⁶ At least local craftsmen have been employed in the building's construction. The carved wooden beams were designed by Khorog artisans, Dushanbe craftsmen created the decorative plasterwork and carpets on the walls were handmade across Central Asia. <http://simerghphotos.com/2014/03/27/ba-shokouh-the-ismaili-centre-in-dushanbe-tajikistan/> (accessed 13/06/2014). Unlike the teahouse almost opposite the Ismaili Centre, where reportedly half the workforce was Chinese in a country with severe underemployment. <http://www.eurasianet.org/node/67218> (accessed 13/02/2014).

⁵⁹⁷ The ceilings in traditional Pamiri houses (*chorkhona* or four houses) show four concentric box shapes, surrounding a central opening called a *day-ruz*, left open for light and smoke, and closed at night. These type of ceilings are also seen in the Buddhist site of Bamiyan. It is believed that they represent the four Zoroastrian elements, earth, water, air and fire.

Bagh-i Poytakht, Dushanbe (2011)

The Dushanbe theme park (**Fig. 189**) shows the past as a fantasy world, even though models of real buildings are used, buildings which stand in the 'lost Tajik homeland' of Bukhara and Samarqand. These buildings morph into ships and trees and other fantastical objects. One of the buildings used as a model is the Kalyan minaret in Bukhara⁵⁹⁸ which has now been transformed into a backdrop for Disney's Aladdin and his princess, who float past the minaret on a magic carpet. This is an example of an Eastern tale mediated through Western eyes, where since its translation into French by Antoine Galland in 1704, the *Arabian Nights* has always enjoyed great popularity, and was a literary best seller of the period.⁵⁹⁹ Its status has been maintained for new audiences by the Disney animation and the happy couple is now 'immortalised' in the Bagh-i Poytakht. Is this Eastern Orientalism and the exotic being reclaimed?⁶⁰⁰

⁵⁹⁸ The famous Kalyan minaret, Bukhara (1127), has non-repeating geometric friezes in brick. It is one of the first examples of coloured tiles used in Central Asian architecture, however the Dushanbe pastiche is a riot of colour.

⁵⁹⁹ See Irwin 1994.

⁶⁰⁰ Irwin states that there are no Arabic translations of the Aladdin story which predate Galland's translation, which begs the question whether this was a fabrication of Galland's, and thus a Western idea of an Eastern story? (1994:17).



Figure 189: Bagh-i Poytakht, Dushanbe, 2011

Equally the Shir Dor madrasa with its tiger or lion attacking deer from Samarqand's Registan is shown here.⁶⁰¹ The Bagh-i Poytakht theme park shows the blatant but vibrant and amusing disneyfication of history, which has been described as the architecture of reassurance (Marling 1997). Interestingly, this inauthentic representation of historical architecture seems to suggest a new acceptance of the loss of the cities of Bukhara and Samarqand while still claiming its historical architecture as cultural heritage in present-day Tajikistan.

⁶⁰¹ The madrasa was built between 1619 and 1635, opposite the madrasa of Ulug Beg.
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Other buildings referencing the Samanid Mausoleum

It is possible there is some link between the construction methods of the Samanid Mausoleum and decoration on Tajik buildings, which I saw during my preliminary fieldwork there in Summer 2008 (Fig. 190), these show hazar baf motifs picked out in brickwork. These potentially reference this design and the Samanid era. I did not see such construction or design methods anywhere in Uzbekistan. Kohi Rudaki's pearl band and brickwork are a modern homage to the Samanid Mausoleum, on a building named for Rudaki.

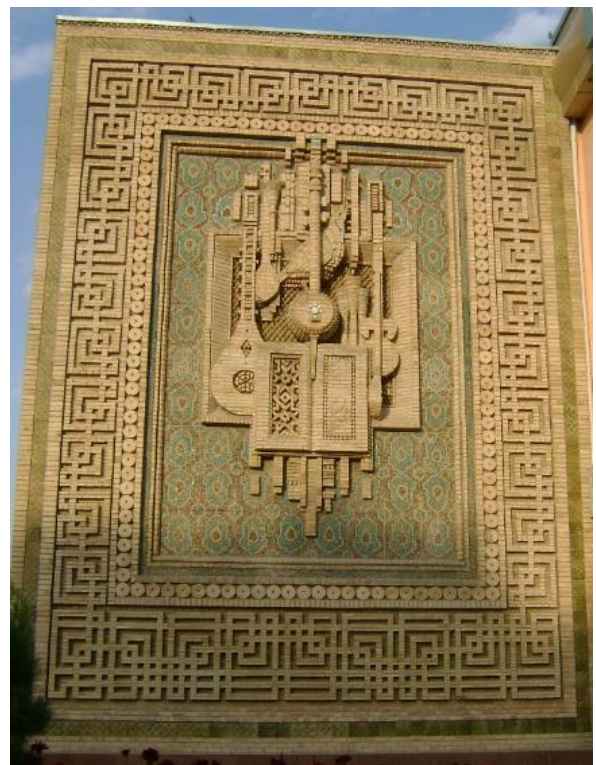
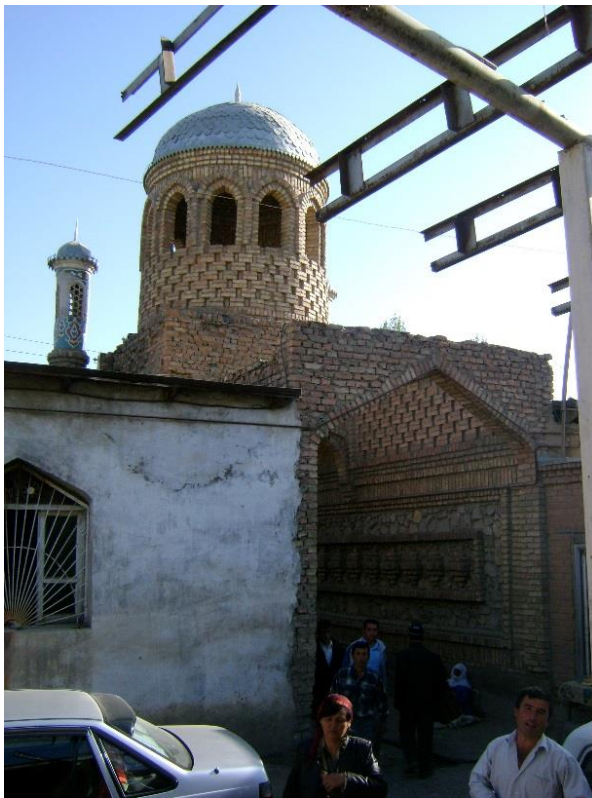


Figure 190: Tower with hazar baf brickwork possibly referencing Samanid architecture, Istaravshan, 2008 and Kohi Rudaki, Khujand, 2011.

People's reception of changes

Dushanbe residents see a lack of transparency in planning, which seems to create wealth for a few individuals through bribes. Also unpopular with many residents is the removal of the tall plane and sycamore trees which line Dushanbe's roads, such as Chekov Street, providing welcome shade in the hot summers where temperatures regularly reach 40 degrees.⁶⁰² However many young Tajiks also seem to be proud of the new buildings, as reflecting their own modernity and independent nation.⁶⁰³ For one of my interviewees the Somoni statue in Dushanbe and the others around the country were not a symbol of the independent Tajikistan, but a visual representation of history.⁶⁰⁴ However another believed that while the Somoni Statue worked as a national symbol and depiction of history, he thought it was probably not worth the money when it was being built, but now that it has become a symbol of independent Tajikistan he thinks that they were probably correct to do it.⁶⁰⁵ The same interviewee thought that the search for national identity was important for national unity and able to improve Tajikistan's standing on a regional and global stage, as well as being able to give Tajiks stronger feelings of self-worth. One online commentator complains about the Somonisation of Tajikistan or the fetishisation of Somoni.⁶⁰⁶ Another of my interviewees thought that since the government came to power they have almost been worshipping Somoni.⁶⁰⁷ It is difficult to know what weight these comments have, but it shows that not all Tajiks revere Somoni and Tajik government's representations of him. However, it seems that many younger Tajiks are proud of the new look of their capital, and how it projects the new image of nation (**Fig. 191**).⁶⁰⁸

⁶⁰² <http://www.eurasianet.org/node/68124> (Accessed 30/04/2014). The fact that these trees have been replaced with mature chestnut trees imported from Belgium is farcical. Recently planted fir trees in Qurghonteppa often die through lack of sufficient watering. Summer temperatures can reach a scorching 50 degrees, which is not suitable for fir trees. <http://globalvoicesonline.org/2014/02/20/they-fell-our-souls-and-memory-felling-of-trees-draws-anger-in-tajikistan/> (Accessed 30/04/2014) <http://globalvoicesonline.org/2014/03/03/expensive-plants-for-a-poor-country-tajikistan-imports-belgian-trees/> (Accessed 30/04/2014).

⁶⁰³ <https://www.facebook.com/exploretajikistan> (accessed 20/01/2014).

⁶⁰⁴ Z interview, Dushanbe, September 2011.

⁶⁰⁵ S interview, Dushanbe, September 2011.

⁶⁰⁶ "It is a pity that instead of the 'Leninization' of the monument space we now have its 'Somonization'. Every town erects a Somoni statue. How much more can we take? Why do we need so many identical monuments? Somoni might have been a heroic figure (which is impossible to ascertain now because the country's history is excessively ideological and politicized), but we should not turn him into a new Lenin, a 'father' or 'grandfather' of the nation" Tomiris. <http://globalvoicesonline.org/2013/05/06/stop-somonizing-tajikistan/> (Accessed 11/05/2014). "Don't we have other historical figures to erect statues to? Was Somoni really the only one of its kind? I understand that this fetishization of Somoni is a political phenomenon, [part of] nation building, so to say. But why are the representatives of our intelligentsia ... silent about this? Do they also worship Somoni?" <http://globalvoicesonline.org/2013/09/26/fetishization-of-somoni-continues-in-tajikistan/> Tomiris (Accessed 11/05/2014).

⁶⁰⁷ S interview, Dushanbe, September 2011.

⁶⁰⁸ <https://www.facebook.com/exploretajikistan> (accessed 21/08/2014).

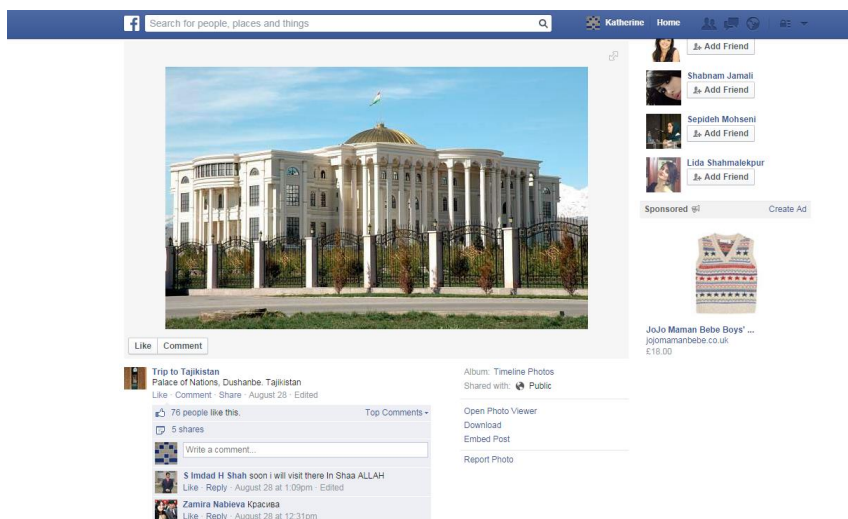
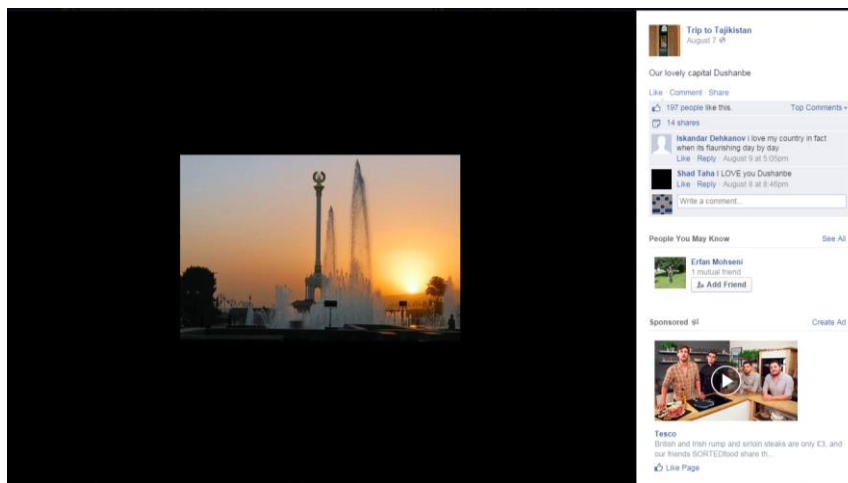


Figure 191: Three webpages with positive comments about the new capital, August 2014.

The older Tajikistanis seem more cynical and compare how Dushanbe was under the Soviets.⁶⁰⁹ One Dushanbe resident, Salomat is reported to have said "It makes no difference to me. It's up to the government to remove or keep them. To me, it makes no difference whether it's Lenin's monument or Avicenna's." Her apathy appears to resonate with many when viewing these public monuments, which are less a monument to history or identity, but mark the changing political situation.⁶¹⁰ In a town near Qurghonteppa which had been renamed as Ismoil Somoni, instead of Kommunist, I did some interviews with passersby. One middle aged lady I spoke to did not know much about history, but appreciated the statue and gardens where she could come and sit after work, as there was nothing there before.⁶¹¹ A 24 year old man called Islam from the same town, does not really pay any attention to Ismoil Somoni. He missed out on his education during the civil war, and thus had not studied history or the Samanids at school. I also spoke to a writer, Ibrohim Isroili, an older man, who was pleased that he had been able to get the town a new library as part of the twenty years independence celebrations, as the old library was smelly and dark and there had been many complaints.⁶¹² Thus here we see the celebrations being used by people to get what they want, they are not just passive recipients of the top down messages.

Future projects: Largest Mosque, largest teahouse and largest dam in the world

This monumentalism of dictator chic has not yet run its course, and continues with the planned future projects, such as the region's largest mosque (**Fig. 192**) and the world's largest tea house (**Fig. 193**). Symbolism, historical and religious references are also packed into the much talked about but still unfinished mosque in Dushanbe, partly funded by the Qatari government.⁶¹³ According to planners it will include fountains symbolising Tajikistan's abundant water resources, as well as have elements of traditional Tajik architecture. Other features will include a museum, library and conference halls. "The

⁶⁰⁹ <http://www.eurasianet.org/node/65340> (accessed 19/02/2013) For the last six years, Tajikistan has had power outages as freezing winters mean there is a danger of overloading their limited electricity supply http://centralasiaonline.com/en_GB/articles/caii/features/main/2012/11/13/feature-01 (accessed 20/02/2013). Although Tajikistan has an abundance of lakes and rivers millions of Tajiks struggle daily to get safe drinking water <http://www.rferl.org/content/tajikistan-water-shortage/24899185.html> (accessed 20/02/2013). In Dushanbe in 2010 I saw women getting water from a dirty canal near their apartment blocks during a water outage that lasted three days. The year 2012 was the Year of Clean Water showing its importance to the Tajik government.

⁶¹⁰ <http://www.rferl.org/content/article/1076513.html> (accessed 12/08/2014).

⁶¹¹ Habiba, Ismoil Somoni, 23 May 2011.

⁶¹² Ibrohim Isroili, Ismoil Somoni, 23 May 2011.

⁶¹³ The Qatari government will foot some \$70 million of the mosque's \$100 million price tag <http://www.eurasianet.org/node/64345> (accessed 21/04/2013).

mosque will be decorated with a majestic minaret, seven painted columns, embodying the seven steps of God creating the world and the seven gates to paradise, as well as water reservoirs and fountains," a presidential spokesman said in reports.⁶¹⁴ However it is noteworthy that this mosque has been in the planning process since 2009. Thus, these building projects while global in style and financing, display reconstructed local traditions and identities as imagined from abroad, which Boym sees as examples of restorative nostalgia (Boym 2007).

The reasons behind the mosque's construction have been variously stated as showing a religious commitment to Islam to an internal audience, as well as enabling the monitoring of the mosque imams, and controlling their preaching.⁶¹⁵ It is easier to control one mosque containing 115,000 worshippers for Friday prayer (almost all of the male population of Dushanbe, as women and children are not permitted to Friday prayer). Central Asian traditional religious beliefs focus as much around *mazars*, or sacred sites, such as saints' tombs as they do around mosques, these are often found in out of the way places and are supported by local communities, rather than central government (see Chapter Five above).⁶¹⁶

Thus how we should view Tajikistan's contemporary architecture, which, as a Muslim majority country, can be seen according to Grabar⁶¹⁷ as producing 'Islamic' architecture, such as the construction of the Grand mosque and Ismaili Centre⁶¹⁸ For Rabbat, the forms Islamic architecture takes are less relevant than understanding the impact of religion on architecture, and the multiple ways, including legal, spiritual and social as well as formal which makes architecture 'Islamic' (Rabbat 2012). Postmodern Islamic architecture is often seen as hybrid, colonial and not 'Islamic' or part of the canon of Islamic art and thus not worthy of scholarly interest (see Chapter One), compared to medieval and early modern material culture from the Islamic world, which is seen as traditional and 'authentic'. As characterised above, Tajik architecture post-independence is all of these things, hybrid, colonial and Islamic, and certainly it is considered to be worthy of interest.

⁶¹⁴ <http://www.thenational.ae/news/world/middle-east/qatar-paying-for-giant-mosque-in-tajikistan#ixzz2Klzfkh6q> (accessed 21/12/2013).

⁶¹⁵ See above on surveillance.

⁶¹⁶ <http://beforeitsnews.com/media/2014/07/differing-views-on-islam-in-kyrgyzstan-and-tajikistan-part-1-big-mosques-2483656.html> (accessed 20/08/2014). The Bishkek mosque part-funded by Turkey, is in a Turkish style, with slim minarets. Built to hold 'only' 10,000 worshippers (compared to 115,000 in Dushanbe), it is planned to be finished in 2015.

⁶¹⁷ Grabar 1983, Rabbat 2004, 2012.

⁶¹⁸ This building is being planned, in spite, or most probably because of the secular Tajik government's problematic relationship with Islam (see Chapter Four above).



Figure 192: The new mosque on a 2013 stamp of Architecture of Tajikistan (top right).

Due to open in September 2013, the world's largest teahouse or *chaykhona*⁶¹⁹ situated on the edge of the Komsomol Lake is next to the Hyatt, Dushanbe's finest five-star hotel. Although a possible source of pride to some Tajiks, others believe that it will not be open to the public although it cost \$60 million to build, or it will be prohibitively expensive for most Tajiks to visit.

⁶¹⁹ The chaykhona is a traditional Central Asian institution, which like the bazaar was able to continue throughout the Soviet period <http://www.eurasianet.org/node/67218> (accessed 12/11/2013).



Figure 193: Teahouse under construction © Eurasianet, 2013⁶²⁰

However, the most important construction project in the pipeline; the Rogun Dam (**Fig. 194**), does not reflect Tajikistan's past but points to a potentially better future for all. It is the symbol of modern Tajik identity. My Tajik contact told me that it is the only thing in Tajikistan that everyone has the same view, and thus it unites people more than any other symbol.⁶²¹ The past can bring people together, but it can also be conflicted, it is *real* help in the present that Tajiks need. Thus, the dam has an almost mystical importance for Tajikistan's future, and would be a major part of Rahmon's personal legacy, shown by the way he is portrayed in the vast portrait in the National Museum, standing in front of a waterfall/ dam.

"Tell the world: When we build Rogun, all of our problems will be solved. With Rogun we can ensure energy not only for ourselves, but also for Afghanistan and Pakistan. Like Arabs sell oil, we will sell electricity," shouted Salolov, Nurek's deputy director, over the cascading water, as if straining to be heard beyond Tajikistan's borders. *"Roghun is our national pride, our brightest future. It's the light in Central Asia!"*⁶²²

⁶²⁰ <http://www.eurasianet.org/node/67218> (accessed 20/8/2014).

⁶²¹ SB pers. comm. Dushanbe August 2011.

⁶²²

The dam, like the other monumental projects in Tajikistan today, is also billed to be the tallest in the world, once completed. It is by no means certain that this will take place, and indeed it has been in construction since 1976. However, thanks to a largely positive, long awaited report from the World Bank, this goal has come closer. It seems that out of the various options the tallest dam is seen by the World Bank to be the most effective, thus its size in this case does have a purpose.⁶²³ Rogun is characterised as a game changer, allowing the country rapid development due to its control of a vast water supply. The dam has been funded by forced contributions from Tajik citizens.⁶²⁴ It faces stiff opposition from the downstream neighbour, Uzbekistan, who has grave concerns over its water supply, as its cotton fields require a great deal of water. The dam is also in an area of high seismic activity, and there are very real concerns that Tajikistan does not have the expertise to complete such a large project safely. The government has garnered public support for the dam using posters which decorate streets around the country. Also stamps celebrating twenty years of independence show the importance of fresh water and suggesting the president's part in its provision.

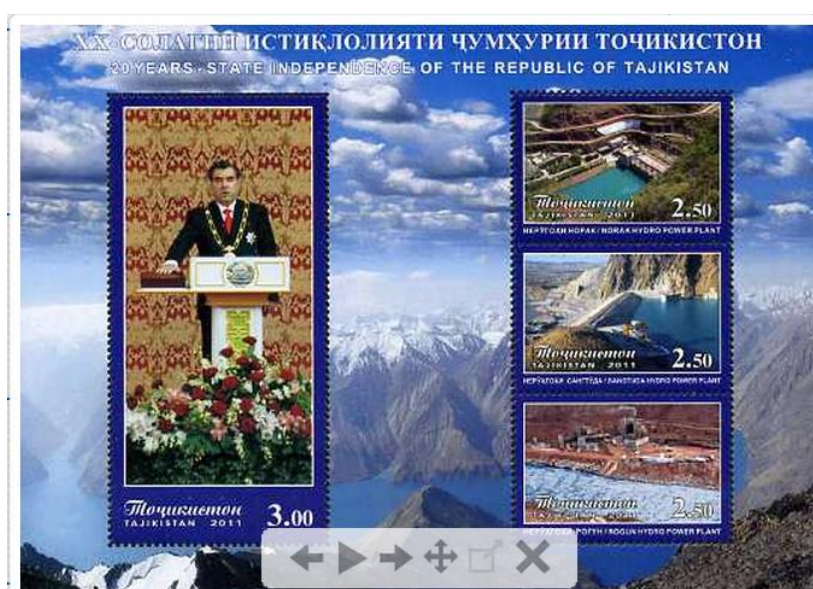


Figure 194: Stamps pairing Emomali Rahmon with Nurek, Sangtuda and Rogun dams, 2011.

<http://www.aljazeera.com/focus/2010/03/201032513529763859.html&ct=ga&cad=7:1:0&cd=TguC8hWY3W4&usg=AFQjCNGN6x-juV0Hz0hXJoRkz-bHL6RhuQ> (accessed 12/02/2013)

⁶²³ <http://www.eurasianet.org/node/68761> (accessed 28/06/2014) <http://www.hrw.org/reports/2014/06/25/we-suffered-when-we-came-here-0>, (accessed 28/06/2014) <http://www.worldbank.org/en/events/2014/06/17/fifth-information-sharing-and-consultation-meeting-on-the-assessment-studies-of-the-proposed-rogun-hydropower-project-hpp#1> (accessed 28/06/2014) <http://www.worldbank.org/content/dam/Worldbank/Event/ECA/central-asia/WB%20Rogun%20Key%20Issues.pdf> (accessed 28/06/2014).

⁶²⁴ The state through coercion and persuasion has collected c\$160 million from Tajik citizens in local currency (Heathershaw 2013).

Chapter Six: Summary and conclusions

Thus, to some extent we can see that the nations and nationalities that the Soviets brought into being in Central Asia in the 1920s, almost a century on have assumed an air of solidity and 'permanence', just like Rahmon's government, in spite of early commentary to the contrary. In spite, or probably because of, Tajikistan's civil war there do not seem to be effective centrifugal forces, such as pan-Islamic tendencies, which would cause the breakup of the Tajik nation-state. Neither does there seem to be, at least in Tajikistan, general public support for the Turko-Persian idea of Transoxiana or Mawarannahr, the various names reflecting different moments in the region's palimpsestic history, only 'Khurasan' has some contemporary relevance, and that is from Islamic extremists.

This new monumental architecture, intended to project independent Tajikistan on an international stage and to provide cohesive forms around which the various groups in the country can coalesce, as well as provide structures and symbols which are consistent with the state's enabling of public order (c.f. Wedeen 1999), instead can be seen to reflect a country in crisis. Dushanbe's post independent architecture conveys a form of nostalgic socio-political fantasy, which comes to the fore in the theme park *Bagh-i Poytakht* but is also present in the monumental new architecture all over the city. This architecture is part of the 'radical imaginary' of elites seeking reinvention in the post-Soviet era. Following Kaika's discussion of Castoriadis' 1987 work *Imaginary institution of society*, the making of history is "impossible or inconceivable outside productive or creative imagination. The production of the radical imaginary rests on the ability of an institution, or a collective, to institute images and symbols for something that does not (yet) actually exist, and to bring it into existence" (Kaika 2010:457). These buildings are invented traditions made manifest, thrust along by global postmodern ideas of eclecticism, but also referencing specific Tajik past and present cultural forms, as shown by Greco-Bactrian and Achaemenid columns as well as Islamicate forms, such as the dome and *giri*.

We can read the choice of placing Achaemenid-style double headed protomes on the National Museum of Tajikistan's façade, the Botanical Gardens entrance and the Khujand Somoni mosaics as placing Tajikistan within the Greater Iranian space, looking back to the Sasanians and the ancient and powerful Achaemenids. This is an excellent example of Vale's hypothesis where monumental architecture is claiming a supra-regional identity, demonstrating what is visually unique about a state compared to its regional rivals (Vale 1992). No other state in Central Asia may claim the Achaemenids or Greater Iranian heritage in the same way, as they are ruled by Turkic majorities, and Tajik speakers are in the minority there. Thus, in the National Museum we see the architecture of the majority in Tajikistan. This is also shown by the street name changes, post-independence, which commemorate the Persian poets Sa'adi and Hafez Shirazi in their long avenues, which are main city thoroughfares. However, it seems that these names are still, even 20 years after, little used by the population, who seem happier still talking in soviet era *microrayons*, such as *hashdododo*, or using

other landmarks, such as Tsirk, Sadbarg, President's Palace and Vardanasos Bazaar. Equally people also do not seem to use the street name Somoni much for the road that runs from the president's palace.

Yet this seeming plurality referenced in contemporary architecture and street signs is directed at reflecting a purely ethnic Tajik heritage. It is questionable how monuments supposedly glorifying ethnic 'Persian-Tajik' figures, Ismoil Somoni, Rudaki, Ferdowsi and Rumi display the mixed heritage of Tajikistanis, including Uzbek speakers and Pamiri Ismailis. Arguably this history is mostly forgotten or ignored in monuments and material culture, except for the currency which is careful to display Tajikistani heroes from the different regions. There are no monuments to the Ismaili poet and *pir*, Nasir Khusraw, in Dushanbe and the only female figures are those of the mourning mother in the Soviet visual lexicon. Uzbek heroes are certainly not portrayed in Tajik public space.

In much of the preceding Soviet era, following Stalin's directive, the art and architecture of Tajikistan should be 'national in form, socialist in content' however, today post-independence monuments as well as the public displays to which these buildings form a backdrop can often be seen to be 'socialist in form, nationalist in content'. This is not so much a reversal, I would argue, but a variation of emphasis. Tajikistan can be seen to be combining visual elements from its historical past to invent new traditions in the only way it knows how, continuing the Soviet fashion for fathers of the nation but giving them a national form. Many of the Soviet symbols such as the largest Lenin in Central Asia, and the large red Hammer and Sickle that I saw in Khujand in 2008 are now gone from their original locations. The Kyrgyz contemporary visual art critic Bokonbaev says "Our cultural expression continues to be post-Soviet. What do I mean by that?... Themes may have changed, but Lenin's monumental propaganda has remained. The main point is to create a likeness to the original – there is no desire to produce something phenomenally new, it is simply *a new ideology using post-Soviet methods*" (Bokonbaev 2007 quoted in Cummings 2013b:613, present author's emphasis). It is significant that the term 'post-Soviet' certainly does not mean to Bokonbaev that the Soviet period is negated or finished, but instead it forms a formal and methodological substratum for the new ideology. Just as indeed the Samanids as Muslims continued many of the forms of their Arab Muslim conquerors.

It is understood now that people have an emotional response to buildings and memorials, not purely based on buildings' aesthetics, physical features or their functions (e.g. Gifford, Hine et al 2000). However, it seems that few ordinary Tajiks were consulted in the construction of this new architecture, which is, in the main, built on a monumental and massive rather than a human scale. The results are, in the case of the Rudaki Library, to the detriment of the users, who must negotiate over-long corridors to access what books there are. This Library was arguably built to be seen and marvelled at from the outside and not designed as a user-friendly, inclusive and participatory experience around a national book collection. However, the words used, 'audiences' 'spectators' of architecture and

memorial culture, belie the active participation of people with architecture and their ability to 'read' buildings and memorials like texts, as indeed texts can be seen on some of their walls.

The rapid changes taking place to the central Dushanbe cityscape which reference a past of which nobody has a direct memory, unlike the Soviet era, mean that there is a diminishing of Dushanbe as a container or archive for the 'involuntary memory' of its citizens (cf. Patke 2000 referencing Proust's *mémoire involuntaire*). Many Tajik citizens deplore this 'dictator chic' and would rather have a new water system, better schooling and other more important amenities. I would argue however, that there might be a generational difference in this, with young Tajiks being prouder and more positive about this new architecture. In Central Asia today there is a gap between the ideological production of the state and its people's everyday experience (cf. Adams 2008). There is a huge mismatch between the monumental architecture and gushing fountains in Dushanbe's capitol complex compared to ordinary people's homes in tumbledown apartment blocks with intermittent running water and electricity. There is also a gap between the political pronouncements about the glorious past and the stringencies of the present.

In order to understand more about the reasons for contemporary Tajik architectural forms being chosen, we must look at the potential audiences that they are built for. I argue that this is carried out in different buildings for multiple audiences either internal or external. Like all states, post-independence Tajikistan is using its architecture and other monumental material culture to proclaim itself and where it is in the world, as well as how it links diachronically through time to its Soviet, ancient and medieval pasts. Architecture also connects Tajikistan synchronically through space to its pan-Iranian neighbours as well as Russia, China and the wider international community. Arguably different buildings are seen to reach out to different audiences, with the Palace of Nations with its noted Italianate style speaking to international audiences and the Botanical Gardens entrance with its ancient kings from a shared Aryan, Persian and Central Asian heritage, speaking to a pan-Iranian audience. President's Dacha in Dushanbe can also be seen to be speaking to an Islamic audience, proclaiming his religious credentials to I would suggest, a predominantly internal audience.

However, it has been noted by contemporary architects in the Islamic world that it is difficult to create a modern architectural identity that is at once new and familiar: "on the one hand there is little in the realm of architectural theory, history and criticism dealing with Islamic environments and monuments which might provide guiding principles and insight. On the other, the discontinuities and disruptions of modernisation within Islamic societies make the ready application of whatever principles of space and form that one may extract a problem" (Holod 1980:viii). Tajikistan, like many Islamic nations today can be seen to be feeling its way in creating a visual identity for its new nation. We should also remember that various groups which make up the population will invest these visual forms with symbolic content which is perhaps quite different to the government's intent.

The one building, I would argue, in Tajikistan which has provided a deep investigation of how architecture may be modern but proclaim deep roots, even if these are regional and transnational

rather than completely rooted in the indigenous Pamiri Ismaili tradition; is the Ismaili centre. It is also relevant that the Aga Khan, spiritual leader and Imam of the Ismailis, has a strong personal interest in architecture of the Islamic world, shown by his Architecture program at MIT and the Aga Khan Award for Islamic Architecture, which was begun in 1977. He is endeavouring to have the question answered as to how Islamic architecture may serve modern needs and modernist functions, while still incorporating the cultures' creative spirit. However beautiful, however functional, this building nevertheless is an imposition of a different cultural form, practices and educational style and content than the Pamiri Ismailis are accustomed to. What remains to be seen is how this building will be relevant to their own history, or whether it will work, not on the symbolic level but as a meeting place. We also wait to see as to whether this building may inspire other architecture which will be used by all members of the Tajik population, whatever creed and identity. Whatever the best intentions of this building, it is likely it will only be used by the Ismaili minority.

CHAPTER SEVEN - Conclusions

What is given here is not a 'result' not even a 'method' (which is too ambitious and would imply a scientific view of the [data] which I do not hold); but merely a way of proceeding...

Barthes 1977:127

Past events...have no objective existence but survive only in written records and human memories. The past is whatever the records and the memories agree upon... (It is) whatever the Party chooses to make it.... Recreated in whatever shape is needed at the moment... this new version is the past, and no different past can ever have existed.

George Orwell 1984

This thesis shows the Samanid dynasty firstly as powerful actors, enacting and changing history, moulding it according to their desires, inculcating identity in their subjects and then in a reversal, or transposition, they are passive and acted upon, and have ideas and identity projects ascribed to them which have current political meanings. Throughout history, all new states have had to engage with invention of tradition. Whether or not they are successful depends on how this meshes with citizens' symbolic landscapes. While the Samanid dynasty was only short lived, its successful invented traditions continue to have life, intertwining pre-Islamic Central Asian with Islamic ideas. These ideas live on in Tajikistan as well as further afield, across the Islamic and Persian worlds. Monumental architecture and coinage are symbols of state identity formation as well as active agents in that process, constructing a postcolonial habitus based on new exigencies of power, both in our own time and in the early Islamic period. It is considered here that this thesis' method, bringing both past and present into view, together with the interplay between them, is a useful and original way of viewing Samanid and post-independence Tajikistan's state identity production. This same methodology may also be brought to bear more widely, in other geographic areas and chronological periods. Even if some of these speculative conclusions are controversial or will be disproved by further research, it is argued here that this does not negate the usefulness of this method, employing sources and theories from a range of disciplines, including history, material culture and political science. These disciplines together are able to investigate the rich detail of the material evidence supported by texts of how, why and on who political symbolism is performed. It is argued that both the ways that power is enacted and identity inculcated are not so different now and one thousand years ago. Both Samanids and Tajiks legitimised themselves through their ancestors.

It has been argued here that both the Samanids and Tajikistan today are endeavouring to negotiate Ricoeur's key paradox in their identity formation, as realised in their monumental architectural capitol

complexes: how to be modern and yet return to the sources, and draw on the specificities of their cultural experiences while taking part in the universal civilisation. Tajikistan is not alone in drawing upon history and ethnonationalist symbols as a way of coalescing identity in the present, as events in Britain, Europe and worldwide over the past decade have shown. Whether the Tajik monumental state-sponsored architecture has been able to avoid pastiche is questionable. However, although 'pastiche' is used by art historians as a pejorative term, it may well have the desired effect in formulating national identity by speaking to multiple audiences. It has been argued that restorative nostalgia is seen on the double bull protomes on the National Museum of Tajikistan, nostalgia for an Achaemenid imperial past, shared with the greater Iranian space, which is largely imaginary, claimed by an outpost of empire. While this could be read as reaching out to colinguists in Iran and Afghanistan or connoting an Aryan past shared with those nations and India, the driving force behind these designs seems to be part of projecting back a difference and animosity with the Uzbeks through history, and concerned with displaying a purely Tajik nation both internally to its citizens and externally to Uzbekistan.

Indeed, Tajikistan always seems to be looking over its shoulder at what its near neighbour and rival is doing, how its architecture is designed, and its heroes depicted. The 1,100-year Celebration of the Samanids in 1999 seemed to be in response to the Uzbek celebration of 660 years of Amir Timur held a few years before. And in its third incarnation, the Rudaki Mausoleum was rebuilt as a Timurid tomb. The building is anachronistic, arguably because the Samanid period did not provide an exact model monumental and statist enough for the needs of the present, as the Timurid period did. Thus Tajik and Uzbek cultures represent both alterity and mimesis in their actions and reactions to one another: Tajikistan both defines itself against the Uzbek 'Other' as well as adopting and internalising other aspects of its material cultural heritage, choosing the octagon over the square and the blue tiled dome over that of plain baked brick.

Both post-independence Tajikistan and the Samanid Empire are using architecture and other monumental material culture to proclaim themselves and their position in the world, how they link diachronically through time to recent and ancient pasts as well as synchronically through space to the Central Asian region, pan-Iranian neighbours and to the wider international community. Neither Samanid nor 'Tajik' identity is monolithic and both have changed throughout their existence, just as they shift when they appear in and interact with other geographical contexts: across Central Asia, with their neighbours Russia and China; within the wider Iranophone world or within the Aryan realm of India and Iran. Due to the extremely lacunary nature of the evidence, and the impossibility of ever fully understanding the 'archaeology of mind' of an era so different to our own, these conclusions are speculative, especially where it comes to understanding the Samanid capitol complex of Bukhara, which is only described in extant texts, and must be completed with what we know from other sites, which is also speculative in part, as to its direct connections to the Samanid dynasty. Both Bukhara

and Dushanbe's capitol complexes have been the locus of building programmes post-independence, as a way of symbolising the new states. Both cities had never been capitals of independent nations before, and thus needed new administrative buildings to demonstrate their new position. Both new states built on and used the past to legitimise their new polity. The pasts used include the immediate colonial pasts as well as older more indigenous forms. There are strong links between the architecture in the *mashriq* in 9-10th centuries and the rest of the Islamic world, just as there is a similarity of ways that 'post-Soviet' Central Asian architecture is dealing with its Soviet past. Equally, both states experimented with new forms and iconography as a way of communicating with and creating their new societies, Islamic and post-communist, blending old and new as a way of legitimising themselves and proclaiming their direction to multiple audiences. However, there are arguably many differences in the architecture of the Samanid capitol complex, such as it can be traced and that of post-Soviet Dushanbe.

The Samanids built their first palace on the Arg, where the pre-Islamic ruler, Tughshada's palace was located as well as enlarging the main city mosque. Their palace must have dominated that area of the city, in vertical hierarchy over the surrounding buildings.⁶²⁵ Thus it is possible they drew legitimisation from continuity with the old regime. However new ways of governing were also practiced by the Samanids, these involved an amalgamation of both Abbasid and Sasanian forms of rule using *diwans*. Here again, the importance of these to the state was underlined by their centrality in Nasr's building programme, in their placement next to his palace in the Registan.

Not meant to awe with its size, I have argued that the cardinally oriented Samanid Mausoleum was designed as the symbol of an ideal society, an *inclusive* outward facing public building on a human scale, part of a ceremonial complex where people could gather, thereby possibly inculcating a group identity. There the population of Bukhara were able to wonder at the brickwork on both the exterior and interior, inviting them into the building. However, if the practice of holy *ziyarat* to Sufi tombs did not start until the 11th century, what kind of gathering was the Samanid Mausoleum meant to attract? It is suggested here that this was a political message directed at the whole of Samanid society, a visual realisation of the contract between ruler and ruled, designed to attract people to the building as a symbol of that very society, where each brick, and each person had their place, following some of the ideas laid out by al-Farabi in his *Virtuous City*. Somoni came to be seen as a holy ruler, Farabi's ideal philosopher king, who in apocryphal stories continued to care for his people after his death, just like Lenin in Soviet times, whose mausoleum was also the focus of politico-religious pilgrimage.

⁶²⁵ It must be noted however, that while Somoni was careful to buy the houses surrounding the mosque, properly compensating their occupants, the 19th century synagogue which lay in the way of the Palace of Nations was summarily torn down by Rahmon.

Samanid architecture, as seen most clearly in the Samanid Mausoleum, references a range of pre-Islamic and Islamic influences in its iconographical and structural motifs, combining them into an organic whole by skilfully weaving together many traditions. Thus, the building points the way to a new architectural synthesis by symbolising a new way of ruling over a new kind of Islamic society. Both this building and the modern monument to Somoni are seen to be chronotopes, linking time and space where both structures mark not only a time of origins but a centripetal symbolic space. The Somoni Statue stands in for the Samanid Mausoleum and for the lost past, which once existed but does no longer. The statue complex carries a piece of Bukhara's soil at its centre, under a model of the Samanid Mausoleum itself. This is a homeland seen as not lost but stolen, by their neighbours the Uzbeks.

In this thesis it is argued that the Samanid Mausoleum's meaning is complemented and deepened by a reflection on other buildings and layouts both in Bukhara's capitol complex and that which with some certainty can be ascribed to the Samanids. These include the *chahar bagh* garden connected to one of the Samanid palaces in Bukhara and the Kyrk Kyz summer palace where the quadripartite layout of both, suggests that this was important to the Samanid dynasty. Both the Samanid Mausoleum and Kyrk Kyz are cardinally oriented and thus together with the quadripartite structure this is a visual display of the centrality of the Samanid ruler as *shah jahan* or king of the world, facing outwards to the four quarters. It is possible that this tomb was meant to be viewed in a garden setting, as that would be one way which its virtuoso brickwork would be appreciated, and thus it resembled in death a garden pavilion that the Samanid rulers used in life. The gardens of the Samanid palace were marvellous, according to Narshakhi, where they very possibly would have symbolised control over nature and provision of water for ruler and subjects, the water of life. The water of life is also symbolised in a very real way in contemporary Tajikistan by the construction of the Rogun Dam, which Rahmon has made his personal goal. Both Samanids and Rahmon used much more ancient beliefs around their body to also symbolise their rule and their power over their subjects. In the text about the Chinese embassy, the Samanid ruler appears literally as the master of the animals of ancient repute, able to tame the wild beasts which answer to him. Rahmon today is shown in the posters as having the body of a king, bringing fruitfulness and water to the land, symbolising his right to rule. These messages are not explicit, but they are woven into these images on some level and might have been understood as such by the viewers.

Yet how are we to interpret the three minarets in the Zarafshan, if they were built by the Samanids, as seems possible? Could it be that they symbolised the new faith and the power to construct these structures? Built of mud brick, it seems that they were built not to adorn the countryside, indeed their decoration is minimal, but possibly were a line of panopticons, where Samanid spies might overlook on a population who was notoriously hard to control. Thus, we may speculate that the expression of power at the centre compared to a 'periphery' might be characterised differently, as a more intrusive surveillance apparatus rather than symbolising an inclusive society. Today these minarets are forgotten monuments, arguably of interest neither to the religious community nor the state. In private

the dynasty was more heterodox, suggested by the decoration of a curling semi-naturalistic acanthus, as seen on the mihrab from the possible Samanid palace at Samarqand. This can be compared to the medallion of Mansur ibn Nuh, which shows a different face of the dynasty, and its more Central Asian roots, than is seen in the coinage (see below).

The architecture of Dushanbe's capitol complex, compared to the Samanid Mausoleum, it is argued here, is not inclusive but exclusive to one ethnic group, that of the Tajiks. Just as those who have Uzbek ethnicity marked in their passports are becoming increasingly invisible in public life in Tajikistan, they are also invisible in the monuments, architecture and museum displays of the state post-independence. Tajikistan is building on Soviet ethnonational ideas, which prioritise ethnicity and look up to heroes of the nation. In this case the heroes can only be Tajik. The Ismailis have an international champion in the Aga Khan, who is able to wield the power as well as the cultural and economic capital to have a centre built for Ismailis in Dushanbe. The monumental building and location are able to symbolise the sect as an important part of the Tajik nation. However, the Uzbeks have no such champion in Tajikistan. This is not much different to what is happening to Tajiks in Uzbekistan and underlines how the two countries can be seen as yin and yang.

So far, Dushanbe has allowed the Soviet Hammer and Sickle symbol to remain, at the heart of government on the Majlis or Parliament building, just as the iron plaque to Bidun was also allowed to remain in Bukhara. This is similar, we could argue, to the fact that the Tajik national anthem is still sung to the same tune (but with different words) as in Soviet times of the Tajik SSR. A Soviet outlook still colours many aspects of Tajik life both statist and private. In much of the Soviet era, following Stalin's directive, the art and architecture of Tajikistan should be 'national in form, socialist in content' however, today post-independence architecture and monuments as well as the public displays to which these buildings form a backdrop can often be seen to be 'socialist in form, nationalist in content'. This is not so much a reversal, I would argue, but a distinction of emphasis.

The flagpole, the tallest in the world when it was built, was designed as a symbol of independence to put Tajikistan on the map, visible from all over the city. This is a reminder of nation; similarly sited to the Palace of Nations in prominent locations in order to see and be seen throughout the city. Not even Stalin pulled down the old synagogue to put a government office there, as was done by Rahmon. The Palace of Nations is designed in a neo-classical style, in keeping with the Soviet architecture, connecting to empire as well as a grand and vague internationalism. This building is easily recognisable by other nations as monumental, with its domes, portico and columns. But what demonstrates its monumentality is not so much the design but its size and elevated position in the city. In post-soviet Dushanbe, size is a key element in the design of the new capitol complex, where flagpole, mosque, National Library, *Choikhona* as well as the Rogun Dam must all be 'the biggest'. The Library is built to impress from the exterior rather than designed for users to learn. Some of that money could have been spent on books, rather than requisitioning old books from the population. The library in the Samanid palace described by Ibn Sina, on the other hand, seems a veritable treasure

trove of all the knowledge the world had to offer. Thus, while the Somoni Complex is called *Vahdati Milli*, or National Unity Complex, designed to bring people together. However, it works in name only, as it is not underpinned by government structures and systems that bring different regions and ethnic groups together in reality. As a symbol of national unity, it is arguably an empty symbol, like the currency, which displays an ideal not supported by reality. However, the statue now symbolises the country on the international stage, and in some ways can be seen to represent the Tajiks to themselves as a successful ethnonational symbol of statehood.

Coins and currency both in the Samanid period and today are important ways in which a ruling body legitimises itself by assuming the economic right to order the internal economy and flow of money, as well as being able to put messages and images on the coins or notes that travel all over the state. The choice of images and script on currency is an important window into core state identity as depicted in visual symbols. Imagery on coins, stamps and posters are messages from the ruler to the ruled; which together with renaming of places, are mundane reminders and tools of banal nationalism, bringing the nation into everyday experience, with the goal of unifying the population. However, rulers cannot control how these objects are viewed and used, and messages may well be subverted. Modern Tajikistani currency is called *Somoni* after the Samanids and shows a selection of Tajik 'heroes', carefully chosen not only to represent Tajikistan's past glories but also the regions of Tajikistan. The Pamirs, Kulyab, Khujand, Isfara, Tursunzoda, Garm as well as the capital Dushanbe are all referenced by the architecture or people in this fiercely regional country. Regionalism, one of the main causes and drivers of the Tajik civil war (1992-1997), is still rampant in the country and continues to strike at national unity. Thus, the currency symbolises a desired unity between regions under one national identity of Tajikistan. Unlike Samanid dirhams, use of Tajik currency defines the borders of the nation. The Samanid dynasty used two forms of money, Ismaili dirhams, and Bukhar Khudats which shows the different aesthetics possible on Samanid coins, acceptable to ruler and ruled. It seems that the dynasty presented their orthodox Muslim face and honoured the caliph on their silver dirhams that were used in external trade, but were nostalgic for the old pictorial coins in Bukhara and other cities in Transoxiana and it was these low silver content coins that they used more frequently internally.

As non-state sponsored structures, both the Ismaili Centre and the Bagh-i Poytakht reference Bukhara's architecture, but there the similarity ends, as one is a theme park and shows the joyous abandonment to the disneyfication of history, with Aladdin and his princess on a magic carpet floating past Bukhara's Kalyan Mosque. The Ismaili Centre is serious architecture, but with an openness and inclusivity in its design, which has been carefully thought out as to how a modern building with varied functions may show deep roots in the architecture of the region. Sadly, the interior will not be seen by most Tajiks, although designed for all, as arguably only Ismailis will use the building. However the building can also be seen as an imposition of a transnational Ismailism under the Aga Khan on a Tajik Ismaili population, one whom, however, it seems are happy to accept the building along with the Aga

Khan's spiritual directives, as this has been accompanied by very real help and support, especially during the civil war. Ismailis are using the building as a central location for meeting and other events connected to the community.

The carved wood from the Zarafshan and the Ferghana Valleys shows a deep-rooted indigenous tradition of craftsmanship and designs which continues in the area until today. It shows creators and commissioners including zoomorphic images which continued to be important to Muslims but were rarely pictured in Islamic religious contexts. Birds were popular motifs in Samanid ceramics, as well as appearing on earlier Sogdian ossuaries, meaning 'good fortune'. Birds also appear in Sufi texts where they are connected to paradise and the tomb. Thus, possibly while pre-Islamic ideas were continuing to be depicted, these were being resemanticised into the new religion along with new visual forms, shown by the bevelled style and the geometrical designs on the Hazrati Shoh ceiling. The Iskodar mihrab is a masterpiece of its type, as wooden mihrabs have rarely survived. Muslims prayed facing swastikas and other pre-Islamic forms, including possibly fish while being exhorted by the hadith to 'hold the front line.'

In the ceramics however, a massive non-state sponsored corpus of material, no 'classical Samanid' forms can be discovered. It is suggested here that the new glazed ceramics fulfilled a similar aesthetic desire to the Sogdian domestic wall paintings from across the social spectrum, famously seen in houses in Penjikent. It is more difficult to identify narratives in the later ceramics, whereas these were the prime organising structure of the wall paintings. Samanid ceramics include the finest thinly potted epigraphic wares to rustic simply potted ceramics were designed for everyone, across society. The ceramics had lively colours, often in a quadripartite design. We do not yet know exactly how design choice may have connected to people's identity, either expressed or assigned, however it seems likely that different designs would be understood by different groups or different people in various ways, perhaps this was how it was designed to be. Images contained jokes and references to those in the know, just as the Arabic aphorisms did. This was a subtle way of creating and sharing a joint culture brought different ethnicities together under the same morals and laws.

Compared to glazed polychrome ceramics which were used and enjoyed by all sections of Samanid society, non-state sponsored Tajik contemporary art, is however for the few, an intellectual urban elite. Contemporary art is seen perhaps as Islamically suspect and not traditionally Tajik, it is rare in any case that there is any paper-based art on the walls of Tajik homes. Their traditional interiors consist of carpets, ceramics and low chests. While western armchairs might be pushed against the walls, people seem happiest sitting on *kurpacha* on the floor. How does contemporary art fit within a traditional lifestyle and worldview? There are many ways that Tajiks have chosen to represent their identity in contemporary art but the Samanids are not one of them. The government has a monopoly not only in Somoni's depiction, but also in how the dynasty are characterised. There are many other things to talk about, fuelled by contemporary art programmes usually run by non-state organisations

such as the Swiss Development Corporation and the Bactria Cultural Centre. However, it is thought that it is through their own cultural forms that they are best able to critique their society.

Thus, Samanid material culture is not as mythologised by Tajik nationalism today compared to the poetry of the period. This is because there is not much of it within the country, and what there is, is not the 'best' in the world, which is in Uzbekistan, Iran and in worldwide museums. One possible exception to this is that many of the earliest extant domed square mausoleums come from within the territory of Tajikistan, suggesting further research is needed to understand this complex regional picture. However, Tajikistan has a legitimate claim on all the Samanid literature. This connects to how poetry is a vital, if not *the* most important carrier of culture, in the Tajik-Persian world, where it is common to hear recitations of Hafez or Rumi. National architecture is arguably too limited to make up a true communal medieval patrimony in Tajikistan, because of the small number of monuments, and what there are not either sacred enough to operate on the national stage or statist enough to draw the crowds. There are funds for restoring medieval architecture, especially as the Tajiks can tap into international funding streams such as the US Ambassador's Fund Programme, the real problem is that few of these buildings are spectacular monumental items upon which Tajiks could hang their national identity, in the same way that Uzbekistan can on its ancient sites and cities, Bukhara, Samarqand and Khiva. Thus, these historical sites are only of interest to a very few historically. However, since their renovations sites such as Khulbuk or Hissar are a source of local pride, and people use them as backdrops for wedding photos. It seems obligatory to find either a beautiful park such as the Botanical Gardens or a historical monument to mark the occasion.

A major difference between the Samanids' extant material cultural output and that of post-independence Tajikistan, is that the latter panders to ethnonational ideas of culture, prioritising ethnic Tajiks whereas the Samanid is more ecumenical and inclusive, we cannot see a pure 'Sogdian' or Central Asian past either in their material culture or written texts. Sogdian culture in any case is famously syncretistic, a feature it might have passed down to the early Islamic dynasty. The Samanids are seen to bring homogeneity for the first time ever to the *mashriq*. They wove together diverse influences and religions under one world view. This is what Rahmon would like to achieve, however the Samanids did this, I have argued, by recognising that they needed to speak differently to diverse audiences in an inclusive rather than exclusive manner. It remains to be seen, however whether the Tajik government can look to Ismoil Somoni's impartiality and justice, and uphold these values as beneficial ways of running the country? These could be the true heritage of the Samanid period.

One symbol of the nation and Tajikistan's national identity looks firmly to the future rather than the past; this is the Rogun Dam. The Dam is a very real symbol for the future which is able to link the entire country in feelings of national identity, rather than the past. If it was built would offer energy security especially during winter, meaning that Tajikistan would have energy independence from more

powerful neighbours. Thus, Tajik people support the Rogun Dam as they believe it will help future generations.

The Samanids are seen as a successful invented tradition, which continue to have resonance, at least at elite levels, in spite of other historical periods being used as identity formation such as Zoroastrianism / Aryanism and ancient Iran. Somoni is a foundation figure par excellence, not only did he unite the region after a period of unrest, but he remains a popular and arguably semi-religious figure, credited with being a just ruler, whose tomb is the focus of *ziyarat*. This is quite apart from his inclusion in Tajik statebuilding, as most Tajiks have not been able to get Uzbek visas and thus could not visit the Samanid Mausoleum. While he had nothing to do with the foundation of the Tajik state in its present form (which does not even include his capital, Bukhara) this seems almost irrelevant. It is seen that the Samanid era has continued to produce “an encoded fund of myths, memories, values and symbols, the puissant core of the future ethnies in Tajikistan” (Nourzhanov 2001: online). However, it is questionable as to whether Somoni or the Samanids can speak to the sizable Uzbek and Ismaili minorities. In his current form Somoni is a Tajik foundation figure rather than a Tajikistani one.

Appendices

APPENDIX A - The Samanids: Historical outline and discussion of sources⁶²⁶

Only just over half a century ago, Samanids were a “little known dynasty” to historians (Frye 1944). In spite of subsequent historical and archaeological research, to date the only in-depth historical monograph on the dynasty is Treadwell’s unpublished PhD dissertation (1991). Unlike Buyid contemporary histories, for example that of Miskawayh, Samanid dynastic history lacks a central narrative, being told by outsiders rather than those close to the dynasty (Treadwell 2012a:4). We simply do not know much about the political and social history of the Samanid court and realm. This historical outline is based on primary sources such as Narshakhi’s History of Bukhara,⁶²⁷ as well as various geographies (see below), summarised in scholars such as Barthold (1968). The eponymous ancestor, Saman Khuda, was an 8th century *dehqan* apparently from the Balkh area of Tokharistan who converted to Islam, serving one of the last Umayyad rulers of Khurasan, Asad b. ‘Abd-Allah al Qasri,⁶²⁸ governor of Khurasan 723-27 CE (Frye 1975a:136). The family next enter history during Rafi ibn Layth’s rebellion, which many Khurasani landowners took part in suppressing, leading their own military detachments. Among them were four brothers, grandsons of Saman Khuda, who, in 819 CE were rewarded for their loyal service to caliph al-Ma’mun (r. 813–33 CE) by being awarded lifelong control of Ferghana, Samarqand, Chach (Tashkent) and Herat,⁶²⁹ thus establishing the Samanid dynasty in Transoxania. In 827, one of the brothers, Ilyas, was appointed the governorship of Alexandria in Egypt (Barthold 1968:215 Note 4). While we do not know how long he stayed, this incident highlights elite movement around the Abbasid caliphate, suggesting a possible

⁶²⁶ Genealogical table of the Samanids

Nasr b. Ahmad	c. 261/875-279/892
Isma’il b. Ahmad	279/892-295/907
Ahmad b. Isma’il	295/907-301/914
Nasr II b. Ahmad	301/914-331/943
Nuh b. Nasr	331/943-343/954
‘Abd al-Malik	343/954-350/961
Mansur	350/961-366/976
Nuh II	366/976-387/997
Abu’l-Harith Mansur II	387/997-389/999
‘Abd al-Malik II	389/999
Isma’il Muntasir	390/1000-395/1005

⁶²⁷ Narshakhi 1954.

⁶²⁸ However, Saman Khuda might have come from outside Termez and there is a suburb, shahr-i Saman, where Kyrk Kyz is situated (see Chapter Three). Saman’s son was named Asad after the governor.

⁶²⁹ Governorships: Samarqand (Nuh b. Asad), Ferghana (Ahmad b. Asad), Shash and Ustrushana (Yahya b. Asad), Herat (Ilyas b. Asad).

way cultural styles migrated across the empire, without necessarily going through Baghdad.

First under Tahirid rule, by the end of the century, the Samanids had thrown off their overlords to form a 'monarchical state' (Treadwell 1991:104) in Transoxiana and Khurasan under Ismail ibn Ahmad (r. 893-907 CE). This seems to be reinforced by the fact that the year after Ismail was appointed governor of Transoxiana, he annexed the province of Ustrushana, defeating the last Afshin, whose family had been favoured by the caliph (see below). Ismail also led a momentous campaign against the city of Talas/ Taraz, resulting in the Turkish Qarluq khan's expulsion in 893 (al-Tabari 1985). According to Gardizi, a later historian (2011), the first thing Ismail did once the investiture diploma and standard arrived was expand his empire to Gurgan, Tabaristan and Rayy around the southern Caspian.

Ismail is seen as the true dynastic founder; he fought the Persian Saffarids and conducted *ghazi* warfare against the pagan steppe Turks. In 900 Ismail conquered the Saffirids and incorporated their lands under him. From this time the dynasty was *the* power in Khurasan and Transoxiana. In the later years of his rule, Ismail displayed great ability in setting up a centralised bureaucratic system of central and local state administration (*diwans*). This state formation of the Samanid monarchy with ministers in control of various *diwans* was significant in Central Asian political history. *Diwans* "linked through the caliphate to Sasanian Iran, but it was Ismail Samanid who first used [them] in Central Asia" (Masson 1999:166). However, the model of this centralising political system was Baghdad. This political system differed from the preceding Sogdian Transoxianan city states, protected by volunteer armies. Ismail organised the army, ensuring internal and external security, as well as creating opportunities for economic and commercial development and the resurgence of local scientific and literary traditions.

During the 10th century, there was a cultural highpoint under Ismail's grandson Nasr ibn Ahmad (914-43 CE), who patronised Persian poets and is credited with the state-sponsored 'New Persian Renaissance'. The Samanids were the first governors of the *mashriq* who did not pay the Abbasids an annual tribute (Treadwell 1991:272), showing that they were independent rulers. However, there was a slow decline in the second half of the century due to the Samanids' inability to control the appointment of governorships of outlying areas, especially in Khurasan, and its capital in Nishapur. During the last quarter century before the Qarakhanid invasion, all the rulers came to the throne as minors. This was one possible contributing factor in the Samanid downfall; as young men, they were more easily manipulated by the powers surrounding the throne, including men such as Fa'iq (see below). During this time Turkish mamluks, slave soldiers of the Samanids, gained greater power over the state's running and mass conversions to Islam also took place in the steppe Turks to the north. It is the latter which is also believed to have contributed to the Samanids' demise, which took place mid 10th century, in Frye's words "the Muslim Turks accomplished what the pagan Turks could not have done – the conquest of the Samanid kingdom" (Frye 1965:147).

The Sunni Samanids were also fighting the Shi'i Buyids over the important city of Rayy. In 945 CE the Buyid, Mu'izz al-Dawla captured Baghdad, becoming commander-in-chief of the caliphal armies. He made the caliph his puppet, although maintaining his titular authority. Thus Iraq, the Abbasid heartland, came under Shi'i control, thereby threatening the Samanids. The Samanid dynasty was extinguished by the Turkic Qarakhanids to the north and the Ghaznavids to the south. It was the last time a Persian-speaking dynasty was to rule Transoxiana and Khurasan, and the only time the two areas were unified under one rule, until the Mongols in the 13th century. It was also the last time that Persian speakers ruled in Central Asia, up until Tajik independence in 1991. These facts go a long way to explain the Samanids' importance to Tajikistan today.

Early Arab geographical writings

The well-known descriptions of the mashriq by the three great Arab geographers; Istakhri (d. after 951 CE), ibn Hawqal (d. after 980 CE), and Muqaddasi (d. after 985 CE)⁶³⁰ cannot be taken at face value, as the geographers were not objective observers, and had political reasons for describing countries as they did. Furthermore we must understand their relation with the ruling authorities in order to understand their texts (Treadwell 1991:25ff.), however it does suggest that this area of the Samanid Empire was an important part of the caliphate, and not a peripheral area, as is seen by many historians today. There are problems in using these geographies for a historical understanding of the period, as their goal was the synchronic portrayal of human and landscape geography, therefore they omitted dates and change over time. This static picture is exacerbated by the fact that they were great plagiarists, thus a chronological precision is impossible (Treadwell 1991:26). The question remains, why did the Arab geographers favour the mashriq, was it because of the ancient cities filled with a mainly pious Islamic population, who were prepared to take on holy war at the frontier of the Islamic world, however superficial beliefs might have been in some parts? Equally, during the Samanid period the mashriq was known as being a region with extensive trade, a secure currency and low taxes, who took seriously its location on the frontier of *dar al-Islam* to fight with and proselytise the pagan Turk.

One of the contemporary geographies of the region by al-Muqaddasi is called *Ahsan al-Ta'asim fi Ma'rifat al-Aqalim* (The best divisions for knowledge of the regions). It was written in Arabic in the 10th century. It has a substantial section on *al-Mashriq*, which al-Muqaddasi argues should be seen as one region separated by the Amu Darya, which he calls the Jayhun.⁶³¹ There are many elements of

⁶³⁰ They are following in the footsteps of al-Balkhi (d. 934) whose works have not survived. We know that he founded a new discipline, that of human geography, or social anthropology, using principles of Arab rationalism. (Gaube 1999).

⁶³¹ Muqaddasi 1994:260ff. Equally Grabar 1983 is calling for the area to be viewed as a whole.

interest here, but for our purposes it is noteworthy that when compared to the metropolises of Iraq, those of the eastern provinces, Nishapur, Samarqand and Bukhara are seen to be long established (1994:242). Al-Muqaddasi discusses the settlements one by one, and whether they include a mosque, a *quhandiz*⁶³² and other features, such as canals, suburbs and markets. Also mentioned is local produce. He also talks about city gates and whether the population are Sunni Muslims. He notes that “in the entire region [of Khurasan and Transoxiana] the dynasty of Saman is mentioned in the Friday sermon; and the land tax is paid to them, except by the amirs of Sijstan, Khwarazm, Gharj al-Shar, Juzjan, Bust, Ghaznin and al-Khuttal, they send gifts only, and their rulers avail themselves of the land taxes” (1994:337).⁶³³

Samanid Mints⁶³⁴

The list of 47 mints, which Miles notes is probably incomplete:

Ferghana - east of Jaxartes 1)- Akhsikat 2) Uzkan 3) Tunkath 4) Ilaq 5) al-Shash (Tashkent) 6) Ferghana (Andijan?) 7) Qubba 8) Marghinan 9) Nasrabad **Sogdia between Oxus and Jaxartes** 10) Bukhara 11) Sogd 12) Samarqand 13) Taghama **Transoxiana** 14) Ustrushana 15) Andijaragh 16) Badakshan 17) Binkath 18) Termez 19) al-Khuttal 20) Rasht 21) Zamin 22) al-Shaghaniyan **Sistan** 23) Farvan 24) Farah **Khurasan** 25) Andaraba 26) Bamiyan 27) Balkh 28) Panjhir 29) Taliqan 30) Gharchistan 31) Merv 32) al-Ma'dan 33) Nishapur 34) Herat **Qumis** 35) al-Biyar **Gurgan** 36) Astarabad 37) Guran **Tabaristan** 38) Amul 39) Firim **Fars** 40) Shiraz (also called Fars) **Jibal** 41) Sava, 42) Qazvin 43) Qum 44) al-Karaj 45) Mah al-Basra 46) al-Muhammadiyah 47) Hamadan

List of mints under ruler name⁶³⁵

Ahmad I b, Asad: Samarqand and Akhsiket; **Nasr I b. Ahmad:** Samarqand and Shash; **Ismail b, Ahmad:** Andaraba, Andijara, Balkh, Bukhara, Fervan, Khuttal, Ma'den al-Shash, Nishapur, Samarqand, Shash, Ustrushana; **Ahmad b. Ismail,** Andaraba, Bukhara, Merv, Nishapur, Panjhir, Shaghaniyan, Samarqand, Shash (during Ishaq b. Ahmad's mutiny (301/913-14), coins of Samarqand

⁶³² Old citadel (*kuhne diz*), also called *qala*, usually where the local rulers had lived before the Arab conquest.

⁶³³ Maqaddasi notes that the commander of the army is in Nishapur, Sistan is under the control of 'Amr bin al-Layth, Gharj under control of al-Shar, Juzjan under control of the Farighun dynasty, Ghaznin and Bust under the Turks. (1994:337). He does not mention Khuttal here, but it is interesting that the Turks were able to keep their taxes, and were more independent, showing their rise to power.

⁶³⁴ Miles 1975:374.

⁶³⁵ Fedorov 2010a:287.

and Nishapur cited Ishaq b, Ahmad); **Nasr II b, Ahmad**, Akhsiket, Andaraba, Amul, Badakhshan, Balkh, Bamian, Barab, Bian, Binket, Bukhara, Fara, Ferghana, Farvan, Hamadan, Ilaq, Ispijab, Jurjan, Karaj, Khuttal, Ma'den, Mah al-Basra, Mah al-Kufa, Muhammadiya, Nuket, Nishapur, Tunket-Ilaq, Samarqand, Shash, Qazvin, Qum; **Nuh b. Nasr**: Akhsiket, Amul, Badakhshan, Bamian, Bian, Binket, Bukhara, Ferghana, Ilaq, Jurjan, Mah al-Basra, Muhammadiya, Nasrabad, Nuket, Nishapur, Tunket-Ilaq, Samarqand, Save, Shash, Shiraz, Qazvin, Quba, Qum; '**Abd al-Malik I b. Nuh**: Amul, Bukhara, Herat, Nishapur, Samarqand, Shash, Quba; **Mansur I b. Nuh**: Amul, Akhsiket, Balkh, Bukhara, Ferghana, Jurjan, Herat, Nishapur, Shaganiyan, Samarqand, Quba; **Nuh II b, Mansur**: Amul, Balkh, Bukhara, Ferghana, Herat, Khujand, Kurat, Badakhshan, Nishapur, Rasht, Shaganiyan, Samarqand, Shash, Sijistan, Uzgend, Qumm; Mansur II b, Nuh; Andaraba, Bukhara, Nishapur, Ghazna, Herat; '**Abd al-Malik II b. Nuh**: Ispijab, Bukhara; **Ismail II b, Nuh** (Muntasir); Bukhara.

Description of the Chinese Embassy⁶³⁶

He also ordered all the houses [in Bukhara] to be decked out in various colours. Goldsmiths were summoned; his throne and ceremonial table were laid out, and he ordered a great crown to be made. He commanded them to make forty sceptres, each of gold and silver combined, and he commanded that his audience hall should be hung end to end with furnishings stiff with gold embroidered on them. The whole chamber was to be made as resplendent as a superb turquoise. Then he ordered them to collect together as many as possible of gilded breastplates, cuirasses and arm-plates. He reviewed his army and told the commander of the army of volunteers to take as many weapons as he needed from the armoury and as many mounts too....

They found Bukhara en fete and decorated from end to end for their reception 'the town was adorned from beginning to end with pavilions of brocade and silk, hung with all sorts of precious cloths.' The banners of the various quarters of Bukhara were all displayed amounting to 1,700 in all each banner was borne by a group of the local 'ayyars, these groups having from 200 to 1000 men. All these banners were in addition to the flags of the ghazis of Bukhara. The envoys were met on the level ground near the Narh al-Mawali by forty of Nasr b. Ahmed's generals (hujjab). Each general was accompanied by 1000 Turkish slaves; all wearing satin brocade kaftans and caps of sable and fur (sammur) and stationed before each general were ten ghulams with gold swords and belts and with gilded maces, which had the appearance of being solid gold. Next to them along the road were 100 mashayikh on each side, all wearing black and with swords and belts of gleaming white silver, and then there were ten more shuyukh seated on each side and in front of the Amir's throne, these men being dressed in white robes (durr'as). A prominent role in this reception was played by the commanders of the wild beasts (hajabat as-siba). There were ten of these officers, each with five animals, which were of course tamed (mu 'allama) and again each lining the side of the way along which the envoys were to approach the enthroned Amir. The beasts themselves had gilded collars and anklets and there were special attendants for them.

⁶³⁶ Bosworth 1977.

The Amir himself was seated on a gilded throne, encrusted with jewels and wearing his crown. He had over him a quilted coverlet (duwwaj) made from the plumes of pheasants, which had an exterior covering of black silk stiffened with gold thread. From beneath this quilt, two of the wild beasts, in crouching positions, peeped out.

APPENDIX B - Samanid Mausoleum

Samanid Mausoleum: Description

The Samanid Mausoleum is oriented cardinally, with the main door, as shown by the inscription, looking west, an approximate direction of the *qibla*.⁶³⁷ Its structure is made up of an almost perfect cube surmounted by a hemispherical dome with a corner cupola above a three-quarter round pier. Both walls and columns are battered, or slightly inward sloping.⁶³⁸ The piers seem to support the gallery blind arcade with ten arches on the exterior. However, columns, cupolas and gallery are structurally unrelated, being complementary decorative elements. It is suggested that this is due both to the novelty of the building's design, but also because of the amalgamation and fusion of the different building traditions (see below). Inside, the gallery opens to the dome chamber with a single purely structural arch on each side. This traditional form is here filled with a brick lattice (Rempel 1936). The building is constructed of highly articulated baked brick and this material also constitutes the majority of the ornament. This brickwork has sometimes been described either as *hazar baf* ('thousand weavings' in Persian i.e. basket weave), pointing to its textile-like decoration. Subsidiary carved stucco decoration is found on the exterior arcade columns, in the spandrel motif above exterior doorways and in the ribs of the interior squinches.

Below the arches on each of the four sides is a large pointed arch doorway. The aperture is a two centred arch, originally carried on two columns as the well-preserved parts of the west and north walls show (Rempel 1936). The spandrels either side of the four doorway arches are composed of diagonally end-set bricks. In the centre of the spandrels is a baked brick design showing a circle surrounded by three squares, possibly a cosmogramme,⁶³⁹ enclosed by a pearl band border. Above each doorway is a triangle design (see below). The entire doorway on each side is framed by a pearl

⁶³⁷ Mecca is south west of Bukhara.

⁶³⁸ This resembles the Buddhist sanctuary at Kalai Kafirnigan, Period I (Litvinskiy 1981) and the mosque of Diggaron (Hillenbrand 2006b: 4 & 80ff.).

⁶³⁹ Michailidis has compared these to stucco motifs found on the Parthian palace of Assur's façade. (2007) However see Pourshariati 2008 – for direct links between the two. The building of Kyrk Kyz also has links through its quadripartite ground plan to the Parthian palace at Assur (see below).

band border. Diagonally end-set bricks are interspersed with three levels of horizontally set bricks in the corner columns and on the main structure.

Each of the stucco columns either side of the arches in the blind arcade exhibits a subtly different design, some of which can be compared to the 'Samarra' bevelled style. Thus, here importantly we have a reasonably securely dated example of this being used in a Samanid context.⁶⁴⁰ There are bosses in the arches' spandrels and the whole is enclosed in a geometric interlacing. Above the doors is a decoration of two types of quatrefoil, with both rounded and pointed ends. The interior decoration replicates the same masterful quality as the exterior; showing that, unlike the Bavandid tomb towers (Michailidis 2007), the building's interior was meant to be seen (see below). In the interior tripartite pointed-arch squinches span each corner of the chamber, supporting the octahedron transition zone. The squinches are of the same width as the arches between them, resulting in a regular octagonal plan at this level (O'Kane 1995:119-122). This Iranian style squinch has an arch thrown across the corner with a narrower arch of steeper profile within it, so that the two sides of the arch and this half arch constitute three 'ribs' (Rempel 1936). Thus, the dome's weight is carried at three points, as the interior of the squinch carries no load it can be pierced by windows. Blair calls this peculiar tripartite squinch a prefigurement of the "dissolution of the squinch and the rise of the muqarnas" (Blair 1992:25) as shown by the other extant Samanid mausoleum that of Arab Ata in Tim.⁶⁴¹

The dome is also supported by the interior gallery wall transmitting the pressure of the dome to the corner. Rempel believes that the discharging arch which springs from the outer wall over the gallery to the key of the arch prefigures the flying buttress (1936:201). Slender colonettes separate the arches or angles of the octagon in the graceful and decorative transition zone and spanning them is a narrow octagon band with an openwork design of chained lozenges imitating carved wood (Rempel 1936). These baked brick colonettes are more delicate than the carved wooden columns which date to the Samanid period for example from Fatmev and Obburdon. The columns on the Samanid Mausoleum, like those on the Iskodar mihrab can rather be linked to Sogdian columns, such as are shown on the Biya Naiman ossuary (see below). Above is a thin openwork quatrefoil band decorating the hexadecagon, (sixteen-sided polygon) supported by columns between the arches, below the dome. In

⁶⁴⁰ This could have dating implications for the wooden columns with similar style, e.g. that of Urmitan and Fatmev and possibly Kurut (see Chapter Four above). It can be clearly seen in the photograph, that while the right column of the centre arch is reconstructed, it has been based on the original left column.

⁶⁴¹ Arab Ata, in Tim, Samarqand province, Uzbekistan, is a mausoleum dated to the Samanid period which is fascinating as it stands so far from any cities and yet shows many innovations. Pugachenkova explained this was because an architect was sent from Bukhara to build it (1999) through its monumental inscription in floriated Kufic on its pishtaq porch, dating to 977 CE, and thus one of the earliest examples of the type. It is an innovative architectural monument also having a tripartite squinch which heralds muqarnas (Pugachenkova 1963, Grabar 1966:19, Blair 1992:47-48).

the spandrels are shallow discs with a central boss (see the Table of Motifs below). Pearl bands are found again framing the doorway arches and bordering the dome base. Interspersed lozenge and square bricks make up the upper layer of the decoration and lozenges can also be seen decorating some of the corner arches. Windows between the arches are covered by a baked brick grille, with quatrefoil and polygon motifs. Stucco is also found on each of triangular sections on the interior, where it is shaped into a scrolling vine motif, showing an undulating stem carrying half three-bract leaves⁶⁴² of acanthus origin (Rempel 1936:203).

The building measures 11 by 11 metres with its walls being two metres thick. The thick walls, together with the fact that the building was protected by surrounding graves, may have been the reason it survived when so many buildings have perished. It was excavated in 1934 by the Soviet archaeologist Shishkin, who found it buried under several metres of sand and earth. The brick tomb can be seen inside, placed near the entrance. The graves were relocated, the area was desanctified and turned into the Kirov public park (Rempel 1936).

Samanid Mausoleum: Dating and waqf documentation

The picture is quite a confused one: according to a waqf document,⁶⁴³ which is a copy dated 1568-69 CE/986 AH of an original document dated to 868 CE/ 254,⁶⁴⁴ there is evidence that Ismail donated land for the construction of the *mazar* (grave) of his father Ahmed b. Asad. This land was in the western part of the city outside the Arg, on what is now known as the Char-Gumbazon Street. Topographically this is in the same location as the Samanid Mausoleum and thus Pugachenkova argues that the Samanid Mausoleum was the same building mentioned in the waqf document constructed by Ismail for his father Ahmed (Pugachenkova 1999:140). “He [Ismail] dies on 14 Safar 295 (AH) His [Ruhmeshugel = grave] is found in Bukhara on the western part of the city” (quoted in

⁶⁴² This is also seen in Samanid pottery – and on Sogdian metalware silver ewer from 700 CE <http://www.iranicaonline.org/articles/sogdiana-vi-sogdian-art> (accessed 20/08/2013).

⁶⁴³ Stock notes that while the waqf evidence is often mentioned, the content is variously given by different authors. She describes seven *waqf* records and seven supplements relevant to the Samanid Mausoleum, first published in Cekhovic (Stock 1989). In the Bukhara *waqf* collection in the Central Archives of Uzbekistan No 1287 is a *waqf* document of Ismail Samanid, written in 986 AH, from an original from 254 AH/ 868 CE with six and a half pages, with later additions. To Stock’s knowledge, only a photograph of this waqf document has been preserved, which she has translated in full from the photograph. She concludes, however, that it was written at the latest in the 18th century, rather than copied from an old document. She has looked at the seals, palaeography and terminology as well as the words and phrases used. The confusion with the dating, makes her think that this is a new document rather than a copy of a medieval document (Stock 1989:273-283).

⁶⁴⁴ Russian translation (Cekhovic 1950 pp.159-170 in Stock 1989). This should be published by Zaidzanov and the supposed publishing by Umniakov has a sentence quoting Zaidzanov (Stock 1989).

Stock 1989 quoting Zasyrkin 1940).⁶⁴⁵ Pugachenkova states that there was a mausoleum of Ismail's son Ahmed (d. 914) in the Naukand⁶⁴⁶ cemetery, located far to the south of the Samanid Mausoleum (and thus not the same area),⁶⁴⁷ according to sources (Pugachenkova 1999:140ff.).⁶⁴⁸ Treadwell believes that the building was built by Nasr, as Ibn al-Athir tells us that Nasr was buried with his father, and Yaqut reports that Nasr had built his own grave (*qabr*) twenty years before his death (Treadwell 1991 Note 42). However, this seems to confuse the picture further if we believe, following Pugachenkova that Ahmad b. Ismail was buried at Naukanda which is in a different location to the Samanid Mausoleum.

Antecedents of the Samanid Mausoleum

While it is important to give a brief outline of the Samanid Mausoleum's antecedents, enabling the building to be placed in a web of different architectural trajectories in a culturally heterogeneous area, as this contributes to an appreciation of how its meaning was created by its builders and their audiences. There has been much scholarship on the antecedents of the mausoleum and the domed square type, however, from both Western and Soviet scientists and a complete rehearsal of their arguments is not thought useful here. Our aim is to place the mausoleum in its present context – that of the capitol complex, as this is rarely looked at.

There are various Central Asian antecedents posited for domed-square mausolea. These include secular buildings such as the *kushk*, which have been archaeologically excavated, as well as being depicted in contemporary silverware such as the Anikovo plate and Berlin salver (see below). Khmel'nitsky is the main proponent of this theory (1992). The domed square form also has a possible Buddhist heritage, outlined by scholars such as Litvinskiy (1981). Other scholars, such as Pugachenkova have linked the Samanid Mausoleum to the mural found in Penjikent of a mourning

⁶⁴⁵ Stock notes that the Russian word 'mogila' never means building works but a grave hill similar to a Scythian kurgan. Zasyrkin does not give the original, which she could not discover in Frye either, Narshakhi gives the date of death as 15 Safar (Stock 1989). However, Frye notes that the date of 14 Safar is given by Gardizi 22, this is also stated in Mirkhwand and Samani (Narshakhi 1954 Note 273).

⁶⁴⁶ The name 'Naukand' includes the Turkic toponym for land, 'kand' (Lurie 2003 in http://s155239215.onlinehome.us/turkic/40_Language/Toponymy/KamoliddinPart4En.htm (accessed 12/04/2014).

⁶⁴⁷ However other scholars believe that the Naukand cemetery and canal is in the same area as the mausoleum (Michailidis 2007).

⁶⁴⁸ Pugachenkova (1999) does not state her sources, just directs readers to Bulatov's publication (Bulatov 1976), however it is likely that she is meaning Narshakhi 1954:129. Descendants of Ismail Samanid lived in an area of Bukhara supported by *waqf* income until 1920. The *waqf* document is copy made in 1578 of *waqf* document of 868. It gives a list of lands belonging to descendants corresponding to Narshakhi – among districts listed are Juy-i Muliyan and Nahr-i Naukanda (Narshakhi 1954: Note 128).

structure (Pugachenkova 1994,1999). Khmel'nitsky believes that the presumed links between the chahar taq and early Islamic mausolea are too general (1992), and in any case this structure resembled that found in palaces, which had the common features of a square hall covered by a dome resting on squinches, piers at four corners and four arches piercing four walls (Marshak 2002c:138). Can it be argued that this kind of structure has been continued in the secular building of Kyrk Kyz (see below)?⁶⁴⁹

It is argued here that the mausolea shows the mixed heritage found in Central Asia where it is difficult to unpick the origins of various forms. Very few pre-Islamic grave memorials have been found, and monumental grave buildings or mausolea only date from the 9th century, i.e. the Islamic period. Khmel'nitsky believes that because these early mausolea show a clear typological unity of a domed square from the beginning, this means that they must have pre-Islamic roots (Khmel'nitsky 1989:179).⁶⁵⁰

Sogdian ossuaries showing a domed building have been found (see for example Khmel'nitsky 1989, Fig. 122, which shows two ossuaries from Merv). Possibly these replicate in miniature the appearance of the naus, where ossuaries were placed (Khmel'nitsky 1989:179ff, Pugachenkova 1994). This naus was itself a centre for veneration (Shishkina 1994). A domed pavilion is found on the Yu Hong couch, a Sogdian funerary relief from China (**Fig. 195**). While the pavilion is common on Chinese funerary reliefs, the crowns, musicians and haloed female attendants identify this paradise as Zoroastrian (Grenet 2013).

⁶⁴⁹ See below.

⁶⁵⁰ Khmel'nitsky rejects links to Buddhist or Christian funerary customs, the former as Buddhism does not hold that human remains have any value, and the medieval cemetery by Ak-Beschim church had simple earth graves (Khmel'nitsky 1989:179-184). However, it seems unusual to base this supposition on the result of one cemetery.

IMAGE REMOVED FOR COPYRIGHT REASONS

Figure 195: Yu Hong couch, 593 CE, © Grenet & Ory 2013 Fig 15, showing a Sogdian Zoroastrian paradise with a pavilion in a garden

Also discussed is the early eighth century Sogdian mural⁶⁵¹ from Temple II in Penjikent (Azarpay 1981, Figs 49, 56-7): the dome is in a funerary context, which Pugachenkova interprets as a catafalque, with a hemispherical dome and short order columns similar in organisational structure to the Samanid Mausoleum (1994; 1999). Khmel'nitsky believes that this is a 'Ked',⁶⁵² square in plan, and with a hemispherical dome⁶⁵³ (Khmel'nitsky 1989: Fig 125). While clearly a domed structure, it is hard to tell whether this was a permanent building or a tent, and thus this thesis follows Khmel'nitsky's argument that the secular buildings or *kushk* represented on the Anikovo plate and Berlin Salver are more likely to represent the Mausoleum's antecedents (Khmel'nitsy 1992).

The construction of Qubbat al-Sulaibiyya in Samarra, Iraq for al-Muntasir in mid-9th century is a domed octagon, built for him by his Byzantine mother, supposedly a dynastic tomb⁶⁵⁴, which could have been a monumental model for the Samanid Mausoleum. Blair argues that the Samanids could be seen to be consciously imitating this Abbasid innovation also in the face of Buyid Shi'i threats (Blair

⁶⁵¹ The funeral of a young, beardless crowned person whose death is mourned by gods and humans is shown. The deceased was tentatively identified by excavators as Siyavush, reputed founder of Bukhara, described in Narshakhi (1954:22-23) and the Shahnama (Azarpay 1981), however it could also be a scene linked to the funerary cult of Penjikent. This ritual was associated, according to Chinese sources, with the Sogdian variant of the Adonis cult where the goddess Nana was believed to have joined with mortals in annual mourning for the dead god (Azarpay 1981).

⁶⁵² A Ked is a building for the temporary resting of a famous or well-known person (Khmel'nitsky 1989:184).

⁶⁵³ It is interesting that strict Zoroastrian beliefs prohibit the mourning displays shown in the Penjikent mural, demonstrating how Iranian Zoroastrian beliefs were transformed to suit local needs in Central Asia. Khmel'nitsky (1992) is not convinced about Pugachenkova's reconstruction, and believes the structures were made of wooden carcasses rather than brick (although it resembles brick architecture).

⁶⁵⁴ Northedge reminds us that this tomb is not securely dated, and its brief excavation in 1911 took place over only three days (1991 figs 15-16). There was only one photograph taken in the dome chamber barely showing the burials, thus Northedge believes that it is possible they could be secondary inhumations.

1992:27).⁶⁵⁵ Treadwell refutes this, believing the Mausoleum to stem from a local tradition, and questioning the 'largely unsubstantiated assumption' that Samanid architecture was based on Abbasid architectural models (1991:50). There are instances where the Samanids could be seen to be following Abbasid imperial style, however. According to Narshaki, the vizier al-Jaihani added a minaret to the congregational mosque in 918 CE (Frye 1965) and as Bloom has argued the minaret was introduced in the 9th century as a specific symbol of Abbasid authority (Bloom 1989).⁶⁵⁶ The bevelled style, called Samarra C (see Chapter Four) is also noted in stucco on a column of the blind arch on the façade of the Samanid Mausoleum. Thus Treadwell's belief that there are no solid grounds for postulating an Abbasid model for the Samanid Mausoleum does not quite hold true.⁶⁵⁷ Also, in the case of Kyrk Kyz (see below), which might well (though it is unproved) be a Samanid building, there are links in its layout to Islamic palaces.

Following Khmel'nitsky, the two main Central Asian structures for elucidating this mausoleum are depicted on two dishes, the Anikovo Plate in the Hermitage Museum and the so-called Berlin Salver in the Museum für Islamische Kunst, Berlin. The Anikovo plate (**Fig. 34**)⁶⁵⁸ shows a realistic picture of a two-storeyed castle (*kushk*) being defended from mounted attackers. This architecture is representative of Samarqand and Bukhara from the early middle ages (Marshak 1986). The diagonally placed bricks resemble those on Khoja Mashhad, convincing Khmel'nitsky of the image's veracity (Khmel'nitsky 1963 in Stock 1990). The diamonds interspersed with quatrefoils also remind us of the Samanid Mausoleum, as does the arched arcade above the door, here on the second floor. The plate shows a goffered façade which has been reconstructed by Nilsen on Varakhsha (Khmel'nitsky 1989 Fig. 86).

Also discussed as a possible antecedent is the large bronze salver in Berlin (**Figs. 38 and 196**).⁶⁵⁹ Its central medallion has a stylised and irregular palace building, with a central dome with two smaller

⁶⁵⁵ See Chapter Three above, obviously this depends on the dating of the Mausoleum, as if it was built for Ismail, this would have been pre-Buyid.

⁶⁵⁶ See section on minarets in Chapter Four above.

⁶⁵⁷ Treadwell believes "the argument relies too heavily on the largely unsubstantiated assumption that the Samanids were dependent on Abbasid architectural and procedural models" equally, the dimensions are completely different, and it is based on an Iranian *chahar taq* rather than an Iraqi model (Treadwell 1991:50).

⁶⁵⁸ The Anikovo plate is now in the Hermitage Museum, St Petersburg, and was a chance find. Generally thought to come from Central Asia and date to 5-8th century (Marshak 1986 Figs 209-211).

⁶⁵⁹ Berlin Inv No 5624, height 9cm, and diameter 64.5cm, possibly Sasanian provenance (see Pope 1933 & Grabar 1963 Fig 8). The plate has early 8th century CE structural elements e.g. a blind arcade and crenellations with winged palmettes. Under the building is a large winged motif of Sasanian origin, also found in early Islamic architecture. Around the salver's edge is a horseshoe arch arcade with stylized plant forms interspersed with the winged motif. Possibly referencing heavenly vegetation similar to Umayyad mosque in Damascus (von Gladiß 2012, fig 2). Dated in this publication and museum label as 8th century, and provenance of (Greater) Iran. The building has contemporary architectural elements similar to those in Umayyad desert palace, Qasr al Hair al-

domes either side, and an arched arcade above the door. This unique motif on extant metal artefacts possibly represents a building similar to the Samanid Mausoleum. Due to the sickle shaped symbol above the structure as well as the Sasanian winged motifs, it seems certain that this building was secular and probably a royal structure or pavilion. Here, again, a dome could be seen to be a sign of a royal presence (Grabar 1963:195ff.). Upham Pope sees the design as representing the Sasanian notion of Paradise. The garden palace is not necessarily a fire temple, in spite of the presence (as he believes) of a fire altar. "It seems primarily if not exclusively, to be a pictorial symbol of the divine abundance, the infinite source of light and life, which it radiates in all directions" (Upham Pope 1933:83). Khmel'nitsky also agrees that it shows a reception hall or pavilion in a palace, as it displays forms representative of domestic architecture (Khmel'nitsky 1989:115-132). It is noteworthy that both the Berlin salver and the gallery of the Samanid mausoleum have ten arches.⁶⁶⁰ It is also interesting to speculate whether there is any connection between the wings above the door in the Berlin salver and the 'triangle motifs' in the Samanid Mausoleum. Certainly, their similarity of placement would suggest a link in viewers' minds, it is argued of those who were used to seeing the iconographical wing motif placed in this way (see below).

Both the Anikovo and Berlin salvers have a central pillar in the middle of the main doorway. Upham Pope suggests this connects to the buildings' Zoroastrian function (1933) which is also supported by a Penjikent mural which shows a similar motif (Marshak 1986:322 fig 213.1).⁶⁶¹ It is noteworthy that these two buildings had similar functions although one is in a garden and one in a battle scene.

gharbi, however the main dome is surmounted by the sickle moon, the Sasanian royal symbol.

⁶⁶⁰ Giving a total of forty for the Samanid Mausoleum, a significant number, especially of time, for example 40 days in a chillakhana.

⁶⁶¹ Similar pillars are found on Sasanian sealstones (Lechler 1937).

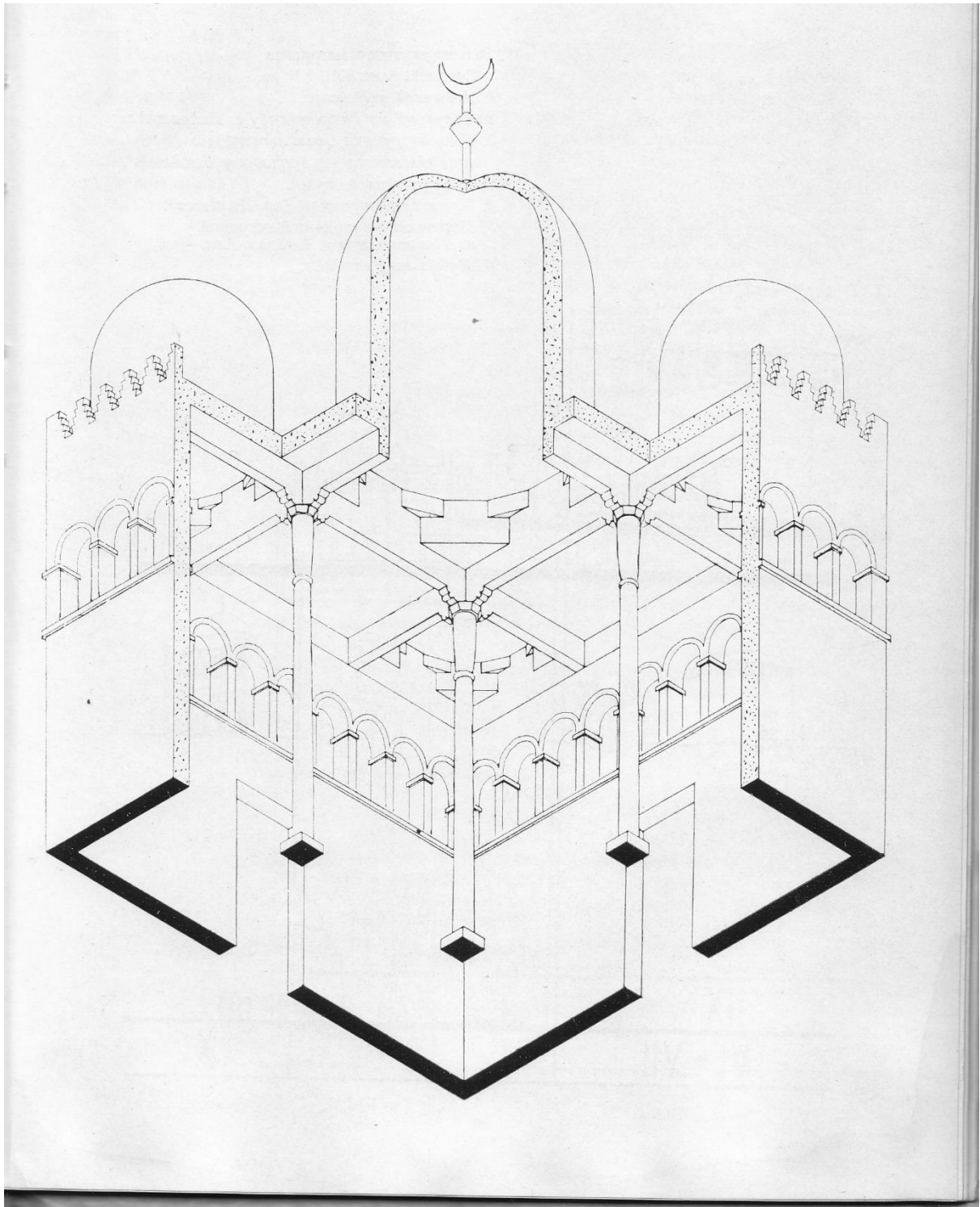


Figure 196: Bulatov 1976 Fig 30 – possible three-dimensional reconstruction from the Berlin salver

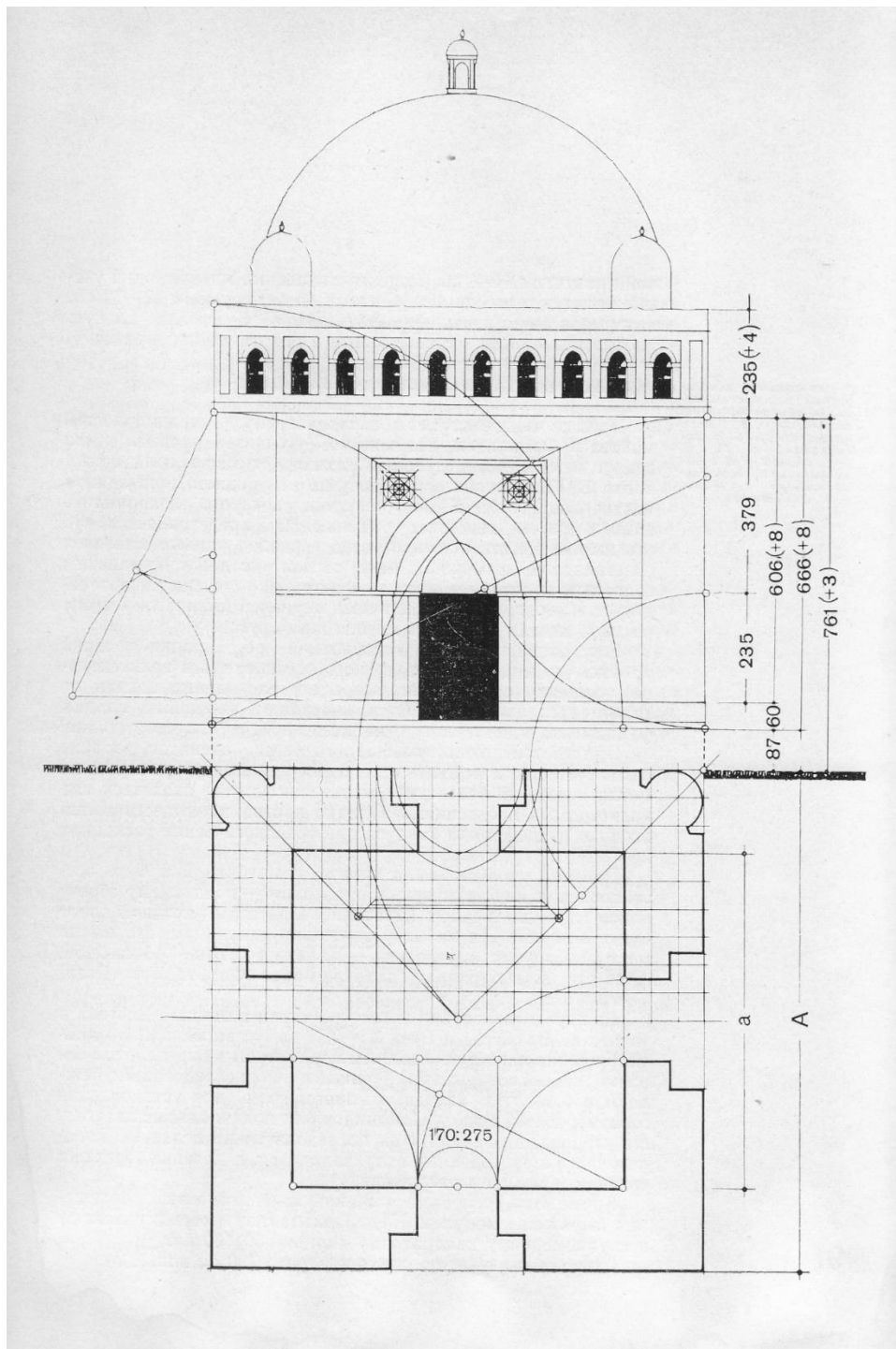


Figure 197: Samanid Mausoleum, Bulatov P 92 Fig 32

Samanid Mausoleum: Table of motifs

A table of motifs has been included here as it provides an overview and précis of the various motifs in the Mausoleum, and their many putative origins.

	Sogdian	Buddhist	Islamic	Iranian/ Sasanian - Fars	Classical	Mixed / Unknown/ Other	Samanid/ Early Islamic
STRUCTURE							
Cardinal orientation		Buddhist stupa	Islamic palaces – e.g. Qasr al- Jiss ⁶⁶²				Kyrk Kyz Other mausolea e.g. Khoja Mashhad
Domed- square	Oldest naus – almost square room (9 x 9.5 m) with arched niche in the middle of three walls, Possibly covered with a dome. Ossuary Small domed square rooms in a kushk – possibly cultic Khmel'nitsky 1989 Fig. 21	Buddhist stupa	Dynastic Abbasid mausoleums?	Chahar taq	Martyria ?		Khoja Mashhad, Tilla Hillaji
Squinces	Squinces formed of elliptical arch with windows in Tschil-Chudschra (7-8 th century)– first time wall openings seen in squinces – like Samanid Mausoleum						
Hole in dome	Holes in Zoroastrian ossuaries to emit the sun's rays ⁶⁶³						
Tapering structure – battered	Small palace in Bunjikat ⁶⁶⁴						Diggaron mosque
Corner towers	Kushk e.g. Tschil- Chudschra ⁶⁶⁵						Kyrk Kyz

⁶⁶² Khmel'nitsky 1992.

⁶⁶³ Grenet 1984 in Bivar 1987.

⁶⁶⁴ Khmel'nitsky 1989 Fig 68.

⁶⁶⁵ Near Shahristan in northern Tajikistan Khmel'nitsky 1989 Fig 22.

Corner domes - quincunx	Kushks with five domes reconstructed ⁶⁶⁶					Berlin salver and also incense burner – from Amman	Diaggaron mosque – Domes in same order ⁶⁶⁷ ? But nine domes?
Upper gallery	Defensive platform in kushk – as in Anikovo plate ⁶⁶⁸	Buddhist architecture in Xinjang and Afghanistan ⁶⁶⁹	Although these corridors were found in some early Islamic buildings they mostly ceased with the development of the portal ⁶⁷⁰	Blind corridors in Parthian and Sasanian fire temples ⁶⁷¹	Classical temples with statuary in the arches	Sanctuary surrounded by corridor in Buddhist cultic architecture - Kalai Kafirnigan Buddhist temple ⁶⁷² Ajina Tepe has tiny discharging arch galleries (Litvinskiy 1968). Synthesis of Indian and Iranian architectural ideas ⁶⁷³	
Columns of upper gallery			Samarra bevelled style on columns	Spirals and zigzags – Ctesiphon Kish Damghan		Spirals and zigzags on columns like the columns of the Sasanian palaces of Ctesiphon, Kish, Damghan Samarra	
Baked brick							Only became common in 10 th C
Chahar taq				“a fire temple in Islamic dress” ⁶⁷⁴	May have classical heritage ⁶⁷⁵		Early mausolea Khaja Bulkhak, Tilla Hillaji Also link quadripartite form – Kyrk Kyz
Ten arches in Upper gallery	Berlin Salver - both have ten arches in upper gallery						

⁶⁶⁶ Khmelnitsky 1989.

⁶⁶⁷ Creswell 1932.

⁶⁶⁸ Khmelnitsky 1992:125-140

⁶⁶⁹ Litvinskiy 1981.

⁶⁷⁰ Rempel 1936.

⁶⁷¹ Rempel 1936.

⁶⁷² Litvinskiy 1981, Fig 33.

⁶⁷³ Litvinskiy 1981:54-55.

⁶⁷⁴ Hillenbrand 1994:290.

⁶⁷⁵ Hillenbrand 1994.

Geometric layout			Square root of two ⁶⁷⁶ New ideas here				
Arch above door – two centred arch?							
Small hole at top of dome							Khoja Mashhad, Diggaron mosque ⁶⁷⁷
Hazar baf							Northeast Iranian brickwork resembling textiles – (Golombek 1988) Khoja Mashhad
DECORATION							
Pearl Band	Textiles and in Penjikent wall paintings also kind of pearl band on Berlin salver		Samarra wall paintings	Textiles		Tang China textiles	
Inscription			Arab lettering and inscription- could be later addition?				
Quatrefoils	Sogdian textiles and wall paintings Anikovo salver			Achaemenid rosette - flower of the whirling sun			Quatrefoils are very common design in Samanid ceramics e.g. Fig 26
lozenges				Lozenge borders also Sasanians, e.g. stucco work Damghan Veramin (Bernheimer 1938).			Sabz Pushan stucco in Nishapur and tombstone from Nishapur ⁶⁷⁸ Also Khoja Mashhad
'cosmogram me'	Varakhsha wall paintings Rempel 1965, Shiskin 1963			Possible link to Parthian palace of Assur Fig. 37?		Cave complex at Dunhuang ⁶⁷⁹ Possibly link to Lanternedecke ceiling – Khmelnsky	
Triangles above doors	Wings? – like in Berlin Salver		10th C Islamic rulers still used winged crown - Bahrami gold medal	If they are wings, this links to Sasanian pre-Islamic royal prototypes - or just general power		Hephthalite kings also had winged crown	Wings in stucco in Asht mihrab

⁶⁷⁶ Hillenbrand 1994:14.

⁶⁷⁷ Khmelnsky 1992:72-78 and 146-156.

⁶⁷⁸ Chevedden 1986.

⁶⁷⁹ <http://enweb.dha.ac.cn/0011/index.htm> (Accessed 29/07/2014) Mogau Cave 249, Western Wei 534-556 CE.

Transition zone	Friezes in transition zone the Anikovo plate ⁶⁸⁰						Khoja Mashhad and the later Ribat-i Malik ⁶⁸¹
Interior columns	Sogdian ossuaries						Interior columns placed in octagonal transition zone purely for decoration, providing no support to dome. ⁶⁸² Cf. Arab Ata. Thus, they visually represent and are a sign of a vertical support which is fictive ⁶⁸³
Discs in the spandrels	Discs in spandrels ⁶⁸⁴		Mihrab below dome of the Rock		Discs – classical <i>paterae</i> –	Discs also in Ibn Tulun mosque mihrab No Gunbad Gwalior	Arab Ata Domed hall in Afrasiab
Interlace			Khirbet al-Mafjar ⁶⁸⁵				Interlace ceramics, wood etc.
Stucco	Not Sogdian			Iranian / Sasanian decorative media –e.g. Ctesiphon, Takht-e Suleiman ⁶⁸⁶			Nishapur, Afrasiab Varakhsha palace – 5 th stage ⁶⁸⁷

⁶⁸⁰ Khmel'nitsky in Stock 1990.

⁶⁸¹ Khmel'nitsky in Stock 1990.

⁶⁸² This is even clearer in Arab-Ata in Tim, where the columns clearly do not support the dome.

⁶⁸³ Cf. Fairchild Ruggles 1997.

⁶⁸⁴ Pugachenkova 1991.

⁶⁸⁵ Grabar 1987 Fig 77.

⁶⁸⁶ Kröger 1982.

⁶⁸⁷ Naymark 2003.

APPENDIX C – Zarafshan Valley

Historical outline: Ustrushana in Samanid period

The Upper Zarafshan is seen to be a part of medieval Ustrushana by 10th century geographers such as the author of the *Hudud al-'Alam*. At one time called Buttam or Buttamon, the Upper Zarafshan in the tenth century formed a separate province with its own *Malik* of Buttam (Ibn Khurdadbih in Barthold 1968).⁶⁸⁸ Four rivers emerge here, including the Zarafshan, and it had Inner, Middle and Outer areas. "This is a region with much cultivation but with a poor population (*darvishan*). It has many villages and districts and, in its mountains, numerous mines of ammoniac (*naushadhur*) are found" (1937:115). Istakhri also mentions the Buttamon mines of gold, silver, vitriol and ammoniac (in Bosworth and Clauson 1965). Most importantly, local iron ore was made into weapons in the towns of Marsmanda and Mink/Mank and exported as far as Khurasan and Iraq (Ibn Kurdadbi and Ibn Hawqal in Bosworth 2005), thus showing the high level of the craftsmanship here. This area was not just a source of raw materials. This might be one reason for the splendid extant artefacts in the Zarafshan, as there was potentially money there to donate gifts to the local mosques and build minarets. Although rich in mineral resources, this highland district, dominated by gorges and mountain passes, is not easily accessible, even today.⁶⁸⁹

Ustrushana⁶⁹⁰ was closely linked to Sogdiana culturally and historically, originally a part of it, but with increasing urbanisation developing its own identity,⁶⁹¹ for example the region had its own dialect. Its rich mineral and agricultural resources and location on the main trans-Asian route from the Near and Middle East to Central Asia and China also played a role in its identity formation. In the Early Middle Ages there was a synthesis of the local traditional culture in Ustrushana with new Sogdian, Indo-Iranian and Mediterranean cultural elements brought in by the aristocracy (Negmatov 1986). From the late 5th to the 7th century, the area formed part of the Hephthalite and Western Turk states, however

⁶⁸⁸ Several 10-12th century Muslim geographers thought that Buttam/ Buttaman on Upper Zarafshan, south of the Turkestan range ridge was part of Ustrushana (Barthold 1968, Stark 2008a).

⁶⁸⁹ On my trip to Obburdon in Summer 2011 I had to walk, together with a group of local people, from Fatmev to the next village along a narrow and precipitous track high above the river as a landslide had destroyed the road. On the way back we used donkeys to carry our packs.

⁶⁹⁰ Our knowledge of Ustrushana (Ustrushana) in late pre-Islamic and early Islamic periods is based on archaeology, numismatics and written evidence, including the Sogdian letters and Mount Mugh documents and Arabic sources such as Tabari (al-Tabari 1195ff.) who tells us at length about Khaidar (See also de la Vaissière 2007:39 ff.).

⁶⁹¹ However today the Upper Zarafshan is in the Sogd province, as Tajikistan has renamed the Leninobod region for its ancient name. Sogdiana was centred on the heartland of Bukhara and Samarqand, rather where its modern realisation is located. Again, Uzbekistan is seen to have appropriated the ancient territory, but Tajikistan has taken the name.

they probably retained their own rulers, the Afshins of the Kavus dynasty as well as their internal autonomy. Early medieval Ustrushan architecture had remarkable variety⁶⁹² showing a complex society with different social levels and functions (**Fig. 198**).

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Figure 198: Kala-i Kakhkaha I, reconstruction of the Afshins' palace Marshak & Negmatov 1996, Fig. 29

According to archaeological evidence the intensive growth of Bunjikat began in the 7th and 8th centuries. A major site was Kalai Kakhkaha (Marshak & Negmatov 1996). The residence of Ustrushanan ruler at Kalai Kakhkaha was a multi columned hall (which was resembled the old Persian apadanas at Persepolis and Susa). The paintings of Kala Kakhkaha show - as they do in

⁶⁹² Architecture included royal palaces, castles of the urban and rural aristocracy, including Chilhujra and Urtakurgan, barracks and temples, all with well-developed characteristic layouts (Marshak & Negmatov 1996).

neighbouring Penjikent - a vast array of influences, the four-armed Kushano-Sogdian goddess Nana is mounted on a lion⁶⁹³ (Marshak & Negmatov 1996 Fig. 35), a she-wolf is shown suckling two twin boys (Marshak & Negmatov 1996 Fig. 33), in the same way as Romulus and Remus. Also, a three-headed four-armed divinity is shown, possibly a specifically Ustrushanian interpretation of the Hindu Vishparkar (Marshak & Negmatov 1996). The wall paintings from this site (**Figs. 199-200**) show Chinese influences, suggesting that this area was not just a pale reflection of the more metropolitan Sogdian plain to the west. There is a close parallel of the *div* or demon in a painting from Dunhuang at the British Museum.⁶⁹⁴ The ruler's image seems more connected to Uighur and Turkic depictions.



Figure 199: Wall painting, Prince, Bunjikat, 8-9th century

⁶⁹³ The main goddess of Ustrushana, and a great warrior mother.

⁶⁹⁴ British Museum 1919,0101,0.45 from Cave 17, Cave of the Thousand Buddhas, Dunhuang (9th century) showing a painting of Vasiravana, guardian of the north, the div here resembles the yaksha warrior in the front of the image.



Figure 200: Wall painting: Div, Bunjikat 8-9th century

Religious as well as secular power was concentrated in the hands of the Afshin. Marshak and Negmatov believe that the rulers were almost deified⁶⁹⁵ which might be another reason why the Afshins in the 9th century fought so hard for the population to continue practising their old religion (see below). The palace⁶⁹⁶ of Buttam (Falgar) has been excavated in Kum, a small village between Urmitan and Aini. This castle was built on a natural platform and heavily fortified; the external west wall was more than 4 metres thick. The castle had more than 30 vaulted rooms, including reception halls with four pillars and private chapels. In the largest room, a throne room, the ceiling was supported by eight wooden columns, like in Bunjikat, another sign of the long history of woodworking in this region. The palace's location is not far from the villages which are the source of the Urmitan and Kurut columns and the Aini minaret. Khmelnitsky reports that the results of the ongoing excavation are not well published yet (1989:131).⁶⁹⁷

In the late 7th – 8th centuries Ustrushana fought the Arabs for their independence and the area did not submit until Ma'mun's (r.813-833 CE) caliphate in about 820 (Bosworth 2005). The indigenous ruler, Kawus' story is well known through Tabari (1991), he was captured and forced to come to Baghdad, where he converted to Islam and was re-established as ruler of the province. His son Khaidar subsequently became the first noble at the caliph's court under the name Afshin.⁶⁹⁸ Afshin Khaidar b, Kavus was one of caliph al-Mu'tasim's principal men of state.⁶⁹⁹ A coronation ritual in which the caliph crowned (*tawwaja*), enthroned (*ajlasa... 'ala kursi*) him and endowed him with a belt (*washshaha*) is mentioned in connection with the campaigns that he led for al-Mu'tasim in 837-8 (Marsham 2009 notes 67-8, quoting Tabari iii). Coronation of commanders and administrators was part of the invented traditions connected with the Abbasids' new capital in Samarra (Marsham 2009:269).

Khaidar was appointed to an Egyptian governorship as well as the governorship of Sind, suggesting another way that motifs and artistic ideas circulated in the Caliphal Empire, without necessarily going directly through the Islamic heartlands of Iraq, and also how Indian influence continued into the early

⁶⁹⁵ The phrase used was 'To the lord of lords from his slave so-and-so the son of so-and-so' (Marshak & Negmatov 1996).

⁶⁹⁶ Khmelnitsky has called this a palace but notes that the differences between castles and palaces are very unclear, and depend on the complex's function, room sizes, whether it was an administrative centre and how far its power reached (1989:115-132).

⁶⁹⁷ I have not found any more information on this.

⁶⁹⁸ Together with the Barmakids from Balkh, the family of the Afshin were some of the pre-eminent Central Asian families known to have moved to the Abbasid heartland to occupy key positions there.

⁶⁹⁹ The caliph al-Mu'tasim appointed Khaidar as al-Jibal's governor, he was also a governor of Barqa in Egypt, repressing Coptic and Bedouin rebellions in Alexandria and the Delta. His career peak was the repression of Babak's anti-Islamic revolt in Azerbaijan and north-western Persia, for which he was richly rewarded, adding the governorship of Sind to existing governorships of Armenia and Azerbaijan (Bosworth 1984).

<http://www.iranicaonline.org/articles/afsin-princely-title> (accessed 3/04/2013).

Islamic period.⁷⁰⁰ Khaidar was executed by the Caliph in 841, and the ostensible reasons for this,⁷⁰¹ and his trial are given in Tabari. These tell us something about the situation in Ustrushana at that time, as well as their attitudes to material culture, pre-Islamic and Islamic. The Afshin was charged with whipping an imam and a muezzin, and so he says in his defence:

They built a mosque in Ustrushana, so I gave each of them 1000 lashes because there exists between me and the princes of al-Sugd a covenant and stipulation that I should leave each people to their own religion and beliefs. These two men fell upon a house that contained their idols... and threw out the idols and turned it into a mosque. I accordingly gave them 1000 lashes each because of their transgression and their keeping people from their place of worship" (Tabari III 1309, trans. E. Bosworth).

Khaidar is also accused of having a "book ornamented with gold, jewels and satin brocade and that contains blasphemies against God".⁷⁰² Bosworth speculates that this refers to a Manichaean illuminated book (Tabari 1991:187 Note 535). Wooden idol figures, probably Buddhist, decorated with jewellery were found in his palace in Samarra, now identified as the site of Sur Jubayriyya⁷⁰³ (Tabari III 1318), as well as in Ustrushana and Buttam. This is a concrete example of Central Asian material culture being brought to the Central Islamic lands (Esin 1973-4). The Afshin "represented the old Sogdian noble and military caste, which exhibits the reality as well as the limitations of cultural assimilation of the Sogdian nobility into the Islamic world. These nobles, who still retained a preponderance of Sogdian cultural codes, were sometimes only Muslims on the surface, but politically had definitively joined the Islamic side" (de la Vaissière 2011).⁷⁰⁴

The region is also home to two further cultural groups in the Early Islamic period, the Kangina and the Kumiji as we know from Al-Khwarazmi. They were probably the remnants of an old established Central Asian Iranian people, probably the Saka⁷⁰⁵ whose culture persisted during Early Islamic times in the mountainous and inaccessible lands (Bosworth and Clauson 1965). In the Samanid period, the

⁷⁰⁰ Similar to the governorship of the Samanid ruler Ilyas in Alexandria in 827 (see Appendix A).

⁷⁰¹ The real reason, according to Tabari, is connected with Khaidar inciting Mazyar to rebel so al-Mu'tasim would send him to repress the rebellion, thereby removing 'Abdallah b. Tahir from office to be replaced by Khaidar (Tabari III 1305). The Tahirid governorship of Khurasan was a prize that Khaidar greatly desired. Presumably too Khaidar had made powerful enemies, which finally managed to move against him "a group of prominent figures had been assembled to heap reproaches on al-Afshin for what he had done" (Tabari III 1308).

⁷⁰² Khaidar responds that this was his father's book which he enjoyed reading for the wise counsels of the Persians. He did not think that it was anti-Islamic and saw no need to remove the adornment. He left it like it was, like the books of Kalila wa Dimna and Book of Mazdak in the chief prosecutor, Muhammad b. 'Abd al-Malik al-Zayyat's house (see Tabari [III 1309 and Bosworth 1991:188, Notes 536-537).

⁷⁰³ Two *farsakhs* to the south of Samarra at al-Mutira were built the cantonments of al-Afshin Khaidar. The site can be identified with the modern area of al-Jubayriya. (Northedge 1991: Fig 1) This palace is also mentioned in Yaqubi.

⁷⁰⁴ <http://www.iranicaonline.org/articles/sogdiana-iii-history-and-archeology> (accessed 16/04/2013)

⁷⁰⁵ However others call the Kangina 'Turks' (Fedorov 2006:201). The *Hudud al-'Alam* differentiates between the two groups and says the Kangina, although Saka, had been absorbed into the Hephthalite confederation (1937).

rebel Abu Ali gained help from the Kumiji mountaineers in fighting Amir Nuh ibn Nasr from 946 CE. Bosworth calls them the “ever turbulent Kumijis” (Bosworth 1981:13). Again, this shows that pre-Islamic elements were living in the Upper Zarafshan in the early Islamic period. It is also possible that there is a link between these two groups and the appearance of the bevelled style known from the Scytho-Siberian animal style (see below).

Stark calls this region a “close periphery” (Stark 2008a:216), closely linked to the core centres of Islamic Transoxiana: Samarqand and Bukhara downstream on the Zarafshan River, as well as to the nearby cities of Penjikent and Shahrstan. It was also linked to areas much further away as it was on one of the main Silk Roads (see above). Thus, influences would have passed in both directions, enabling Ustrushanan culture potentially to influence areas further downstream. This is unlike other Transoxianan highlands, which had no such close connection with important cities. Upland Ustrushana was also not peripheral, in the sense that it was not on the border of Mawarannahr. Stark believes that this link to centres downstream had an important effect on the settlement pattern of the mountainous areas and how they used their resources. And the area also had a deep effect on the political life outside the mountains especially during the pre-Islamic and early Islamic periods (Stark 2008a:215-6). “There is evidence from the written records that the Turkestan range⁷⁰⁶ (*like the whole upper Zarafshan kuhistan*) traditionally offered shelter and safety for war refugees from the lowlands”.⁷⁰⁷ He believes that this could also have happened in the early Islamic period. Arguably this was how the highland areas were able to impact on the neighbouring lowlands, and why the Afshin might have been able to defend their political independence for longer than any other important ruler in Mawarannahr (Stark 2008a:231 – present author’s emphasis). The pre-Islamic Dewastich⁷⁰⁸ (**Fig. 201**) from his last stronghold at Mount Mugh fought the Arab armies in 722 CE, this was a castle built on a mound overlooking the confluence of the Zarafshan and the Qom / Kum rivers.⁷⁰⁹ However even after the political defeat of Dewastich (See Grenet & de la Vaissière 2002), the city of Penjikent continued and wall paintings from the 8th century show that Zoroastrianism was still practiced locally.

⁷⁰⁶ Stark is specifically discussing the Argly valley system in the Turkestan Mountains which is practically invisible from the lowlands and easily defensible (Stark 2008a), but it is suggested here that we could extrapolate his findings to the whole area.

⁷⁰⁷ Stark refers to reports by Arrian in Alexander’s time and later, Babur retreating from the Shaybani Khan in 1501-2 (Stark 2008a: 232 Notes 1&2).

⁷⁰⁸ Not only is Dewastich honoured on the Botanical Gardens entrance (see Chapter Six), but also there is a modern statue to the ruler who fought the Arabs dominating a roundabout at the western end of Penjikent city.

⁷⁰⁹ Mount Mugh (1500 m above sea level and 150 m above the river) is 120 km east of Samarkand and 70 km east of Penjikent. Sogdian documents found there in 1932 are the most important Sogdian political and economic 8th century accounts, written during the Arab conquest. In some documents Dewastich calls himself King of Sogd (Grenet & de la Vaissière 2002).



Figure 201: Portrait of the Ikhshid Divashtich (719-20, not later than 722 CE) (From Fedorov 2007: Fig 4). Reproduced with kind permission from the British Institute of Persian Studies

Thus, Ustrushana was more resistant to external threats and late in accepting Islam: “and therefore preserved for a longer time the peculiar features of the old Aryan aristocratic organisation” (Barthold 1968:168). It was only in the 10th century that Islam was generally accepted by the inhabitants (Negmatov 1986). During the early Samanid period, until Ismail ibn Ahmad conquered it in 892-3, it was ruled by the native dynasty of the Afshins. The last Afshin Sayr b. Abdullah minted his coins in 279/892-3, and Ismail ibn Ahmad minted his own coins in Ustrushana the following year (Fedorov 2004:120).⁷¹⁰

Antecedents and textual evidence of early Islamic Zarafshan mosque architecture

Just as we did with the Samanid Mausoleum’s antecedents, it is important here to elucidate briefly the various antecedents for the woodworking in the Zarafshan. Thus, we can see that there are cultural continuities between the pre-Islamic and Islamic periods, which arguably are far stronger than the differences, for example four columns arranged in a square in the main cella of the Penjikent temples are also seen in the much later mosques in the Zarafshan. A major stylistic difference is the bevelled style which is first seen in the early Islamic wooden columns. It is still discussed whether this was an independent invention to the much more famous, and more ‘central’ stucco panels from Samarra (see below). The balance of scholarly opinion (see Chapter Four above) believes this to be an echo of the

⁷¹⁰ Coins are in the Hermitage Museum collections.

imperial style, but that does not explain its presence here, especially in such deep relief, suggesting an unbroken cultural tradition.

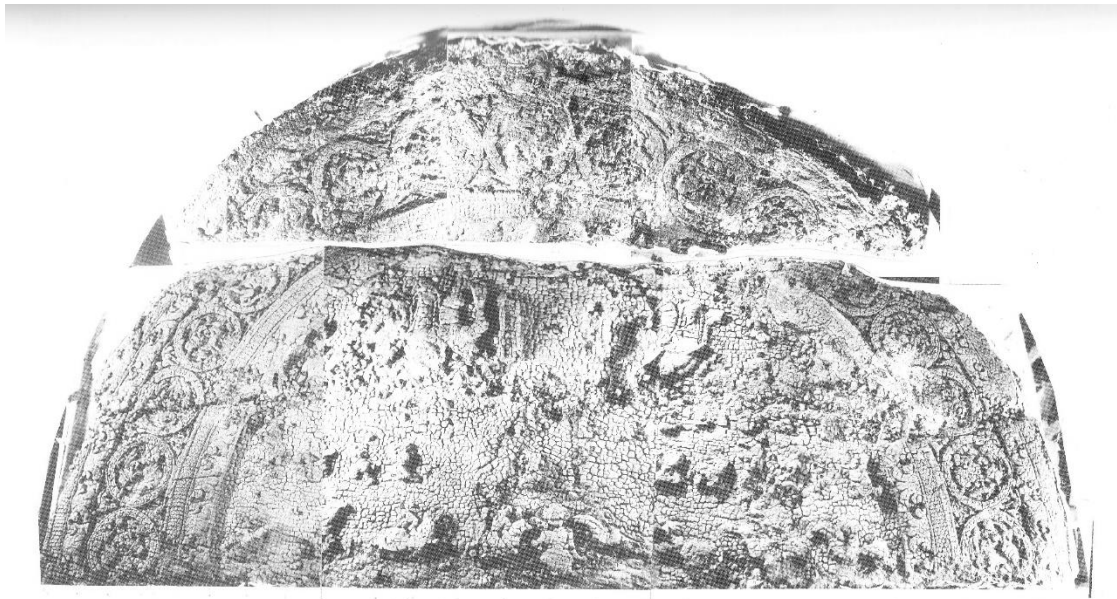
Excavated religious and secular buildings in Penjikent have four columns,⁷¹¹ arranged in a square in the centre of the main cella as do many mosques in the Zarafshan Valley today, such as the Urmitan mosque. Four columned halls are seen in Penjikent temples (I, II and X) dating to the 5th century CE. This layout is known in Central Asia as far back as Takht-e Sangin, where the Temple of the Oxus which dates to the first quarter of the 1st century BCE has four stone columns in its main hall with Ionic type capitals (Litvinskiy 1994b). Four wooden columns in the centre of the main room are also known from the grander domestic architecture built for Penjikent patricians (Azarpay 1981: 22, Fig 2), showing that this layout was suitable for secular as well as religious architecture.

This outstanding carved wood tradition is a continuation from pre-Islamic times (Pugachenkova 1991:220). The excavated part of Penjikent city shows that around every third house had wood carvings as skilful as the city's famous mural paintings (Azarpay 1981). Examples of Sogdian woodwork from Penjikent include carved wooden statues and reliefs depicting deities, while hunting scenes decorated the wooden ceilings (Marshak & Negmatov 1996). One of the most impressive objects from the palace of the Afshin, Kala-i Kakhkakha I, Room I⁷¹² (Bobomulloev & Yamauchi 2011 – Figs KHa A030-A060) is the massive carbonised semi-circular wooden tympanum (**Fig. 201**) now in the National Museum of Antiquities in Dushanbe. This tympanum⁷¹³ has a wide border of dynamic figurative combat scenes displayed in roundels, showing riders fighting each other with short swords. Snakes and grotesque creatures are also shown fighting the mounted warriors, the two fighters have been interpreted as Rustam and Sohrab. Heroes, clothes and harnesses are realistically rendered, and the human faces have great expressiveness. The main area of the tympanum's design can only be partially made out, however most famously it shows a man with snakes emanating from his shoulders. This is most likely Zahhak, known from the Shahnama and Iranian mythology. Carving 3 from the same room is a carbonised male figure (Bobomulloev & Yamauchi 2011 – Figs KHa A067-70).

⁷¹¹ Shkoda sees this type, together with an ambulatory as typical of many Iranian buildings which Schipman has related back to the temple of Ayadana at Susa (Shkoda 1998).

⁷¹² This room was called the 'big hall' and has *khum* or large cooking pots buried in it, a dais at one end and a vaulted roof (Bobomulloev & Yamauchi 2011).

⁷¹³ The tympanum is 143 cm high and c.292 cm (diameter).



KHa	Palace Room 1, Carving 1
A030	

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Figure 202: Wooden Tympanum, Bunjikat, National Museum of Antiquities, Bobomulloev & Yamauchi 2011 – Figs Kha.

Iranian Sasanian influence, as well as that from Gupta⁷¹⁴ period India are seen in the wood carving from Sogd, both Kalai Kakhakha (**Fig. 202**) and Penjikent (Masov, Bubomulloev & Bubnova n.d.). Other wooden objects include a post-Corinthian wooden capital from Penjikent, Object III, Room 55, as well as a wooden caryatide carved as a dancer,⁷¹⁵ with Indian iconographic features which dates to the first half of the 8th century, before the city was burnt by the Arabs in the victory over Dewastwich.

⁷¹⁴ The Gupta dynasty (4-6th century CE) controlled much of northern India and the Indus valley, up to the Himalayas and to the area now ruled by Myanmar to the east. The Gupta period “has been interpreted as a manifestation of Indian cultural nationalism, after centuries of foreign influence.... [It] is quintessentially Indian and will determine the development of Indian culture for centuries.” Yet both Mathura and Gandhara were permeated with Graeco-Roman influences and certain of these appear at this late date (Harle 1974:7).

⁷¹⁵ Three almost life-size dancers were found in a residential home, Building 3, Room 47, in a square four-columned room with a great number of other wooden fragments. One is fairly well preserved, and is now in the National Museum of Antiquities, Dushanbe. On the back is a small vertical unworked area, showing these figures were attached to a wall or column as a caryatide. This figure has rows of fine necklaces and the folds of her garment lightly cover the lower half of her body, through which the shape of her legs can still be seen. However, the face is severely damaged. Her iconography comes directly from Indian art, however here women are depicted with rounder and more sensuous figures. The slimness of the dancer as well as the angularity of her body are typical of the Sogdian style (Zeimal 1989 – Fig 76). However, towards the end of 5th century, and possibly earlier in Mathura and the West, the bodies of Gupta sculptures also became slenderer and more sinuous, this is part of what is known as the late Gupta style (Harle 1974).

Sogdian ossuaries⁷¹⁶ and panels with carved reliefs also depict columns of the same type, which differ from Graeco-Roman columns. These already have many elements of early Islamic wooden columns. The columns had five parts, where the largest section, a high square, many-stepped base supported the second section, called the *kusagi* or calyx, a ball or vase-shaped form.⁷¹⁷ The shaft was wider at the base, like a tree trunk, carrying a capital with a broad architrave which broadens towards the top (Brentjes 1992, Figs 4 & 5a). This is seen as continuing the Graeco-Bactrian tradition but highly Indianised. Wooden columns were also found in Kalai Kafirnigan, Dzumalak-Tepe, Urtakurgan and Penjikent (Brentjes 1992, 1996).⁷¹⁸ These were richly decorated with figural images and vegetal ornament.

Zoomorphic capitals are known in Central Asia since the Achaemenid times (5-4th century BCE) from the Kalaly-Gyr I in Khwarazm, where eagle-griffin protomes decorated an Achaemenid palace. There are also zoomorphic capitals depicted on artefacts, such as the Hephthalite bowl from Chilek near Samarqand (2nd half of the 5th century CE), which shows two addorsed zebras (Stavisky 1989 Fig 4). In this long line from the Achaemenid period, Stavisky also includes the Obburdon column (**Figs. 63-65 and 70**), showing the persistence of capitals with zoomorphic designs, albeit here they are much more schematic. However whether these later capitals from the Zarafshan are indebted to the Achaemenid ones is more difficult to say.⁷¹⁹ Today similar zoomorphic capitals have been used by the

⁷¹⁶ Ossuaries are a receptacle in which, according to the Zoroastrian Avesta, bones are kept following cleaning in an isolated site or *dakhma*. Ossuaries have been found in Khwarazm, Merv, Sogdiana, Kish, Chach and Sogdian settlements to the north of Chach. None have been found in Bactria Tokharistan or in Ferghana although Zoroastrianism was practiced there (Pugachenkova 1994).

⁷¹⁷ Vase shape seen to represent water of life, following an ancient tradition which also was seen in Mesopotamia (Upham Pope 1933) (see Chapter Four).

⁷¹⁸ The Arab campaigns did not reach easternmost Sogdiana and Penjikent till 722 CE. The end of 7th century and first quarter of eighth century marked Penjikent's brief Islamic heyday, with two-storey houses with vaulted, upper floors, decorated with murals and woodcarvings, not just the rich but ordinary people as well. Very often, the hall's central area had four wooden columns, supporting complex wooden structures, topped with a dome on a square foundation. "On the whole, the layout of the Sogdian central hall is unique, and its decorations show the familiarity of Sogdians with the artistic and literary traditions of many different cultures, including those of Persia, Greece, and India." (Marshak 2002b online) After the city was burnt, presumably by the Arabs, also destroying Dewastwich's palace, it was later reoccupied in c.738 when houses but not the temples were rebuilt, some continuing to have religious wall paintings on pre-Islamic themes. However, in 749 under Abu Muslim, fire altars were turned into kitchen hearths and murals were vandalised, with special attention paid to face and eyes. The city existed until the 770s, when it was abandoned, and the inhabitants moved to the valley below where the present city of Penjikent stands. In 9-10th century, it had a Friday mosque which differentiated it from a village (Marshak 2002, also see Grenet & de la Vaissière 2002). Thus, from the later part of the 8th century, refugees and craftsmen could have sought the nearby upper regions of Ustrushana, in order to continue practicing their religion.

⁷¹⁹ The only direct relationship Stavisky cites is how the Obburdon column carries a flute ornament that must be traced back "the ornamentation motif on entranceways of ancient Achaemenid palace of Persepolis" (Chubinashvili 1940 in Stavisky 1989:56).

current Tajik government on no less a building than their new national museum, underlining Tajik historical projection into a specifically Iranian Achaemenid past (see Chapter Five, **Fig. 170**).

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Figure 203: Bobomulloev 2011 Kalai Kahahkha, Palace Room 6&7, carved wood, A113, Stake N13/18.

The Central Asian column has different proportions to the Greek column, as it is higher in relation to its diameter. This is because it is made of a single tree trunk, not series of drums as in case of Greek column (Pugachenkova 1991).

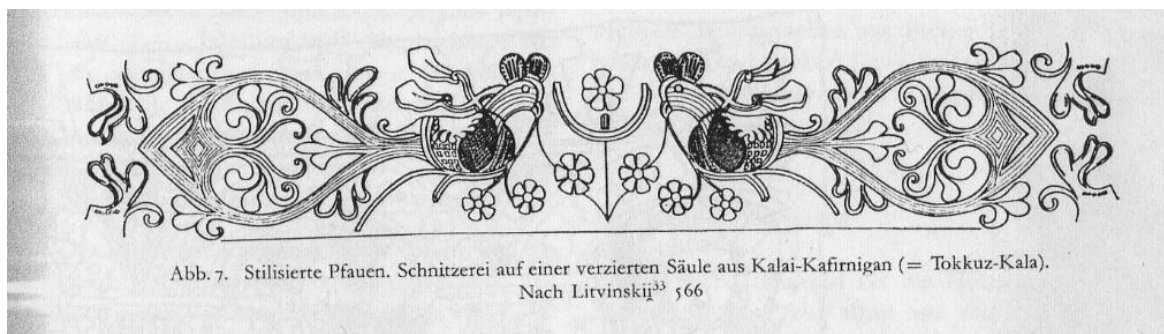


Figure 204: Birds with stylised palmette tails from Kalai Kafirnigan, Brentjes 1992, Fig. 7 after Litvinskiy.

Muqaddasi⁷²⁰ tells us much about wood used in Samanid period architecture, he compares the creation of the universe with the construction of a building,⁷²¹ arguing that no creation is possible without a maker. He frames this theological argument with a precise architectural description which includes wooden ceilings and pillars showing that these construction methods and terminology were used in Samanid times (Grabar & Holod 1979-80:314). Muqaddasi also described the mosque at Kath, the Afsharid capital in Northern Khwarazm, as having black stone columns as tall as a man surmounted by wooden posts supporting roof beams (quoted in Blair 1992:77). We also know about wooden columns at the Samanid city of Nishapur and about fires which destroyed presumably wooden roofs at Bukhara (Narshakhi 1954)⁷²² which are likely indications of a hypostyle plan (O'Kane 1995:120). Both al Muqaddasi and Al-Istakhri mention that the buildings of Bukhara are made of wood.⁷²³ Indeed "[w]oodwork seems to have been an art which was also distinctively Central Asian or even Samanid" (Frye 1965:79). While this statement seems slightly exaggerated on the basis of current extant examples, it shows the importance of wood during this period. However, it remains to be seen whether the woodworking discussed in this chapter from the upper Zarafshan Valley can be described as truly Samanid, derived from the Samanid conquerors or rather more indigenous and 'Ustrushanian'? Although it is clear from the sources that woodworking was found across Transoxiana.

The Zarafshan mosques are not the only wooden mosques known. A wooden mihrab,⁷²⁴ minbar, columns and ceiling struts are also known from the Abyana mosque (Abyaneh), near Natanz in central Iran.⁷²⁵ The mihrab is probably later than the Iskodar Mihrab, dating to 1084-5 CE from an inscription.⁷²⁶ It is composed of many individual panels of various styles including the bevelled style (Ettinghausen 1952:77ff.). Wooden mosques are also found in Azerbaijan, such as the Mulla Rustam

⁷²⁰ In his *Kitāb al-Ba'd wa al-Ta'rikh* (Book of Creation and History), written in 985 CE with additions in 997 CE. Mutahhar b. Tahir al-Muqaddasi was from the city of Bust (Bost), modern Lashkar Gar, southern Afghanistan. Also called Maqdisi.

⁷²¹ In his work, the creation of the universe is also compared to the building of a ship and the weaving of a garment, (Huart in Grabar & Holod 1979-80).

⁷²² See Chapter Four above.

⁷²³ Naymark notes that frame buildings were not found so early elsewhere in Mawarannahr, and that this might connect specifically to the Bukharan soil with its salt and groundwater (Naymark 1999 Note 29).

⁷²⁴ The only recorded wooden mihrab in Iran, it has an open door motif, similar to Iskodar Mihrab (see above).

⁷²⁵ This remote village in the Karkas Mountains has relatively plentiful wood, the Seljuq mosque's main construction material, unusual in this period, when brick was more common. The hypostyle mosque has a flat roof and wooden columns, topped with square capitals with projecting brackets and floral motifs. Archnet http://archnet.org/library/sites/one-site.jsp?site_id=11061 (accessed 27/03/2013). See Gholmohammadi (unpubl PhD) for an in depth discussion on this building. For an image of a column see Hillenbrand 1994:101 Fig 70). These columns are in a different tradition to those from Zarafshan.

⁷²⁶ See <http://www.iranicaonline.org/articles/abyana-village-in-the-barz-rud-subdistrict-dehestan-in-natanz-sahrestan> (Accessed 27/03/2013). We also know the builder, Abu Ja'far Mohammad b. 'Ali.

Mosque in Maragha (Golmohammadi 1988). There are also wooden structures known from Kashmir, such as the Shah Hamadan mosque in Srinagar, on the right bank of the Jhelum River (Mustafizur Rahman 1989).⁷²⁷ The Baltistan mosques in northern Pakistan resemble the Shah Hamadan mosque (Noci 2006), with a wooden framework infilled with rough brickwork. They also resemble the Zarafshan mosques having a cube-shaped central space, constituting the prayer room, with four central wooden pillars in a square formation supporting the roof. This space is generally flanked by verandas along one or two sides⁷²⁸ or four sides.⁷²⁹ These buildings are decorated with carved woodwork with stylised plant motifs and geometric forms. Noci connects these to Kashmiri mosques, however most of the data from that region has been lost. He notices the possible Iranian influence via Central Asia in the presence of the wide veranda supported by columns (Noci 2006). Thus, it seems that this style has spread from Central Asia to northern India. Richly carved wooden crossbeams and *mandapa*⁷³⁰ pillars are also seen in temples in Himachal Pradesh, north-west India such as that of Lakshna Devi (also called Lakshana Devi), in Brahmaur, Chamba (Chander Ohri 1991 Pls. 4.9-4.11) and similar columns from the Shakti Devi temple in Chhatrahi (Chander Ohri 1991 4.17-4.19). The column capitals have vase motifs with abundant foliage emanating from them⁷³¹ and the cross beams are figurative. There is also a wooden mihrab from Charkh-i Logar south of Kabul,⁷³² which seems to be Ghaznavid. From this brief survey, it seems that securely dated woodwork, for example from Abanya and the Charkh-i Logar is later in date than at least some of the Zarafshan material, and due to a strong pre-Islamic tradition of woodworking, it seems that the tradition as well as some of the motifs, if not their meaning have continued into the Islamic times.

⁷²⁷ Shah Hamadani was a Naqshbandi Sufi from Hamadan in Iran, this Sufi *tariqa* comes from Central Asia, showing another way in which ideas would circulate, via travelling Sufis.

⁷²⁸ E.g. Khangsar Masjid, Kapalu and Shighar Palace Mosque.

⁷²⁹ E.g. the Skardu Fort mosque, Jami' Masjid, Halde and Jami' Masjid, Kapalu.

⁷³⁰ A *mandapa* is a pillared outdoor hall or pavilion in a temple for public rituals.

⁷³¹ Flower vases are known in Buddhist art, appearing in mandalas. Flowers in a vase were also important offerings to the deity (McArthur 2002). Flower vases are also depicted in stucco panels in the modern Obburdon mosque (See Chapter Four).

⁷³² First published by Bombaci 1959: Figs. 13-14 (details), Golmohammadi unpubl PI VIId (bad photo), however, it was reexamined by A.S. Melikian-Chirvani in 'Un chef-d'oeuvre inconnu dans une vallée Afghan' *Connaissance des arts* 1977, n°308, pp. 76-79, a reference I have not been able to locate. In the abstract however, it is dated to 10-12th century <http://cat.inist.fr/?aModele=afficheN&cpsidt=12761776> (accessed 21/08/2014).

Two similar artworks

Sangiston console and frieze

The Sangiston console (**Fig. 78**) and frieze were found in the Mausoleum of Muhammad Ali in the village of Sangiston in the Zarafshan valley, near Aini (Voronina 1966, Bloom and Blair 2009). The console was on display in the Bekhzod museum up until 2011.⁷³³ This console also has very deep carving and can be compared to the consoles on the Obburdon column, the Iskodar Mihrab and in the Hazrati Shoh mausoleum. The museum signage states that it is 10th century, Khmel'nitsky dates it to 9-10th century (1992). On the spirals are pearl bands and bevelled style motifs can also be seen on the console's sides. Brentjes dates it to the Samanid period (Brentjes 1992:339).

Sokan column

A similar column is found at Sokan (**Fig. 77**) in the Yaghnob valley, this has been dated to Samanid times (Brentjes 1992:339). I have not been able to locate it in a museum, so presumably it is still *in situ*. This shows a capital bordered with pearl bands and decorated with spiral and wavelike forms, which irregularly decorate the object. It is a different style from the other columns, denoting perhaps its highly inaccessible location in the Yaghnob Valley, shut off in the winter, and not on the Silk Road for example. It does not show the bevelled style ornament that decorates all of the Zarafshan wooden columns and Sangiston console.

Minarets in Central Asia

Minarets are seen today as a symbol of Islam *par excellence*; however their forerunners are obscure, both in Central Asia and indeed across the Islamic world, and there are many conflicting theories.⁷³⁴ The characteristic type of Central Asian minaret, in the form of a round tower which tapers towards the top and surmounted with an observation skylight are either seen to be autochthonous (Pugachenkova 1991:218ff.), or possibly deriving from forms or functions of neighbouring cultures (Hillenbrand 1994:146-148) or a symbol of Abbasid authority (Bloom 1989). Pugachenkova argues that Central Asian minarets are derived from defensive *kushk* towers, where semi-circular towers are

⁷³³ Presumably this console is now on display in the new National Museum of Tajikistan (see Chapter Five), but I have not been able to visit yet to verify this but will be checking it during my planned trip in Autumn 2015.

⁷³⁴ It is generally accepted that tall cylindrical Iranian minarets and western Islamic minarets in Iraq and Egypt probably have different origins (Hillenbrand 1994:146ff.).

found on the curtain wall and three-quarter towers are seen on the corners (Pugachenkova 1991). These towers also continued on secular architecture, for example the Ribat-i Malik (11th century).

Alternatively, Hillenbrand suggests Central Asian minarets are derived from structures which may or may not have had similar functions in neighbouring cultures to the north and east. The Chinese had 8-12 sided pagodas from 5th century onwards and Indians had tall pillars, such as those built by Ashoka in 3rd century BCE. It is suggested that these were built to symbolise the cosmological axis of the universe. Other possible influences for the minarets are Buddhist stupas and the sacred houses, or *idhiz eb* of the Eastern Huns (Hillenbrand 1994:146-148). These high towers placed at the corners of temples or cities were meant to show auspicious influence represented by their shadows stretching as far as possible.

“Thus, the border regions of the eastern Islamic world provided a fertile source of inspiration for the builders of the early Iranian cylindrical minarets. At the very least, these areas on the periphery of the Islamic territory provided ideas for the forms themselves; whether these forms travelled into the Islamic world with an accompanying set of ideas and beliefs is quite another matter. Yet it is a reasonable hypothesis that at least some of the many different functions and associations - religious, symbolic, political, commemorative and military – of these pre-Islamic towers survived the advent of Islam and in time filtrated the Iranian minaret” (Hillenbrand 1994:147).

Although scholars have tried to link tall towers to the Indo-Aryan ideas of worshipping pillars there is no evidence of their existence in pre-Islamic Iran. However an alternative argument is put forward by Bloom who believes that minarets were a symbol of Abbasid authority “[o]ne must assume instead that Islam created the tower for its own purposes and that the vestigial remains of older towers had no more than purely formal significance”(1989:18). The mosque at Bukhara did not have a minaret until the vizier Abu ‘Abd Allah al-Jahani built one at his own expense in 918 CE, even though Ismail the Samanid had enlarged and rebuilt the mosque only 16 years earlier (Bloom 1989), whether this shows changing fashions or the desire of a vizier to proclaim his own personal power is hard to tell.

APPENDIX D - Tajikistan: Ethnogenesis to civil war

The Tajiks participated in the most ambitious and successful nation building project in history (Khalid 2007). In Suny's telling phrase, the Soviet Union was the “incubator of new nations” (1993:45). The Soviet Russian concept of *natsional'nost'* or ethno-nationalism held that an ethnic community or

ethnie was a natural living fact⁷³⁵ conflating ethnic identity with nationality.⁷³⁶ Each *ethnie* preserved an identity founded on a shared language and spoken on a particular territory, seen to continue throughout its whole history (Slezkine 1996, Hirsch 2005, Roy 2005). Not only did this lead to a “romantic enthronement of folk cultures” but linked ideas of ‘nation’ and their visible and intangible ethnic attributes in various disciplines such as folklorism, geography, linguistics, archaeology and ethnography, which might or might not have the same spatio-temporal boundaries or be similar in any way (Slezkine 1996:827). Most of these disciplines had visual realisation in the museum and other material culture. Museums were intrinsically connected to this phenomenon, part of the inculcation of a ‘double assimilation’ where citizens were assimilated into nations at the same time that they were assimilated into the USSR as Soviet citizens. They did this by displaying and strengthening ideas of ethnic nationalism by storing and showing the artefacts found by Soviet archaeological expeditions within the territory of the modern nation, showing the depth of the Tajik ethnic past as well as displaying communist ideology (Hirsch 2003, 2005).⁷³⁷

Many people at the beginning of the period had only a hazy idea of their nationality, or what ‘nationality’ meant, often confusing it with religion (Baiburin 2012, Kassymbekova 2013). Categorisations of nation and ethnic identity replaced ideas of religion, city or clan in Central Asia; the area had, up until that point been formed of the Kokand and Khiva Khanates and the Emirate of Bukhara. As well as creating new nations, the Soviets aimed to modernise Central Asian life. National identities were formulated by Soviets to counter ideas of pan-Turkism such as those presented by the *jadids*,⁷³⁸ as well as religious identity, i.e. Islam, both seen as potentially fomenting unrest against the Soviet state, (just as is done today by the Tajik government). The Bolsheviks wanted to secure their active involvement in the Revolution. “No issue was more central to the formation of the Soviet Union than the nationality question” (Hirsch 2005:5). However, this meant that many people with different

⁷³⁵ This is different from postmodern problematisation of identity as hybrid, plural, ascribed, dynamic and changing as a result of cultural contact.

⁷³⁶ Ilkhamov believes that while this distinction is clear for Western scholars, it is less clear for those brought up in the Soviet system who researched ethnicity but ignored modern and Western political science discourses on ‘nationality’ (Ilkhamov 2004).

⁷³⁷ Archaeological research was not overly ideological and was organised differently, initially part of the Academy of Sciences, it was later done through ‘Archaeological Expeditions’, semi-independent institutions under Academies’ umbrellas. It was not designed to influence the masses, as the research did not filter much beyond the Academy, with print runs of a few hundred. Thus, there was minimal link between archaeology and education. “So you can argue that museum work and archaeological work were different in institutional level. While the museums were the institutions of ‘culture’ (hence with excessive ideology) the archaeology was under the institutions of ‘science’” (Jorayev pers comm. 14/11/2012). This difference can still be seen today in Tajikistan in that the National Museum is run by the Ministry of Culture and the National Museum of Antiquities is under the auspices of the Academy of Science (see below), it has less obviously nationalistic or ideological displays (See below) however arguably it has other biases, reflecting those of the Director Rahim Masov.

⁷³⁸ The Jadids were Uzbek and Tajik reform movement of modernising Muslim intellectuals who were against traditional religious and political hierarchy. See <http://www.iranicaonline.org/articles/jadidism> (accessed 20/04/2014).

ethnic affiliations found themselves within the borders of an 'artificial' entity, a national republic which did not necessarily reflect their ethnic origins (Dagiev 2013), which hardened into regional complexes.

Thus *natsional'nost'* policies were both personal and political, high minded and vicious, creating as well as destroying cultures and communities, and consigning groups in a hierarchy of major and minor nationalities. As such they became a primary category of social regulation,⁷³⁹ in censuses, residence permits and passports. Through the fifth column in their passport, all Soviet citizens had to identify themselves as belonging to one ethnic nationality or another. They could not simply be "Soviet".⁷⁴⁰ Being a member of the titular nationality meant that a person had access to greater power and resources than minorities. Division of groups into major and minor nationalities was also more than just statistics, it had considerable impact on people's everyday lives, these included adjusting national-territorial borders and setting up national language schools.

Thus, throughout the twentieth century, Tajikistan was exposed to Soviet Russian material culture in every aspect of its life, its new state symbols such as flag and crest connected the country with its Soviet master. Equally, Tajikistan's currency although it had a local name, som, was denoted by Lenin's portrait, introduced in 1937. He remained a dominant and unifying feature of Soviet paper money over the next fifty years, until the dissolution of the Soviet Union in 1992, just as Lenin statues could be found in towns and cities across the USSR. The Soviet Union was linked by its currency, and the ability to use it across the ruble zone was a very real symbol of its imperial power and the countries' political and economic interconnection.

History writing was a key area in which members of a republic's titular nationality were active, and also had more opportunities than minorities, in this case to research and create 'the national past'. Historians, ethnographers and local intelligentsia looked for 'direct pure lines' to an 'ancient cultured population', usually seen as settled rather than nomadic. However, these primordial ideas of nationality ascription ironically did not help the Tajik speakers, who laid claim to the Islamic Persianate culture seen as the foundation of Central Asian settled civilisation. Firstly they were the most weakly territorialised of all the identities in pre-Soviet Central Asia, as Montstuart Elphinstone observed in the early nineteenth century: "The Taujiks are not united into one body, like most other nations, or confined to one country, but are scattered unconnected through a great part of Asia. They are mixed with Uzbeks through the greater part of their dominions" (1815 quoted in Rubin

⁷³⁹ Thus, nationality was used as a way of grouping the population in order to control them more effectively, and because it was seen not to be polluted with pre-revolutionary thinking (Baiburin 2012).

⁷⁴⁰ When passports were reintroduced in 1932, a person's nationality was a fifth column; until 1953 USSR's citizens were able to self-identify, i.e. chose their nationality, after this point they had to take either their father's or mother's nationality, after which they could not change their minds (Baiburin 2012).

2002:134).⁷⁴¹ Secondly, because many Tajik speakers self-identified as *Sarts*,⁷⁴² which was seen as an economic orientation rather than a recognised nationality on the Soviet lists. This was in spite of early Russian ethnographers seeing it as an ethnic appellation, with *Sarts* being virtually synonymous with Tajiks (Samilovich 1910 in Dagiev 2014:22). However, I.I. Zarubin a pre-eminent ethnographer recommended that if person self-identified as *Sart* but speaking Uzbek, then their nationality should be recorded as ‘Uzbek (*Sart*)’ (Hirsch 2005, Baiburin 2012). Thus, Tajiks were clearly the losers in this creation of nations and nationalities, originally devised as an Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republic (ASSR) and part of Uzbekistan, they only gained true Soviet Socialist Republic (SSR) status in 1929. It can be seen that the troubled creation of Tajikistan on its present territory in the 1920s put in motion the causes of the Tajik civil war, once the USSR had collapsed in 1991. Tajikistan was unable to coalesce around its ancient cultural centres of Samarqand and Bukhara and Tajikistan’s regional dialects showed up deeper rifts between the different populations living in Tajikistan.

Tajik Civil War 1992-1997

In the aftermath of the Soviet Union’s collapse, Central Asian states were unwillingly thrust into becoming new nations, never having been constructed in this way before, “[t]he greatest irony of independence in Central Asia [was that it came] as had Soviet-style colonialism several decades before – it was imposed by Moscow” (Gleason 1997 in Cummings 2012:1). Tajikistan even more than the rest of the Central Asian states went unwillingly into independence (Akbarzadeh 1996).⁷⁴³ And, out of all the Central Asian states post-independence, Tajikistan was the only country which suffered an all-out civil war. Many varying views in the literature have been given for the causes of the Tajik civil war and to explicate what are still very recent events.⁷⁴⁴ Buisson & Khusenova argue that it was not the Tajiks’ weak sense of identity that led to civil war, but the positioning of different actors in a postcolonial context. Three main factors for the fragility of Tajikistani national identity all continue in the post-war period. Firstly localism, where birthplace and region of origin are the most important factors defining identity. Secondly, transnational conception of identity, which includes the historic cultural centres of Bukhara and Samarqand and the language and culture of greater Iran – Iran and

⁷⁴¹ Mountstuart Elphinstone was British envoy to the Afghan court. The quotation further describes the Tajiks’ independent governments in Qarategin, Wakhan, Darvaz and Badakhshan, i.e. mountainous areas which later became the strongholds for anti-Soviet Basmachi before becoming part of the Tajik SSR in 1929.

⁷⁴² See below for discussion of term ‘Sart’.

⁷⁴³ Symbolised as well perhaps by the fact it was the last country to leave the ruble zone, in 1995. There was massive inflation in the early years of independence.

⁷⁴⁴ See e.g. Atkin 1993, Akbarzadeh 1996, Lynch 2001, Chatterjee 2002, Rubin 2002, Heathershaw 2009 and Dagiev 2013.

Afghanistan. The end of the Soviet – Afghan war, where many Tajiks served in the army and worked as translators, gave them access to their co-linguists across the border for the first time in more than half a century. Linguistically this country is separate from its Central Asian Turkic speaking neighbours. However other transnational concepts such as the celebration of Nowruz unite all of Central Asia as well as Iran. Thirdly, national minorities such as the Uzbeks, Kyrgyz, Tartars and Russians, all struggle(d) to recognise themselves in a Tajik ethnic identity (Buisson & Khusenova 2011).⁷⁴⁵ The Pamiris predominantly from Badakhshan, the majority of whom are Ismaili and thus a different sect from the predominantly Sunni Tajiks should also be included here.

However it seems clear that the “weakness of Tajik institutions, limited central control over Tajik territory, and a state 'idea' unable to link disparate components of Tajik peoples into a cohesive community were critical factors leading to the outbreak of civil war in May 1992” (Lynch 2001:55). It is precisely the weak state idea, which the emphasis on the Samanids and other foundation symbols is trying to combat. The civil war was an inter-elite struggle amongst the different regions claiming power, as well as a purported Islamic renaissance. It was also not helped by the contemporary economic crisis (Heathershaw and Herzig 2011). The civil war has been used by the elites as a “strange kind of foundation myth... whereby the victors present themselves as the saviours of the country” (Atkin 2011:1). This is inherently negative in Atkin’s judgement, as any opposition to the authorities is seen as destabilising, for example concerning the difficulties of day to day life. Although the spectre of the Civil War enables the maintenance of the status quo, it is not covered in many public monuments or museums, where only the Khorog Museum in the Pamirs has any display on the topic that I am aware of. Here there is a large poster with pictures of the ‘Pamiri holocaust’, displaying information about the massacres in the 1990s showing the victims and their names. Not all of them are shown, but the concept is interesting and rare.⁷⁴⁶ Museum displays honouring the dead and explaining how the crisis came about can be seen as one way of working through and understanding it. In the new National Museum, the civil war is omitted, (see below), however President Rahmon is lauded for his work in bringing unity to the Tajik nation. From the museum displays, we could not tell why this reconciliation process was needed.⁷⁴⁷ However many things are left out of museums, and this is part of creating a nation, which is also based on a people forgetting their history as much as remembering it (Renan 1991). “Missing parts of history are conveyed by the museum only through

⁷⁴⁵ See also <http://www.rethinkinstitute.org/politics-of-identity-in-tajikistan/> (accessed 20/07/2014), a discussion in 2012 about the politics of identity in Tajikistan with Nuriddin T. Shamslov, Ambassador of the Republic of Tajikistan and Marlene Laruelle among others.

⁷⁴⁶ With thanks to Malgorzata Biczuk, for bringing this to my attention, pers comm. October 2011.

⁷⁴⁷ See Ed Lemon <http://blogs.exeter.ac.uk/excas/2013/07/24/narrating-tajik-history-in-the-national-museum/> (Accessed 12/05/2014).

their remarkable absence” (Khazanov 2000:54). These ideas are reflected in *mankurtism*⁷⁴⁸ referring to society’s attempts to erase what is uncomfortable in their past. This is juxtaposed with cultural empowerment through the quest for new ideologies.

APPENDIX E - Soviet architecture in Dushanbe

Just as Appendix D covers Soviet ethnogenesis and its effects on Tajikistan, Appendix E covers an outline of urban planning and architecture in Soviet Dushanbe, as this is what was built on (or over) in post-independence Tajikistan, both literally and metaphorically. Although the Tajik SSR was not an independent country, like Soviet flag and Soviet national anthem, the state was built its own colonial capitol complex, to Soviet designs. Thus, the neoclassical parliament building, the *Majlis* built in the Soviet period had the Soviet hammer and sickle on it. What is more unusual perhaps, in today’s postcolonial context that the building has retained the Soviet symbol in the heart of their post-Soviet government (**Fig. 93**), showing continuity in the heart of government, or the lack of will to hack into the decorative stucco.

Thus, it was not just the architecture that was new, but the actual institutions themselves. While many of these establishments, such as the Opera and Ballet (**Fig. 204**) were European / Russian imports, the bazaar and *choikhone* (teahouse) two indigenous institutions, continued to thrive throughout the Soviet era.⁷⁴⁹ The territory of Tajikistan was the least urbanised of all the Central Asian republics, with only Khujand (part of the country from 1929) being a city prior to the Soviet period.

⁷⁴⁸ From Kyrgyz writer Chingiz Aitmatov (*The Day Lasts More Than a Hundred Years* (И дольше века длится день) (1983) Aitmatov recalled an ancient Kyrgyz legend about the *mankurt*. According to Aitmatov, “a *mankurt* did not know where he was from. He did not know his name, did not remember his childhood, his father, his mother – to say it more simply, a *mankurt* did not realize that he is a human being.” (Quoted in Sharifov 2006-2007 Note 3).

⁷⁴⁹ ‘Rohat’, Dushanbe’s most famous teahouse on Rudaki Street (1958-59) architects D. D. Gendlin and K. N. Terletskii.



Figure 205: Aini Opera Ballet 1939-46, architects D. I. Bilibin, V. D. Golli, and A. A. Iunger © Unknown.

Local pre-Soviet buildings and specialist architectural knowledge were mostly destroyed during the anti-Russian Basmachi revolt, when the city was under siege, thus there was no continuity with the past (Dodkhudoeva et al 2013).⁷⁵⁰ New buildings were laid out in a grid system along straight roads dividing the city into square blocks (**Fig. 205**), according to general plans⁷⁵¹ which reflect European architectural style at the heart of the city.

⁷⁵⁰ In reprisals for the Basmachi guerrilla campaign, the Soviets destroyed villages and homes during their invasion. Thus, whole villages between Dushanbe and the Amu Darya were left deserted (Middleton & Thomas 2008).

⁷⁵¹ Dushanbe and Leninabad (Khujand) were modernised in accordance with general plans: First (1939) principal architect V. G. Veselovskii. Second (1968) architects V. G. Veselovskii and S. N. Samonina. General plans were also created for Kulyab (1939) architect A. I. Andzheikovich and Kurgan-Tiube (now Qurganteppa) architect I. E. Tkachev. In the 1960's new plans were worked out for both Kulyab (architect V. A. Bugaev) and Kurgan-Tiube (architect Kh. A. Zukhuriddinov).

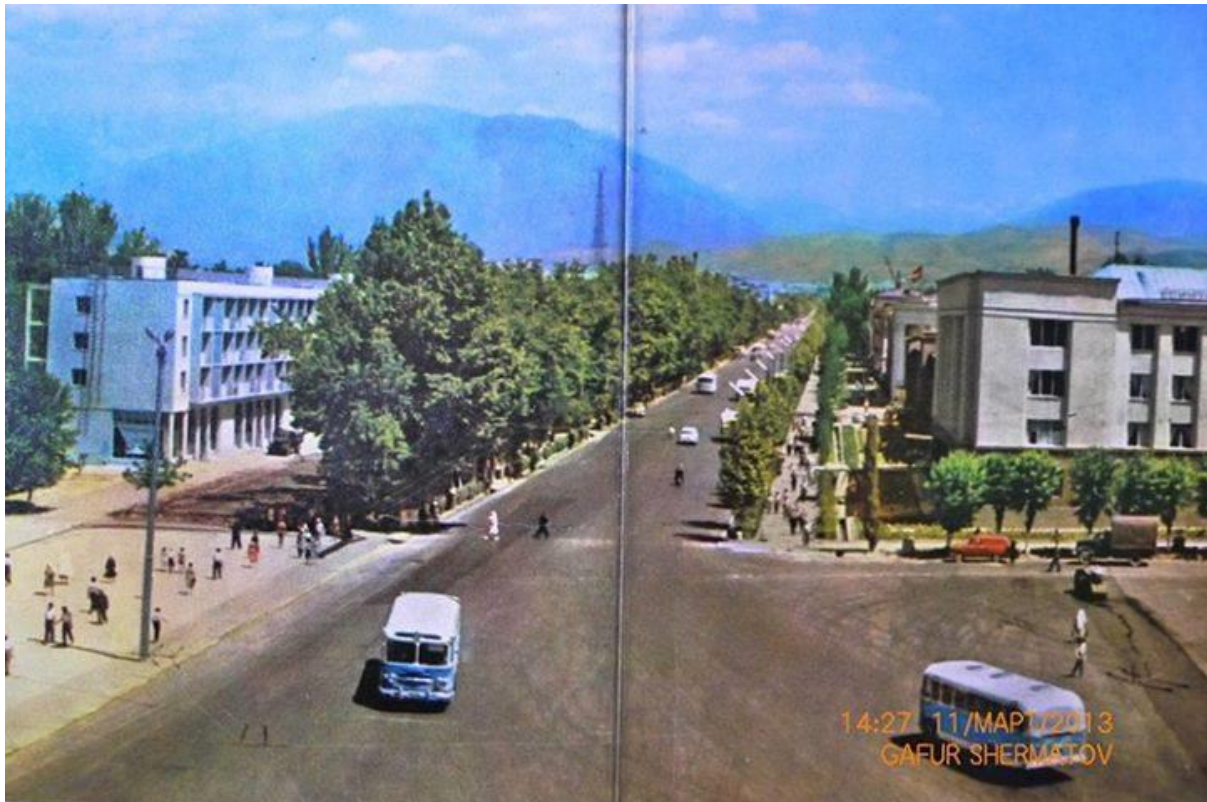


Figure 206: Dushanbe street scene, Soviet period.

Indeed, the *avant garde* architect Alexei Gan saw the built form as it is theorised today, as an active agent of social change (Cooke 2003). Styles like modernism and the constructivist style used to build the Central Post Office in Dushanbe, either appeared alone or were combined with classicism in the new architecture. Buildings were decorated with communist slogans, a socialist equivalent to the Qur'anic texts to which Central Asians were accustomed. By the Stalinist period in the 1930s,⁷⁵² neoclassical forms with massive pillars and decorated with Soviet or national iconography on the portals were in vogue.⁷⁵³ Classical architecture was seen as the architecture of empire, suitable for the perpetuation and legitimation of its power. Consciously copying past styles is a way of legitimising empires and institutions in the present, by linking them to past imperial glory, such as that of Greece and Rome, and thus the neoclassical style appealed to the Soviets on aesthetic and, to a certain

⁷⁵² Josef Stalin was General secretary of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union between 1922 and 1952. By the late 1920s he was the unchallenged leader of the USSR.

⁷⁵³ These buildings include Aini Opera Ballet 1939-46, architects D. I. Bilibin, V. D. Golli, and A. A. Iunger Government House of the Tajik SSR (1948-49, architects S. L. Anisimov and M. A. Zakharov), Dushanbe Hotel architect G.U. Aizikovich 1964, Chaikhane Dostuk in Dushanbe architect G.V. Solominov 1960.

extent, on ideological grounds:

*The grandiose and symmetrical designs of Stalinist architecture served to legitimate the current system, and hence buttress the socialist order. Soviet officials explicitly put forward the architecture of ancient Rome as an appropriate model for socialist architecture, arguing that construction on such a grand scale showcased Soviet technical achievements. Neoclassical design, moreover, linked Soviet culture to a universal, timeless tradition. It was to be an eternal culture that appealed to all people, and neoclassicism expressed this ambition as no other form could (Hoffman 2004:663).*⁷⁵⁴

The use of the classical style in Muslim Central Asia has been interpreted as symbolising their entrance “into an era of enlightened internationalism, thereby symbolising a disconnection with the pre-modern internationalism of Islamic architecture that represented in the view of Soviet ideologists including Bobojon Gafurov... repression and foreign rule” (Dodkhudoeva, Mukhimov & Hughes 2013:283). Thus Islamic forms were retained as ornament on neo-classical buildings as a legitimising technique and to inculcate national identity, while simultaneously the religion was characterised as allochthonous to Tajikistan.⁷⁵⁵ This was done either as ornamentation or as a solution for what was seen as a specifically Central Asian way of life (**Fig. 206**). These abstracted historical forms of orientalist stylisation were not considered successful by many architects and architectural critics (Demchenko 2013). Khan deplores this kind of ‘façade architecture’ which believes that a façade of arches or false vaulted cantilevers may make a building ‘Islamic’, rather than the structure being a response to the specific needs of a particular urban environment (Khan 1978).

This problematic relation between modernism and historical revivalist styles continued throughout the century, with either one side or the other being in the ascendant. In the second half of the 1950s, Tajik architects solved the problems of building in mountainous urban areas, prone to earthquakes and built multi-storey domestic blocks of frame-panel buildings in microrayons.⁷⁵⁶ In 1960s and 1970s traditional craftsmanship such as carved and painted wood and plasterwork with contemporary designs was again used in construction. During this period, architecture in Tajikistan did not differ from other Central Asian republics, thus we can speak of a regional rather than a *national* style.

⁷⁵⁴ Hoffman references Vladimir Papernyi, Kul’tura “dva” (Ann Arbor, MI: Ardis, 1985), 17–18, 31–46. See also Brumfield 1989:386 Note 48, and Brumfield 1991.

⁷⁵⁵ Across the USSR the Soviets’ neo-classical architecture referenced Greece and Rome, post-Soviet Tajikistan used the same architectural tropes to evoke the indigenous Greco-Bactrian civilisation; thus, there was a shift in meaning, although the architecture resembled each other.

⁷⁵⁶ Soviet era buildings had strict height restrictions, to nine storey blocks, deemed to be seismically safe.



Figure 207: Firdowsi Library, Dushanbe, showing busts of Islamic and Russian literary figures and Islamicate arches, 2011.

Statues of Lenin were placed all over Tajikistan, creating multiple icons out of the most important founder of the Soviet Union, bringing them into the “realm of the timeless or the sacred... stabilis(ing) the landscape and temporally freezing particular values in it” (Verdery 1999:5-6). These statues of Lenin and Stalin were seen as national defenders, in a similar way that statues of Somoni in Tajikistan and Timur in Uzbekistan are used today. However, because of the strong links in the present and arguably because of a nostalgia for the Soviet period, unlike former Soviet countries in Central Europe, Tajikistan did not try to totally eliminate the Soviet memorial and architectural presence in the country just after independence. Although many statues of Lenin have been placed in less prominent positions, for instance the Khujand Lenin statue was moved comparatively recently in 2011 (see above). There is still a large Lenin statue in Istaravshan (or was still in 2012).⁷⁵⁷ However slowly, it seems that many elements of the Soviet heritage are being dismantled. One exception is the Soviet

⁷⁵⁷ <http://globalvoicesonline.org/2012/11/14/lenin-in-tajikistan-better-hitler-or-real-hero/> (Accessed 30/04/2014) shows a modern Varzob building decorated with a Lenin bust. What Tajikistan should do with its Lenin monuments is debatable, as arguably Lenin had more to do with Tajik nation building than Somoni, whose Empire only lasted a short period, and after which Tajiks were ruled by Turks for a millennium.

monuments to the Great Patriotic War, in which Tajik soldiers and citizens played their part. These are still revered today, for example the Dushanbe memorial in Victory Park above the city which is the centre of celebrations on Victory Day (9th May).

A Soviet period urban renewal plan is currently being mooted for Dushanbe, threatening many Soviet era low rise apartment blocks on Rudaki.⁷⁵⁸

*[t]he 1983 reconstruction plan divides Dushanbe into three concentric circles, envisioning an almost complete elimination of private homes from the innermost ring, to be replaced by multistory apartment buildings. An announcement in early 2007 that city officials had dusted off the urban renewal blueprints caused great alarm, particularly among the thousands of families living in the heart of the capital.*⁷⁵⁹

However as one Tajik friend remarked, that it is unusual for a main capital city thoroughfare to be lined with private dwellings in this way.⁷⁶⁰ What is worrying is that the new blocks of over nine storeys might not be safe from the many earthquakes⁷⁶¹ that the city suffers.

⁷⁵⁸ Dushanbe's urban plan (1983) was not carried out due to the Civil War and economic stagnation in the 1990s. It has now been taken up by Giprostroy, a body within the Tajik Agency for Construction and Architecture, responsible for master plans' development. It is seen as a continuation of the Soviet plan, however the city has c. 1 million residents, instead of 750,000 envisaged in 1983
<http://www.unece.org/fileadmin/DAM/hlm/prgm/cph/countries/tajikistan/cp.tajikistan.chap4.pdf> (Accessed 12/04/2013).

⁷⁵⁹ <http://www.eurasianet.org/departments/insight/articles/eav060507.shtml> Accessed 12/04/2011)

⁷⁶⁰ MS pers. comm. April 2011.

⁷⁶¹ There was an earthquake on 10th November 2013 whose epicentre was only 20 km from Dushanbe, which destroyed 104 village homes and damaged 259 more <http://earthquake-report.com/2013/11/10/strong-earthquake-tajikistan-on-november-10-2013/> (accessed 12/04/2014).

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