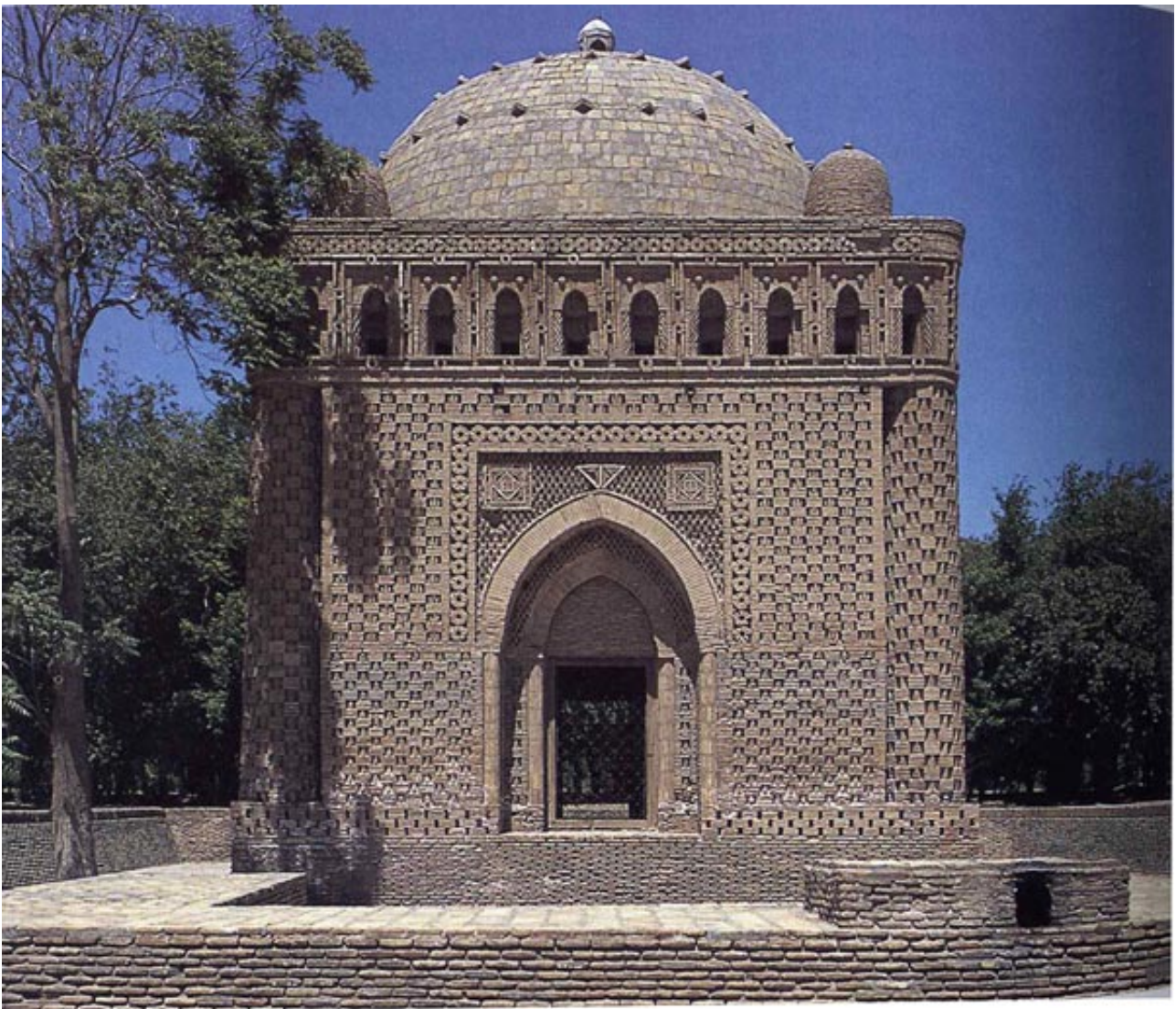


Iran Resurgent? Politics, Literature and Trade in the Samanid Era

A conference at Wadham College, Oxford: September 22-23, 2014

Convened by Luke Treadwell and Dominic Parviz Brookshaw



This conference will explore new perspectives on literary production and political history in the eastern Iranian successor states (in particular the Samanid state) which emerged as the Abbasid centre began to decline. We will look at the poetry of the Samanid period and explore the origins of the so-called 'Persian renaissance' in the context of the language map and the political environment of the Samanid state. We will test the hypothesis that literary Persian was more widely used from an early date after the Islamic conquest than has been generally acknowledged in the scholarly literature. This has important implications for our understanding of the production

of the earliest Persian poetry by Rudaki and his contemporaries, the formal complexity of which suggests that these poets were heirs to an already emergent tradition of poetic composition, rather than the initiators of a new style of poetry. At the same time, the relationship of these poets with the poets of Abbasid Baghdad and the Arabophone poets of Khurasan will throw light on the extent to which the work of these Persian poets was nourished by the literary culture of the central lands of the caliphate. Exploring similar periphery-centre dynamics at the level of state structures, speakers will examine the related issue of the extent to which the Samanids modelled their administrative and political practices on those of the Abbasid caliphs, seeking to understand in both contexts to what extent Samanid culture writ large was innovative or derivative.

The third strand of enquiry will be the relationship of the Samanid amirs with the outside world, and in particular the Turkish steppe lands to the north and east of their state. The Samanids were uniquely successful in pacifying and exploiting both these frontiers for their enormous commercial potential. The implications of the creation of the long-distance trade routes with the northern lands will be investigated, as will the co-option of Turkish tribes for the defence of the Syr Darya basin and the formation of the Qarakhanid confederation.

By combining these three approaches, we hope to elucidate the central role played by the Samanid amirs in forging a distinctive new Perso-Islamic culture long before the Mongol conquests. We believe this to be an important topic that has been clouded by doctrinal and nationalist agendas and which urgently deserves to be revisited.

Attendance is free of charge, but spaces are limited in number and are restricted to those who have pre-registered.

To register, please email Dominic Parviz Brookshaw:

dominic.brookshaw@orinst.ox.ac.uk



FACULTY OF ORIENTAL STUDIES

Iran Resurgent? Politics, Literature and Trade in the Samanid Era

Programme

Wadham College, Oxford September 22nd-23rd September 2014

DAY ONE (Monday September 22nd)

8.45-9.00 **Opening Remarks** Luke Treadwell

SESSION ONE: THE EMERGENCE OF REGIONAL STATE STRUCTURES IN THE ISLAMIC LANDS (9TH-10TH CENTURIES) Respondent – Andrew Marsham, University of Edinburgh

9.00-10.00

The First Abbasid Successor States Hugh Kennedy, SOAS

10-10.30 Coffee

10.30-12.30

The Samanid State – Western and Eastern Perspectives Luke Treadwell, University of Oxford

Samanid History and the Historiography of Iran Edmund Herzig, University of Oxford

12.30-2.00 Lunch

2.00-4.00

SESSION TWO: EPIC AND LYRIC POETRY AT THE SAMANID COURT AND BEYOND
Respondent – Geert Jan van Gelder, University of Oxford

Tracing Idols: The Archaeological Poetics of Buddhism and Manichaeism in Early Persian Verse Stefano Pellò, University of Venice

Characteristics of the Arabic Poetry of Khurāsān and Transoxania as anthologized in the *Yatimat al-dahr* of Abū Manṣūr al-Tha‘ālibī (d. 429/1039) Bilal Orfali, Ohio State University/American University of Beirut

4.00-4.30 Coffee

4.30-6.30

Looking beyond the *Shahnamas*: Engagement with Iranian Mytho-History in Samanid Lyric Poetry Dominic Parviz Brookshaw, University of Oxford

Samanid Patronage and the Development of Persian Epic Poetry Ghazzal Dabiri, Columbia University

7.30 Dinner

DAY TWO (Tuesday September 23rd)

SESSION THREE: BEYOND THE SAMANIDS Respondent – Nicola Clarke, Newcastle University

9.00-11.00

The Seljuqs before Dandanqan Edmund Bosworth, University of Manchester

The Bukharkhudas – Sogdian Kings before and after the Islamic Conquest Aleksandr Naymark, Hofstra University

11.00-11.30 Coffee

11.30–1.30

Samanid Trade with the North: Dirhams, Slaves and Furs Marek Jankowiak, University of Oxford

Central Asian Purchasing Power – Production, Circulation, Debasement and Imitation of Samanid dirhams Luke Treadwell, University of Oxford

1.30–2.30 Lunch

2.30–4.30

SESSION FOUR: THEMES FOR DISCUSSION

Sogdian Heritage in Early Islamic Central Asia Moderator – Aleksandr Naymark, Hofstra University

Samanids and Ghaznavids – Continuity and Change Moderator – Christine van Ruymbeke, University of Cambridge

4.30–5.00 **Closing Remarks** – Dominic Parviz Brookshaw, University of Oxford