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12

# 5th Simone Assemani Symposium on Islamic coins

Edited by  
Bruno Callegher and  
Arianna D'Ottone Rambach





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Symposium  
on Islamic coins**

**Rome, 29-30 September 2017**

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ANDREA GARIBOLDI (University of Trieste), SIMONE MANTELLINI (University of Bologna), AMRIDDIN BERDIMURADOV (Academy of Sciences of Uzbekistan)

## NUMISMATIC FINDS FROM KAFIR KALA AS EVIDENCE OF THE ISLAMIC TRANSITION IN SAMARKAND

### *Abstract*

*The present article focuses on the numismatic finds by the Uzbek-Italian Archaeological Program “Samarkand and Its Territory” in the Sogdian and early Islamic site of Kafir Kala (Uzbekistan). The overall number of coins discovered at Kafir Kala amounts to 178. The major part of them came from the citadel. Beside many Sogdian copper coins of the 7th and first half of the 8th century, the most important discovery was an Abbasid dīnār and a hoard of 132 dirhams. The coins are described in their stratigraphic context. Kafir Kala represents a very important case-study for the comprehension of the changes in the monetary circulation in Sogdiana at the beginning of the Islamic expansion in Central Asia.*

### *Keywords*

*Kafir Kala, Samarkand, Sogdians, Coins, Abbasid Hoard, Archaeology in Central Asia*

## INTRODUCTION (A. B., S. M)

The Uzbek-Italian Archaeological Program (UIAP) “Samarkand and Its Territory” began in 2001 as a collaboration between the Institute of Archaeology of the Academy of Science of Uzbekistan (IAASU) and the Department of Archaeology (later History and Cultures) of the University of Bologna (DHCUB). The main goal of this project was to learn more about the archaeological and historical heritage of one of the most important ancient Eurasian crossroads. Most of the efforts were therefore addressed to the creation of an updated digital archaeological map of the southern Middle Zeravshan Valley and a large exploration of the Samarkand territory<sup>1</sup>. More than 2,000 archaeological sites are positioned between the left bank of the Zeravshan River and the Karatyube range<sup>2</sup>. Further research activities studied human-environment interactions in this region<sup>3</sup>, with special focus on the development of irrigation systems and the digging of targeted sites<sup>4</sup>. Among the latter, a long-term excavation interested in particular Kafir Kala.

## THE ARCHAEOLOGICAL COMPLEX OF KAFIR KALA (A. B.)

The archeological complex of Kafir Kala is located 12 km (ca. 2 *farsakh*) southeast of Afrasiab, i.e. the city of Samarkand abandoned after the Mongol conquest of 1220 (Fig. 1). This site was built on the left bank of the Dargom canal, in a very strategic location that controlled one of the local south-north passages along the ancient Silk Road<sup>5</sup>. The site was defended on all four sides by the Dargom canal north, the natural Ilonsai and Yatanjarsai streams, respectively east and west, and a small artificial canal in the south. The overall extension of Kafir Kala is ca. 20 ha and it consists of a central quadrangular citadel, an inner moat with six towers (three north and three south), a living quarter (*shahristan*) that surrounded the citadel, an outer moat and an outer town (*rabat*) in the west (Fig. 2). A necropolis and an important kiln quarter were also part of this settlement. The necropolis was located just outside the southern *shahristan* and it yielded several terracotta ossuaries related to the Zoroastrian burial cult. The craft quarter, which had some tens of kilns for pottery production, was instead on the opposite side of the Ilonsai.

<sup>1</sup> BONORA *et al.* 2003; SHIRINOV, TOSI 2003; BERDIMURADOV *et al.* 2007; TOSI *et al.* 2007.

<sup>2</sup> MANTELLINI, BERDIMURADOV 2016; MANTELLINI 2017a.

<sup>3</sup> RONDELLI, TOSI 2005; MANTELLINI 2017b.

<sup>4</sup> STRIDE, RONDELLI, MANTELLINI 2009; MANTELLINI, RONDELLI, STRIDE 2011; MALATESTA *et al.* 2012.

<sup>5</sup> MANTELLINI, BERDIMURADOV 2005; MANTELLINI 2017b: p. 340.

Kafir Kala has been the subject of archaeological investigation since the early 20th century<sup>6</sup>. In an attempt to locate the Timurid garden of Davlatatabad, mentioned by the Castilian Ambassador Clavijo, the prominent Soviet archaeologist M. E. Masson prepared both a general map of the area of Kafir Kala and a detailed plan of the site<sup>7</sup>. A few years later, Sukharev investigated the necropolis, dated to the 6th-7th centuries CE thanks to the coins associated with the ossuaries, and he also discovered the industrial quarter on the right bank of the Ilonsai<sup>8</sup>. The kilns were then excavated in 1938-1940 by an expedition of the Institute of History and Material Culture of the Academy of Sciences of the USSR under the direction of G.V. Grigorev. Based on artefacts discovered during the excavation, including several Sogdian coins, Grigorev dated the occupation of this area to the 6th-7th century CE. Grigorev described in particular two copper coins discovered in a pit filling together with a lot of ceramic production waste at -3.90 m below ground surface<sup>9</sup>. Both coins were of the typical Chinese style, one with the inscription of Varxumān<sup>10</sup> (mid-7th century CE) and the second one mentioning the Sogdian ruler Ghūrak (first half of the 8th century CE). A third coin, minted by Tarxūn, Ghūrak's predecessor, was discovered in 1940 in Excavation no. 2 over an anthropic occupational level at a depth of -1.20 m. Grigorev suggested that these three coins belonged to the last phase of occupation of the industrial area. Between 1956 and 1957, on behalf of the Institute of History and Archaeology of the Academy of Sciences of the USSR, G. V. Shishkina carried out the excavation of a small mound also located on the right side of the Ilonsai, very close to the kilns investigated earlier by Grigorev<sup>11</sup>. This site was dated to the Early Middle Ages and its function raised different interpretations: rural manor or a small castle, or even a "tower of silence" (*dakhma*) used for Zoroastrian funerary rituals<sup>12</sup>. It is worth noting that the Soviet agrarian reforms of the 60s and 70s completely flattened the surroundings of Kafir Kala, thus the old information published, although scanty, is the only source of data available for both the necropolis and the right bank of the Ilonsai.

<sup>6</sup> MANTELLINI, BERDIMURADOV 2005: pp. 121-124; MANTELLINI *et al.* 2016: pp. 227-228.

<sup>7</sup> MASSON 1928.

<sup>8</sup> The results of Sukharev's research are available only in his unpublished report of 1938 "Nausy Kafyr-Kaly", stored at the Institute of History and Archaeology (today Institute for Archaeological Research) of the Academy of Sciences of the Uzbek SSR (Manuscript no. 316). Some information is however mentioned by GRIGOREV 1940a: pp. 97-98; GRIGOREV 1946: pp. 94-95; SHISHKINA 1961: p. 208, note 21 and 212; LEBEDEVVA 1999: p. 152.

<sup>9</sup> GRIGOREV 1946: pp. 95-96, Fig. 45, 2-3.

<sup>10</sup> The author actually reported the name "Vashumān" but also referred to him as the king of Samarkand who ruled Sogdiana between 650 and 655. See also GRIGOREV 1940a: p. 98; GRIGOREV 1940b: p. 32.

<sup>11</sup> SHISHKINA 1961.

<sup>12</sup> LEBEDEVVA 1999.

Except for a preliminary excavation on the top of the eastern *shahristan* by O. V. Obelchenko in the late 60s<sup>13</sup>, there was no significant archaeological activity until the early 90s, when the Institute of Archaeology of Samarkand started the excavation of the upper citadel<sup>14</sup>. Between 1991 and 1994, excavations focused on the squared bastion located on the northwestern corner, some rooms on the southern side, and a small area just inside the arched gate. The work opened the whole architecture of the bastion, with its inner partition and many embrasures overlooking east and west. The finds were of exceptional value: intact pottery forms, fragments of decorated plaster, a wooden bowl, wooden cutlery, textile fragments and one leather shoe, organic materials (such as nuts and fruit seeds), but also coins and clay sealings. According to the pottery and other materials, the chronology spanned late Sogdian-early Islamic periods (8th-9th centuries).

#### THE UIAP RESEARCH AT KAFIR KALA (S. M.)

A new season of research carried out by the UIAP began in 2001. Alongside resuming the excavation on the upper citadel KK-1 (seasons 2001-2002, 2005-2008, 2013-2014), new stratigraphic investigations concerned: i) a long trench between the northern *shahristan* and the Dargom (2001); ii) a series of test trenches along the middle-western profile between the citadel and the *rabat* (season 2002); iii) some test trenches at the base of the northern towers (season 2003); investigation of the handicraft quarter in the same area already tested by Grigorev in the '50s (seasons 2007-2008)<sup>15</sup>.

Several investigations complied with the need to understand better: i) the chronology of Kafir Kala; ii) its role in the late Sogdian-early Islamic settlement pattern of the Samarkand region; and, iii) its relationship with the surrounding environment, in particular with the irrigation network based on the Dargom canal. Since 2013, an Uzbek-Japanese team also started investigating the citadel of Kafir Kala under the direction of G. Bogomolov and T. Uno<sup>16</sup>.

The UIAP research on the citadel of Kafir Kala provided new important hints on the early islamization of ancient Sogdiana, when this site experienced a dramatic shift following the defeat of Samarkand by the army of Qutayba b. Muslim in 712 CE<sup>17</sup>. They revealed in particular two major periods of occupation (Fig. 3).

<sup>13</sup> The results of this work are unfortunately unpublished.

<sup>14</sup> BERDIMURADOV, SAMIBAEV 1995.

<sup>15</sup> Six kilns (coded A-F) were excavated in 2007-2008 under the direction of D. Giorgetti (UIAP).

<sup>16</sup> BEGMATOV *et al.* 2016; USAMI *et al.* 2017.

<sup>17</sup> BERDIMURADOV *et al.* 2009; MANTELLINI *et al.* 2016; GRENET, DE LA VAISSIÈRE 2002.

The pre-Islamic record refers to the exceptional discovery of a set of over 700 clay sealings, which is the largest hitherto discovered in the whole Early Medieval Central Asia<sup>18</sup>. Most of the sealings were scattered over a very hard and compact beaten earthen floor (SU 29)<sup>19</sup> covered by a thick layer of burnt and collapsed beams belonging to a wooden portico. This considerable burnt evidence was certainly connected to a dramatic event that possibly occurred at the very beginning of the 8th century and caused the abandonment of the citadel. It has to do with the role of Kafir Kala in the socio-political scenario of pre-Islamic Samarkand. Such a large number of sealings suggests that Kafir Kala was the locus of a very important administrative center<sup>20</sup> and possibly even a royal residence (called *Rēwdād*) of the pre-Islamic kings (*ikhshīds*) of Samarkand<sup>21</sup>. The name of Kafir Kala itself, “castle of the infidels”, as well as its monumental fortification and complex defensive systems, are further proofs supporting the hypothesis advanced above.

The citadel was resettled soon after the fire but with significant changes. A large amount of pottery, new architectural installations, and several fireplaces (around 60) show how, during the Islamic period, the citadel of Kafir Kala was used for residential purposes. Most of the pre-Islamic monumental walls, as well as construction materials, were reused for new rooms and living spaces. The building technique of the Islamic period here was, however, remarkably worse when compared to the previous one. The inner central courtyard, i.e. the core of the pre-Islamic citadel, where the archive was possibly stored, was left empty and used to discharge pottery, animal bones and architectural remains, including baked bricks and tiles. Nevertheless, the discovery of a hoard of 132 coins in Room 2 (see below Season 2006) suggested that the site was still occupied by someone important and it possibly still played a decisive role in the local economy (on this first interpretation see below).

## EXCAVATION OF THE UPPER CITADEL KK-1: STRATIGRAPHY, ARCHITECTURE AND DISCOVERIES

The overall number of coins discovered by the UIAP at Kafir Kala amounts to 178 (Table 1). The major part (168 coins) came from the citadel KK-1, four coins were discovered in the soundings at the base of the northeastern tower (2003), and one from the long trench on the Dargom canal (2001). Moreover, five coins were col-

<sup>18</sup> This figure includes also the circa 200 sealings discovered by the Uzbek-Japanese team between 2013-2017 (BEGMATOV *et al.* 2016: p. 117).

<sup>19</sup> This floor was wrongly mentioned as SU 15 in MANTELLINI *et al.* 2016: p. 228.

<sup>20</sup> CAZZOLI, CERETI 2005; MANTELLINI *et al.* 2016.

<sup>21</sup> BERDIMURADOV, MANTELLINI, MATBABAIEV 2007; GRENET 2010: pp. 271-272.

lected randomly by local people in the area of Kafir Kala. No coins came from the kilns KK-2 (2007-2008) and from the test trenches between the citadel and the *rabat* (2002).

Here below is a description of the coins discovered during the UIAP excavation on the upper citadel of Kafir Kala (KK-1) according to the year of excavation and their stratigraphic context (Fig. 4).

#### SEASONS 2001 AND 2002

The start of the UIAP<sup>22</sup> activities began with an almost L-shaped sounding measuring 10 x 5 m, oriented southwest-northeast, just in proximity of the arched gate. Despite the small surface opened, the excavation resulted in the discovery of a thick burnt layer (SU 1) covering a hard and compact earthen floor (SU 29) at -7.00 m<sup>23</sup> with 296 clay sealings scattered on it, three earthen *sufa* (SUs 27, 32 and 33), and 4 wooden column bases (SUs 23, 26, 31 and 34) (see Fig. 4). Although the potsherds from the layers covering the floor SU 29 were few and little diagnostic, it was possible to date this level to the late 7th-early 8th century, likely at the time of the Arab conquest of Samarkand<sup>24</sup>.

The number of coins discovered was ten: six Sogdian of the Chinese type and four Islamic ones. However, none of them came from the pre-Islamic layers. One coin (no. 10), dated to the Abbasid Caliphate, was discovered inside the floor SU 15, which is one of the earliest Islamic levels recorded. Otherwise, the coins came from the upper layers (SUs 4, 6, 8, and 10) that were either sporadic late Islamic occupations or followed the final citadel abandonment.

In 2002 the excavation was enlarged to the northeastern corner of 2001. Investigations concerned also some limited soundings along the upper citadel's border in order to open its perimeter walls. Again, several burnt wooden beams (SU 13) and 88 sealings were discovered over the same pre-Islamic floor (SU 29) of the previous campaign<sup>25</sup>, but no coins were found.

<sup>22</sup> TOSI *et al.* 2002: pp. 345-350.

<sup>23</sup> The depth refers to the main topographical station placed on the top of the citadel (see Figs. 3 and 4). Because of erosion of the high perimeter walls, the inner deposit of the citadel has a typical convex-shaped profile, which is higher on its side and lower in the center. The topsoil is therefore attested at a different depth from the main station and it is lowest in the center of the citadel (-5.20 m).

<sup>24</sup> CAZZOLI, CERETI 2005, pp. 134-137; MANTELLINI *et al.* 2016: p. 228.

<sup>25</sup> The number of sealings recorded during the 2002 excavation was actually 116 because 28 sealings were discovered after the sifting of the dumps from the 1991-1994 excavations (CAZZOLI, CERETI 2005: p. 134).

## SEASONS 2005-2008

After a hiatus of two years<sup>26</sup>, stratigraphic operations on the citadel restarted in 2005. The limits of the 2002 excavation were enlarged by 5 m at east, 3 m at north and 6.5 m at west, for a total surface of 22 x 14 m, with the goal of reaching the earthen floor SU 29. The archaeological deposit was very similar to that opened in 2001-2002 and another set of 83 sealings were unearthed (SU 22 = SU 14).<sup>27</sup> They were clustered in two different groups in the central part of the citadel, with the remains of a very thick burnt layer (SUs 19, 20, 21, 24) made of many wooden beams on their sides (Fig. 5). After their collapse, this layer sealed the floor underneath (SU 29) and thirteen wooden column bases, also burned and carved into the same floor. The L-shaped layout of the 17 column bases suggests the presence of a wooden portico that surrounded an inner courtyard and it possibly continued northward below the archaeological deposit.

Fifteen coins were found in 2005: eight of the Chinese type and seven were Islamic. Unlike the coins discovered in the first season, four Sogdian coins (coin nos. 30-33) came from the pre-Islamic layers and two of them were closely connected with the fire. Coin no. 31 (SU 21) was minted under the ruler Urk Vartärmuk (675-696 CE)<sup>28</sup> while coin no. 33 (SU 24) dates to Tarxūn (700-710 CE).<sup>29</sup> A second coin (no. 32) from SU 21 is illegible, whereas coin no. 30 (SU 17) belongs to Turgār (738-750 CE) and it was used in the preparation (SU 17) of the floor SU 15 so it was likely in a secondary context. The diagnostic pottery found in those layers is of little use to establish chronology<sup>30</sup>. Coins no. 31 and no. 33, however, deserve special attention because they represent a *terminus post quem* for dating the fire. Coin no. 31, in particular, dates to Tarxūn and it came from the same filling SU 24 of the clay sealings. The dramatic event that forced the people of Kafir Kala to abandon their settlement can be therefore framed in the years of the conquest of Samarkand, possibly exactly 712 CE or about. The hypothesis of the fire during Tarxūn's reign was also advanced by the Uzbek-Japanese team on the basis of the coins found within the same fire layer<sup>31</sup>.

The other coins came from sporadic Islamic occupations or accumulations after the citadel abandonment: one coin from SU 4 (no. 19, Islamic), SU 8 (no. 26, Sogdian), SU 10 (no. 27, Islamic), SU 11 (no. 28, Islamic), and SU 12 (no. 29,

<sup>26</sup> Since 2005 the excavation of Kafir Kala was co-directed by A. Berdimuradov and S. Mantellini.

<sup>27</sup> An extension of 4 x 1 m on the northern border was done to verify the presence of additional sealings within the largest cluster.

<sup>28</sup> Cf. GARIBOLDI 2011: p. 182, no. 30.

<sup>29</sup> Cf. GARIBOLDI 2011: p. 182, no. 27.

<sup>30</sup> DIMARTINO 2011: p. 39.

<sup>31</sup> BEGMATOV *et al.* 2016: p. 117; USAMI *et al.* 2017: p. 789.

Sogdian); two coins from SU 5 (no. 20, Sogdian and no. 22, Islamic); and four coins from SU 6 (no. 22, Sogdian and nos. 23-25 Islamic).

The aim of the 2006 season was to enlarge the excavation sideways in order to expose the pre-Islamic floor up to the eastern and western perimeter walls of the upper citadel. However, soon after the beginning of work, an unexpected but important Islamic structure was found on the western side just over the layer with the burnt wooden beams SU 21 (Fig. 6). It consisted of two small rooms (nos. 2 and 3) leaned up to the eastern perimeter wall of the citadel. Room 2 was particularly well-defined in its rectangular shape (11.50 x 4.20 m) and with a C-shaped earthen *sufa* (SU 90) on the eastern and southern borders. A hoard of 132 coins (nos. 36-167) was hidden inside a circular pit (SU 40 and in SU 41 its filling), 0.50 m in diameter, which was cut into the *sufa* itself at -5.05 m.<sup>32</sup> (Fig. 7). Most of these coins (128) are Abbasid silver *dirhams* but the hoard also included two Sasanian drachms and three Umayyad *dirhams*. In addition, during the removal of this room in 2013, the Uzbek-Japanese team discovered a gold coin of the early Abbasid period a few meters south of the hoard<sup>33</sup> (Fig. 8). Rooms 2 and 3 were opened just below the topsoil (the top of the wall SU of Room 2 was at -3.40 m) so the ceramic sherds from the upper fillings do not provide a coherent chronology. This is supported by the discovery of a Sogdian coin (no. 35) in a filling (SU 2) just below the topsoil at -4.86 m, hence certainly in a secondary context. However, even in this case, the coins from the hoard indicate that this room, which was built exactly over the layer of the burnt wooden beams, dates to the earliest Islamic occupation of Kafir Kala (Fig. 6). One typical dome-shaped oven (FS no. 8), also known as *tandir* and still used today in the rural countryside<sup>34</sup>, was carved into the wall SU 153 outside Room 3 and suggests that these rooms had a prevailing domestic use (Fig. 4).

In the same campaign, a third coin (no. 34) was found in the eastern side of the excavation. This is a Samanid *fals* that came from a filling (SU 60) associated with a structured fireplace (FS no. 3) at -4.61 m. According to a practice largely attested at Kafir Kala during the Islamic period, the fireplace was carved into a previous *pakhsa* wall (SU 57). In this case, the bottom of the FS no. 3, together with a second fireplace (FS no. 2), corresponds to the floor of the Islamic period SU 15 that here was cut by postholes (Fig. 9).

The 2007 season yielded only one coin (no. 168), inside an upper deposit (SU 123 at -2.47 m) that filled both rooms 8 and 9. This coin is dated to the Sogdian king Urk Vartärmuk (675-696 CE) but it was clearly in a secondary context. The poor pottery

<sup>32</sup> BERDIMURADOV *et al.* 2009: p. 247; BERDIMURADOV, ATAKHODJAEV, MANTELLINI 2012.

<sup>33</sup> BEGMATOV *et al.* 2016: p. 118.

<sup>34</sup> DI CUGNO, MANTELLINI, BERDIMURADOV 2013: pp. 103-105.



does not allow an accurate chronology but one ceramic sherd possibly dates to the Samanid period (9th-10th centuries)<sup>35</sup>.

In 2008 it was decided to extend the excavation northward in order to systematically investigate the Islamic occupation over the entire citadel. Eight new rooms (nos. 10-17) were uncovered by the end of the season (Fig. 6). All of them dated to the pre-Islamic period but it is impossible at present to establish their original function. Later, they were readapted for domestic and living purposes, as testified by the presence of several fire structures (23 opened in 2008). The most significant discovery came from rooms 10 and 11, where four different occupation levels witnessed an uninterrupted use of this space as a kitchen. It is especially remarkable the discovery in Room 11 of two *tandirs*<sup>36</sup>. Rooms 10-11 were created inside the long pre-Islamic western corridor by closing it with a small wall (SU 125) in the south, while in the north they were connected to Room 14 (the former circular tower of the pre-Islamic period) by a threshold (SU 480) made of baked bricks. One Islamic copper coin (no. 172) was discovered at -1.62 m in the filling SU 285 (phase IV of Room 11), which was interpreted as underlay for the mud floor SU 284 (Fig. 10). Although this coin is unfortunately unidentifiable, it was associated with a Kharakhanid ceramic sherd dated to the 10th-11th centuries and a handmade bottle fragment decorated with a painted red spiral and concentric circles attested at Afrasiab since the 10th century<sup>37</sup>. A further confirmation of this late chronology comes also from the underlying layers, which belonged to a temporary abandonment of this room (phase III) and contained material dated from the end of the 8th up to the 10th centuries.

A second coin (no. 171) was found in Room 7 that, like Room 11, was obtained inside the pre-Islamic corridor and it also presented different levels of occupation. This coin was discovered inside the wall SU 265 (-2.03 m), mixed with the mud and the straws of the *pakhsa* (Fig. 11). It is impossible to establish whether it was mixed within the *pakhsa* intentionally or not. Together with a floor (SUs 300 and 331) made of small mud blocks, this wall belongs to phase IV of Room 7, which is characterized by the absence of pottery. Despite its stratigraphic complexity, Room 7 yielded in fact very poor diagnostic sherds so its dating remains rough: a fragment of a Samanid dish was found in the filling of the earlier phase (phase III); on the contrary, the last phase of occupation of this room (phase V) was marked by a floor (SU 117) made of reused baked bricks.

Finally, a coin (no. 170) of the Bukhārkhudāt type was discovered at the beginning of this season in a 5 x 5 m sounding outside rooms 3 and 7 and near the border of the 2005 excavation. However, this coin came from a natural filling (SU 2 at -5.22 m),

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<sup>35</sup> DIMARTINO 2011: p. 46.

<sup>36</sup> DI CUGNO, MANTELLINI, BERDIMURADOV 2013: pp. 103-105.

<sup>37</sup> MANTELLINI *et al.* 2016: p. 233.

which followed the final abandonment of the site and the materials associated to it are also too heterogeneous to allow for an accurate dating.

#### SEASONS 2013 AND 2014

The last two seasons of the UIAP at Kafir Kala focused on the southern half of the citadel with the aim of reaching the pre-Islamic earthen floor SU 29 discovered in 2001-2002 and 2005. In 2013 activities interested the sounding begun in 2008 almost in the center of the citadel (coin no. 171). As expected after the previous discoveries, this area was characterized by the absence of architectural remains.<sup>38</sup> On the contrary, there was a considerable presence of natural and anthropic fillings, such as two large wastes of baked tiles SU 718 and SU 735 at -6.70 m. The only significant architectural remain was the small wall SU 610 that delimited Room 3 in the north. The floor SU 29 was covered by some burnt wooden fragments, however, similarly to what discovered in 2001-2002 and 2005, the wooden remains in the central part of the citadel were remarkably less than those on its sides. Two copper coins (nos. 174 and 175) were discovered in the central sounding. Both are highly damaged: coin no. 174 is broken in four fragments, while coin no. 175 is preserved less than its half. The former came from SU 683, right below the northern section of the sounding, at -6.17 m; the latter from the filling SU 695 that covered the southern half of the sounding at -6.34 m. Since both SUs were slightly higher than the burnt wooden pieces (SUs 733, 748, 751-754) covering the pre-Islamic floor at -6.35/-6.70 m, they arguably belong to the earliest Islamic occupation of the citadel.

In 2014 work focused on the southeastern part of the citadel, including Room 9 and the Islamic floor SU 15 outside of it. Due to time constraints, the excavation could not reach the pre-Islamic floor SU 29. It stopped at the height of a burnt layer (SU 889) with several wooden fragments comparable to SU 13 of 2001-2002 and SUs 19, 20, 21 and 24 of 2005. Ten fire structures were opened, hence confirming a prevailing domestic function of the Kafir Kala citadel during the Islamic period. Three copper coins (no. 176, Sogdian, and nos. 177-178, unidentified) were discovered in the SU 807 at -4.58/-4.97m. This layer had many materials such as pottery, bones, glass, and also four clay sealings. It was interpreted as a preparation of the floor SU 819, which therefore belongs to the earliest reoccupation of the citadel after the fire.

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<sup>38</sup> The only significant architectural feature discovered in that season was the small wall SU 601 closing Room 3 north.

## MONETARY CIRCULATION IN KAFIR KALA (A. G.)

## SINGLE COIN FINDS

The coin finds from Kafir Kala testify the important role that the citadel had both during the Sogdian and the early Islamic period. The pre-Islamic numismatic evidence, considering the material discovered by the UIAP (see above), is composed of 21 Sogdian copper coins (called *fen*) and one anonymous silver drachm of the Bukhārkhudāt, struck in the first half of the 8th century. This exemplar (Table 2, no. 170, fig. 12) was found in the south-western port of the citadel, in a superficial layer (SU 2). It is noteworthy that the Bukhārkhudāt coins normally circulated in Sogdiana mixed with Islamic reformed dirhams, as I have recently shown in a more general study concerning Sasanian coins and their imitations in Tajikistan<sup>39</sup>. Without doubt, the majority of Sogdian coins that were used in Kafir Kala are those of the “Sino-Sogdian” type (coin no. 4, fig. 13). Such coins were widely introduced in Samarkand after 630, when the Sogdian confederation became almost independent, although it nominally recognized the sovereignty of China. The local Sogdian lords adopted a fiduciary copper coinage that directly derives from the Tang model, the so called “kai yuan tong bao” coins (minted after 621). This class of Sogdian coins is easily recognizable from the fabric technique: coins have a thin cast module with a characteristic central square hole, encircled by a flat rim. The Sogdian kings of Samarkand put their names on the coins, normally accompanied by the prestigious title of MLK’, “king”, notwithstanding their authority was limited to the oasis of Samarkand and its mountainous hinterland along the Upper Zeravshan valley. On the coin reverse there is no inscription but the symbols (*tamgha*) of the most prominent clans, and in particular the emblem of Samarkand, formed by a ring with three hooks. This heraldic design was also found on a clay *bullā* coming from Kafir Kala excavations<sup>40</sup>. Thus, the presence of the symbol of Samarkand in the administrative archive means that the seal is contemporaneous to the Sogdian coins of late 7th and first half of the 8th century.

The poor Sogdian copper coinage was largely used along the Zeravshan river and served to pay modest salaries to local farmers and peasants<sup>41</sup>, who probably were also employed to dig water canals around Samarkand. The oldest Sogdian coins from the area of Kafir Kala consist of three pieces of Urk Vartārmuk (c. 675-696) (GARIBOLDI 2011, nos. 6, 11, 30), five coins of Tarxūn (c. 700-710) (GARIBOLDI 2011,

<sup>39</sup> GARIBOLDI 2017: pp. 27-34 (coin no. 170 corresponds to SNS-Tajikistan Type 1e1/1a).

<sup>40</sup> CAZZOLI, CERETI 2005: pp. 145-146, fig. 11; GRENET 2010: p. 272, fig. 13b.

<sup>41</sup> Thousands of Sogdian copper coins came from regular excavations in Penjikent, see SMIRNOVA 1981.

nos. 2, 4, 12, 13, 27), four of Ghūrak (710-738) (GARIBOLDI 2011, nos. 25, 28, 29, 31), and finally five coins of Turgār (738-750) (GARIBOLDI 2011, nos. 3, 8, 9, 10, 26), who was the last Sogdian king who struck coins before the Arab conquest of this region<sup>42</sup>. Even if many Sogdian coins came from superficial archaeological levels (see Table 2), which are not significant to establish a certain chronology, some coins, on the contrary, like nos. 31 and 33, Urk Vartärmuk and Tarxun respectively, are important for fixing a sure Sogdian presence when the Arabs took Samarkand in 712 and set fire in Kafir Kala (cf. above). The finding of Sogdian copper coins in Islamic levels may be considered as residual. In some cases, it is possible that upper structures of the castle had collapsed over rooms that were still used during the Islamic period for domestic purposes.

In 2016 the Uzbek-Japanese team has found in the southern part of the citadel about 165 Sogdian copper coins of the middle 7th century<sup>43</sup>, a further proof of the abundant monetization of Kafir Kala as strategic center that continued during the Islamic period too. The Arabs reused at least for two centuries some old Sogdian rooms, main evidence of this frequentation are numismatic and pottery materials. Copper *fulūs* have been found in Islamic strata (coins nos. 10, 24, 27, 28, 34) datable from the Umayyad age up to the Samanid period (coin no. 34, fig. 15). Three Abbasid *fulūs* are from the Bukhārā mint in 151 H. (768) (coin no. 27, fig. 14)<sup>44</sup>, the Samanid *fals* was struck in Samarkand in 244 H. (858/59). The richness of this archaeological site is further demonstrated by the discovery (2013) of a gold *dīnār* of the early Abbasid period in Room 2 near a pot (figs. 8 and 16). It is an anonymous “mintless” *dīnār* struck in Iraq in year 135 H. (752) and represents the first standard emission of gold coins issued by the Abbasids<sup>45</sup>. It does not seem likely that this gold coin was pertinent to the silver Islamic hoard (infra), even though it has been found in the same room (but not in the same pit into the ground), where a lot of pottery fragments and traces of fire for cooking were also found.

#### THE ISLAMIC SILVER HOARD

A hoard of Islamic dirhams was discovered in 2006 in Room 2 (cf. above for the archaeological context in details, coin nos. 36-167). It was hidden inside a pit dug in the

<sup>42</sup> GARIBOLDI 2015.

<sup>43</sup> USAMI *et al.* 2017: p. 791; BEGMATOV *et al.* 2016: pp. 117-118.

<sup>44</sup> Curiously these *fulūs* from Bukhārā, issued under the authority of al-Junayd b. Khālid, are the first Islamic coins bearing the word *al-imām* as caliph's title in the reverse margin. Cf. NASTICH 2012: p. 157. Many similar coins were also found in Penjikent, see SMIRNOVA 1963: pp. 151-152, nos. 916-926. On al-Mahdī's titles see BATES 2003.

<sup>45</sup> BERNARDI 2009: p. 105, type 51; LOWICK 1996: xxix-xxxiv.

corner of the earthen *sufa* (SU 90). It consists of 132 coins (about 350 g of silver): two fragmented and clipped Sasanian drachms of Husraw II (591-628), three Umayyad and 127 Abbasid dirhams<sup>46</sup>. Most of the coins were minted in the second half of the 8th century. Both Husraw II's drachms were likely struck in Shiraz (Pahlavi mint marked with the initial letters ŠY), which was very prolific during the second part his reign<sup>47</sup>. These coins are dated respectively to year 25 (616) and 35 (626) of Husraw II<sup>48</sup>, so represent here the oldest coins. It is clear from the hoard record in general that Sasanian coins continued to circulate throughout the Umayyad and into the early Abbasid period as well<sup>49</sup>. Concerning the three Umayyad dirhams, they were struck in Dimashq year 79 H., al-Taymara 96 H. (part of the city of Isfahan active only between 90-98 H.) and Wāsiṭ 120 H. (figs. nos. 17-19). The 127 Abbasid dirhams (figs. 20-22) were minted between 140 H. and 190 H. (805/6), thus the hoard was closed at the very beginning of the 9th century. The most recent dirhams are from the mint of al-Shāsh (modern Tashkent) struck in 190 H. (805/6), but the majority of pieces were issued by the mints of Madīnat al-Salām (23 coins), al-Muḥammadiya (39 coins) in Jibal region, and Balkh (35 coins) in Khurāsān. The composition of the hoard by different Abbasid mints is shown in the graph (fig. 23)<sup>50</sup>.

If we look at the mints, the hoard appears perfectly coherent with the monetary circulation in Transoxiana at that time. Thus, in order to know the (possible) reason/s of its hiding, being evident that it was not a casual loss of money, we should consider some historical reason. Two factors seem relevant to clarify this question: i) the chronology, and ii) the geographic provenance of the most recent dirhams of the hoard, which were struck in Balkh in 189 H. and Ma'din al-Shāsh, "the mine of al-Shāsh" in 189-190 H. (804-806). In particular, this new eastern mint was opened exactly during these two years, perhaps by order of the caliph, using silver that was freshly extracted from the rich mines located near the city of al-Shāsh<sup>51</sup>. But in 190 H. (805-806) the situation drastically changed, as Rāfi' b. Layth, who was member of a powerful Muslim family in Samarkand and grandson of Naṣr

<sup>46</sup> BERDIMURADOV, ATAKHODJAEV, MANTELLINI 2012, with full misinterpretation by Atakhodjaev of the two Sasanian coins described at p. 165.

<sup>47</sup> See TYLER-SMITH 2017: pp. 128-130, for an up to date discussion about the attribution of Sasanian coins to the mint of Shiraz in Fārs or other possible places, marked with the mint abbreviation ŠY.

<sup>48</sup> Cf. BARATOVA, SCHINDEL, RTVELADZE 2012, pp. 142-145, nos. 371 and 375.

<sup>49</sup> HEIDEMANN 1998: p. 105.

<sup>50</sup> Cf. BERDIMURADOV, ATAKHODJAEV, MANTELLINI 2012: p. 164.

<sup>51</sup> BATES, forthcoming. I thank the author for passing me his unpublished but very interesting paper.

b. Sayyār (last local governor on behalf of the Umayyads)<sup>52</sup>, rebelled against the Abbasid governor of Khurāsān, ‘Alī b. ‘Īsā b. Māhān<sup>53</sup>, even forcing him to abandon his seat at Balkh<sup>54</sup>. Thus Rāfi‘ b. Layth, supported by the “Lords of al-Shāsh” and many Turkish people from Farghāna and other places, was able to take control over Samarkand for some time<sup>55</sup>. Because of such serious political instability, both the important mints of Balkh and Ma‘din al-Shāsh were shut down in 190 H. The rising of Rāfi‘ was put down some years later. Therefore, it is not by chance that Islamic standard silver coinage began again in Transoxiana in 193 H., only after the re-establishment of the official Abbasid authority in the region<sup>56</sup>.

The Islamic hoard from Kafir Kala significantly includes the very last emissions of Balkh and Ma‘din al-Shāsh coined just before the rebellion of Rāfi‘ b. Layth in Samarkand followed by the closure of these mints, and on the contrary, it does not contain coins struck after 193 H., when political order was restored by local Abbasid authorities. It is therefore highly probable that the coins in question were hidden in a safe place by someone who was involved in or alarmed by Rāfi‘ b. Layth’s upset.

## CONCLUSIONS (S. M., A. G.)

The numismatic discoveries from the citadel of Kafir Kala provide further information on the transformation in Samarkand after the Arab conquest of the early 8th century. On one hand, they provide a useful chronological marker to be combined with, or supplying information in place of, the ceramic remains when they not allow for an accurate dating of their provenance layers. Coin no. 33, for example, dates to Tarxūn (700-710) and it was found exactly in association with the clay sealings abandoned on the floor because of the fire. On the other hand, many coins from the citadel of Kafir Kala were clearly in a secondary context. For example, the major part of the Sogdian coins found in upper strata belong to either Islamic occupations or natural accumulations. This is the case of coin nos. 35 and 170 from SU 2, as well as other

<sup>52</sup> GRENET 2008.

<sup>53</sup> Ṭabarī, III, 707-708 (Cf. BOSWORTH 1989: pp. 259-261).

<sup>54</sup> Ṭabarī, III, 713, reports a curious history about a big coin hoard found at that time (191 H.) after the flight of ‘Alī b. ‘Īsā: «‘Alī set off from Balkh and arrived at Marw, fearing that Rāfi‘ b. al-Layth would march against it and take control of it. Now his son ‘Īsā had buried a huge hoard of money in the garden of his house at Balkh, reportedly amounting to thirty million (dirhams) in value» (BOSWORTH 1989: p. 269). This telling is a further proof of the common practice of hiding money in similar circumstances of the Kafir Kala hoard.

<sup>55</sup> Cf. Ṭabarī, III, 712 (BOSWORTH 1989: p. 267); concerning Rāfi‘ b. Layth’s rebellion see BARTHOLD 1928: pp. 200-201.

<sup>56</sup> BATES, forthcoming.

coins discovered in upper fillings such as SU 4, 5 and 6. They only give some basic information on their presence on this site but they cannot be contextualized in a more detailed occupation level.

A further consideration concerns the hoard of silver *dirhams* and the Abbasid *dīnār* from Room 2. Since its discovery, it was considered as the proof that a prominent person occupied the citadel of Kafir Kala soon after the Arab conquest at the beginning of the 8th century. Despite the UIAP excavation demonstrated that the citadel of Kafir Kala changed significantly its function before and after the coming of Islam, from an important administrative center to residential unit, this hoard was interpreted as a persisting important economic role of this settlement in the regional socio-political scenario. The new interpretation, based on both numismatic and historical data, provides instead a different perspective: it seems reasonable to assume that the hoard was buried – and then never recovered – because of the political troubles in Samarkand provoked by the rebellion of Rāfi‘ b. Layth in 806. This event caused a sudden suspension of the Abbasid silver minting activity in the whole region and might have stimulated coin hoarding. It is also likely that Room 2, which was built on the ruins of the collapsed pre-Islamic wooden portico, already existed at the time when the hoard was hidden inside it. The lack of both later structures and rebuilding and artefacts suggests that this room was probably abandoned after its occupation, whoever hid the hoard there. In conclusion, we may say that Kafir Kala represents a very important case-study for the comprehension of the changes in the monetary circulation in Sogdiana at the beginning of the Islamic expansion in Central Asia.

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## TABLES (S. M., A. G.)

**Table 1**

Season	Location	Coins	Notes
2001	Citadel - KK-1	10	
2001	Trench North	1	
2003	Test Trenches Northern Towers	4	All from the sounding NEW
2005	Citadel - KK-1	15	
2006	Citadel - KK-1	134	132 from hoard SU 41
2007	Citadel - KK-1	1	
2008	Citadel - KK-1	3	
2013	Citadel - KK-1	2	
2014	Citadel - KK-1	3	
2001-2014	Sporadic discoveries	5	2001, 2002 (2), 2007, 2008
	<b>Total</b>	<b>178</b>	

**Table 2 – Coins discovered by the UIAP excavation at the citadel of Kafir Kala – KK1**  
(\* still under study; \*\* coins illustrated)

Coin ID	Season	Type	Authority/ Dating	Provenance	Chrono	Reference
Coin 01	2001	ISL	Illegible fals	KK-1, SU 4	ISL	Gariboldi 2011, no. 21
Coin 02	2001	ISL	Illegible fals	KK-1, SU 4	ISL	Gariboldi 2011, no. 22
Coin 03	2001	SOGD	Turgār	KK-1, SU 6	ISL	Gariboldi 2011, no. 9
Coin 04**	2001	SOGD	Turgār	KK-1, SU 6	ISL	Gariboldi 2011, no. 10
Coin 05	2001	SOGD	Tarxūn	KK-1, SU 6	ISL	Gariboldi 2011, no. 12
Coin 06	2001	SOGD	Illegible	KK-1, SU 6	ISL	Gariboldi 2011, no. 16
Coin 07	2001	SOGD	Illegible	KK-1, SU 6	ISL	Gariboldi 2011, no. 17
Coin 08	2001	ISL	Illegible fals	KK-1, SU 8	ISL	Gariboldi 2011, no. 14
Coin 09	2001	SOGD	Illegible	KK-1, SU 10	ISL	Gariboldi 2011, no. 15



Coin 10	2001	ISL	Abbāsīd fals Bukhārā 151 H.	KK-1, SU 15	ISL	Gariboldi 2011, no. 20
Coin 19	2005	ISL	Illegible fals	KK-1, SU 4	ISL	Gariboldi 2011, no. 34
Coin 20	2005	SOGD	Ghūrak	KK-1, SU 5	ISL	Gariboldi 2011, no. 31
Coin 21	2005	ISL	Illegible fals	KK-1, SU 5	ISL	Gariboldi 2011, no. 36
Coin 22	2005	SOGD	Ghūrak	KK-1, SU 6	ISL	Gariboldi 2011, no. 25
Coin 23	2005	ISL	Illegible fals	KK-1, SU 6	ISL	Gariboldi 2011, no. 32
Coin 24	2005	ISL	Umayyad fals	KK-1, SU 6	ISL	Gariboldi 2011, no. 37
Coin 25	2005	ISL	Illegible fals	KK-1, SU 6	ISL	Gariboldi 2011, no. 38
Coin 26	2005	SOGD	Ghūrak	KK-1, SU 8	ISL	Gariboldi 2011, no. 29
Coin 27**	2005	ISL	Abbāsīd fals Bukhārā 151 H.	KK-1, SU 10	ISL	Gariboldi 2011, no. 39
Coin 28	2005	ISL	Abbāsīd fals Bukhārā 151 H.	KK-1, SU 1	ISL	Gariboldi 2011, no. 33
Coin 29	2005	SOGD	Ghūrak	KK-1, SU 1	ISL	Gariboldi 2011, no. 28
Coin 30	2005	SOGD	Turgār	KK-1, SU 17	SOGD	Gariboldi 2011, no. 26
Coin 31	2005	SOGD	Urk Vartarmūk	KK-1, SU 21	SOGD	Gariboldi 2011, no. 30
Coin 32	2005	SOGD	Illegible	KK-1, SU 21	SOGD	Gariboldi 2011, no. 35
Coin 33	2005	SOGD	Tarxūn	KK-1, SU 24	SOGD	Gariboldi 2011, no. 27
Coin 34**	2006	ISL	Samanid fals Samarqand 244 H.	KK-1, SU 60	ISL	Previously unpublished
Coin 35	2006	SOGD	Turgār	KK-1, SU 2	ISL	Gariboldi 2011, no. 3
Coin 36-167 ** 6 coins illustrated	2006	ISL	‘Abbāsīd period up to 190 H.	KK-1 hoard SU 41	ISL	Berdimuradov, Atakhodjaev, Mantellini 2012
Coin 168	2007	SOGD	Urk Vartarmūk	KK-1, SU 123	ISL	Gariboldi 2011, no. 6
Coin 170**	2008	ISL	Bukhārkhudāt drachm. First half of 8 <sup>th</sup> century	KK-1, SU 2	ISL	Gariboldi 2011, no. 1
Coin 171	2008	ISL	Illegible	KK-1, SU 265	ISL	Gariboldi 2011, no. 7
Coin 172	2008	ISL	Illegible fals	KK-1, SU 285	ISL	Gariboldi 2011, no. 5
Coin 174*	2013	UNID	-	KK-1, SU 683	ISL	
Coin 175*	2013	UNID	-	KK-1, SU 695	ISL	
Coin 176*	2014	SOGD	-	KK-1, SU 807	ISL	
Coin 177*	2014	UNID	-	KK-1, SU 807	ISL	
Coin 178*	2014	UNID	-	KK-1, SU 807	ISL	

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## CAPTIONS

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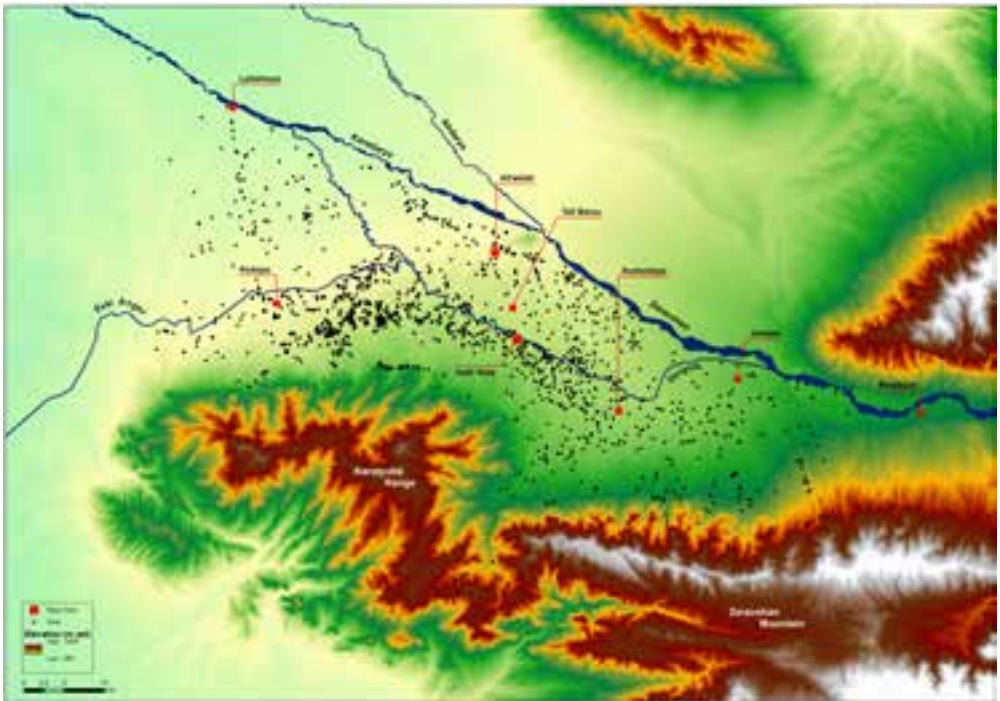


Figure 1 – Archaeological map of the southern Samarkand oasis after the Uzbek-Italian survey (Aster GDEM on the background)



Figure 2 – The archaeological complex of Kafir Kala on the aerial picture of the early 70s

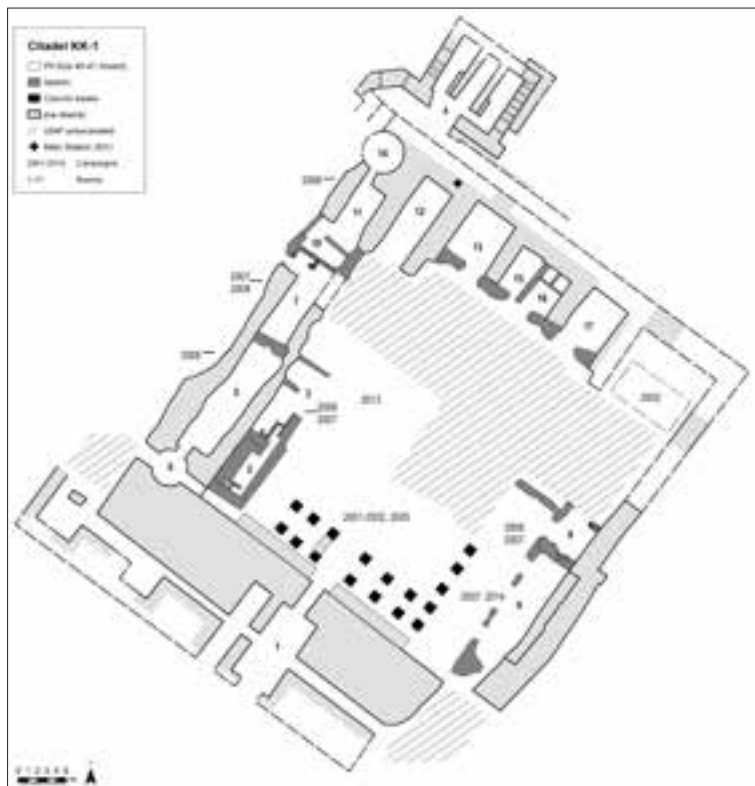
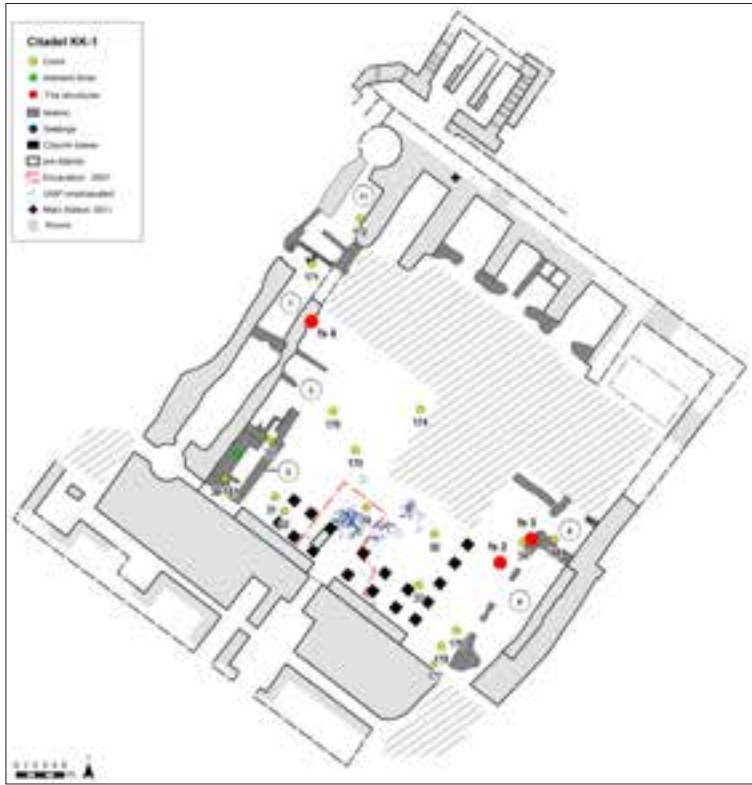


Figure 3 – Upper Citadel of Kafir Kala (KK-1): main pre-Islamic and Islamic architectural evidences and rooms



**Figure 4 – Upper Citadel of Kafir Kala (KK-1):  
main numismatic, archaeological and architectural evidences**



**Figure 5 – The burnt wooden beams SU 21 covering the western part of the pre-Islamic floor SU 29  
during the 2005 excavation (view from East)**



**Figure 6 – The architectural remains of the Islamic occupation in the western and northern inner side of the citadel of Kafir Kala (view from East, June 2008)**



**Figure 7 – Room 2 at the end of its excavation (view from North, June 2006)**





Figure 8 – The Abbasid *dīnār* from Room 2  
(courtesy of the Uzbek-Japanese Archaeological Expedition)



Figure 9 – Floor SU 15 of the Islamic period with fire structures  
and the postholes (black arrows)



Figure 10 – The discovery of coin no. 172 from SU 285  
(Room 11, May 2008)



Figure 11 – The discovery of coin no. 171 inside the *pakhsa* wall SU 265  
(Room 7, May 2008)



**Figure 12 – Bukhārkhudāt drachm. First half of 8th century  
(GARIBOLDI 2011: no. 1; cf. GARIBOLDI 2017 Type Ie1/1a)**



**Figure 13 – Copper coin of king Turgār (738-750), mint Samarkand  
(GARIBOLDI 2011: no. 10)**



**Figure 14 – Abbasid *fals* of Junayd b. Khālid, mint Bukhārā 151 H. (768)  
(GARIBOLDI 2011: no. 39)**



**Figure 15 – Samanid *fals* of al-Amīr Aḥmad b. Asad, mint Samarqand 244 H. (858/59)  
(Cf. ALBUM 2011: no. 1440)**



Figure 16 – Abbasid anonymous *dīnār*, 135 H. (752), 4.24 g 18 mm. Courtesy of the Uzbek-Japanese Archaeological expedition. (Cf. LANE POOLE 1875: p. 34, n. 2)



Figure 17 – Umayyad *dirham*, ‘Abd al-Malik, mint Dimašq, 79 H. (698/99)  
(BERDIMURADOV, ATAKHODJAEV, MANTELLINI 2012: p. 165, fig. 3; Cf. KLAT 2002: no. 323b)



Figure 18 – Umayyad *dirham*, al-Walīd I, mint al-Taymara, 96 H. (714/15)  
(BERDIMURADOV, ATAKHODJAEV, MANTELLINI 2012: p. 166, fig. 4; Cf. KLAT 2002: no. 212)



Figure 19 – Umayyad *dirham*, al-Hiṣām, mint Wāsiṭ, 120 H. (737/38)  
(BERDIMURADOV, ATAKHODJAEV, MANTELLINI 2012: p. 166, fig. 5; Cf. KLAT 2002: no. 713a)



Figure 20 – Abbasid *dirham*, al-Hādī, mint Muḥammadiya, 170 H. (786/87)  
(Cf. Lowick 1996: no. 1666)

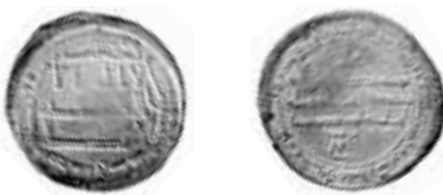


Figure 21 – Abbasid *dirham*, al-Rašīd, mint Madīnat Zaranj, 182 H. (798/99)  
(Cf. Lowick 1996: no. 2426)



Figure 22 – Abbasid *dirham*, al-Rašīd, mint Madīnat Marw, 185 H. (801)  
(Cf. Lowick 1996: no. 2267)

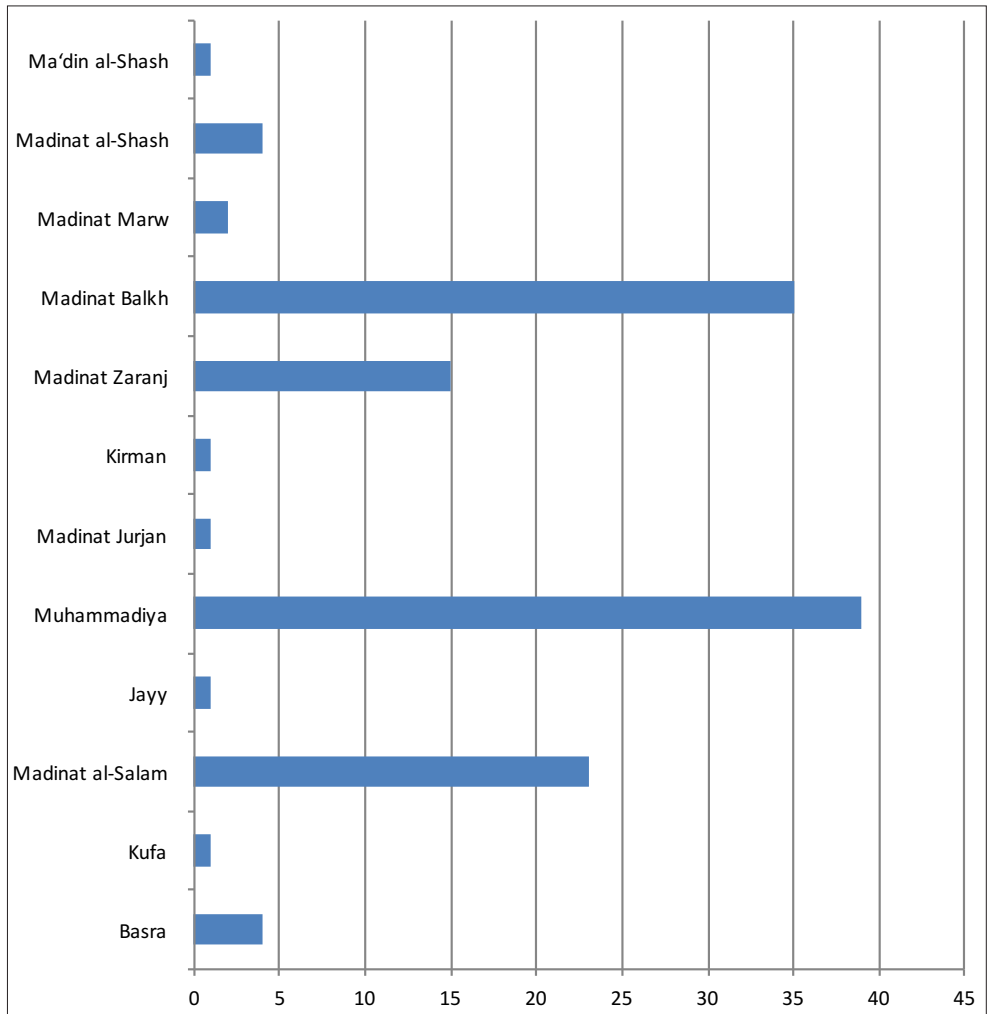


Figure 23 – Graph showing Abbasid mints of Kafir Kala hoard

The Proceedings of the fifth Simone Assemani Symposium on Islamic coins collect the various contributions with the unifying subject proposed for the meeting: Islamic money in the archaeological contexts (Syria, Egypt, Lebanon, Israel, Tajikistan, Poland, on the plains of western Russia and in Georgia, Sicily or Spain), problems, methods, documentary value for the economic history from the Umayyad period to the Mamluks. The numismatic documentation should be also the outcome of recent investigations in the archives, i.e. the project “*Fontes Inediti Numismaticae Orientalis*”, acronym FINO. The opening of a line of research on the history of collecting and studies of Islamic numismatics should strive for an interdisciplinary approach beyond merely classificatory aspects and at the same time a sort of resistance to the danger of considering the numismatics of the Islamic world as secondary, marginal, with respect to the money of the “classical” world. The confirmation of an undeclared inter-disciplinarity appears, e.g., in the paper *The Nani Collection of Arabic Coins through unpublished documents & drawings by Jean François Champollion (1790-1832)*.

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