

Crossroads between Iran and Central Asia. New data on the ceramic assemblage of the Bukhara Oasis.

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Abstract

The recent activities of the MAFOUB in the Bukhara oasis are providing new data for the evaluation of the multifaceted cultural phenomena that took place in this context from antiquity to the Islamic period. The aim of the project is to reconstruct the history of the settlement, its cultural exchanges and its relationship with Iran and Central Asia. The study of the ceramic material conducted since 2016 falls within this framework. The main objective is to gain a more in-depth understanding of the temporal variation and technical innovations reflected in the pottery production of the oasis with special regard to the identification of cultural links with the adjacent regions of Khorasan, Margiana and Bactria to the southwest, Khorasm and Chach to the northeast.

Archaeological excavations and ceramic studies were carried out in the main cities of the oasis covering all its different administrative districts. Samples were collected and submitted for thermoluminescence and C14 analyses, which provided a reliable chronological frame for the stratigraphic units within which to place the variations in the pottery assemblage.

Through a selection of representative examples, the main features of the oasis' ceramic assemblage will be diachronically analysed in order to assess the contributions that trade, movement of people and regional and interregional political changes may have produced. This study will shed new light on the analogies and differences in the ceramic production of the different areas of the oasis, while highlighting its cultural relationships within Sogdia and, on a larger scale, within Central Asia.