

Fall 2022 Arts of Asia Lecture Series
Forging New Connections: Asia in the First Millennium of the Common Era
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Arts in Afghanistan: From the Arrival of Islam to Ghaznavids

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Key dynasties:

Turk Shahi kings (660-850). Capitals Kapisa and Kabul, with other branches in central-south Afghanistan.

Omayyad caliphate (660-750). Capital Damascus.

Abbasid caliphate (750-1258). Capital Baghdad.

Hindu Shahi kings (850-1026). First capital Kabul, with other branches in central and south Afghanistan.

Ghaznavids (977-1186). Capital Ghazni, from 1161 Lahore.

Key figures:

Sebuktegin (977-997)

Mahmud (998-1030)

Timeline:

618: the larger of the Buddhas of Bamiyan, known as the "Western Buddha" built (approximate year based on carbon dating) during Hephthalite rule.

630: the Chinese monk and scholar Xuanzang visits Balkh, reports of Buddhist religious buildings (convents, stupas).

665: the Buddhist Turk Shahi dynasty is established, with capital in Kapisi near modern Bagram; then Kabul.

680: the Zunbil (Shahi) dynasty is established in modern southern Afghanistan region, with capital in Ghazni.

late 7th century: Arab armies are defeated multiple times by Shahi kings

815: the Abbasid Caliphate defeats Turk Shahis, who convert to Islam to maintain power.

850: the Turk Shahi vizir stages a coup and overthrows the Turk Shah king. The Hindu Shahi dynasty is established.

961: Alptigin, a Turk general of the Samanid army, retreats to Ghazni and starts to rule independently.

977: the Turk commander Sebuktegin is acclaimed amir and establishes the Ghaznavid dynasty

998: Sebuktegin's son Mahmud obtains power. Starts intense expansion campaigns towards Khurasan, central Iran, and India.

1040: the Ghaznavid army loses a decisive battle at Dandanqan (today Turkmenistan) against the Seljuq army. The defeat marks the loss of Khurasan.

1150: first sack of Ghazni by 'Ala al-Din Hussain of Ghur, renamed Jahan-suz (the World's Burner).

1161: Ghazni is lost to the Ghurids. The last Ghaznavid sultan, Bahram Shah, retreats to Lahore.

1186: Bahram Shah dies, end of the Ghaznavid dynasty.

1219-1221: Mongol invasion of Afghanistan as part of the Mongol conquest of the Khwarazmian Empire, resulting in thousands killed in the cities of Kabul, Kandahar, Jalalabad.

Further Readings:

Allegranzi Viola, "The Use of Persian in Monumental Epigraphy from Ghazni (Eleventh-Twelfth Centuries)". *Eurasian Studies*, 13/1-2: 23-41.

Filigenzi Anna, "Late Buddhist Art in Archaeological Context: Some Reflections on the Sanctuary of Tapa Sardar". In C. Bautze-Picron (ed.), *Religion and Art: New Issues in Indian Iconography and Iconology*. Vol. 1 of the Proceedings of the 18th conference of the European Association of South Asian Archaeologists, London 2005 (general editor M. Willis). London: 49-62.

Filigenzi Anna, "Post-Gandharan/non-Gandharan: An Archeological Inquiry into a Still Nameless Period". In M. Alam and D. E. Klimburg-Salter (eds.), *Coins, Art and Chronology II, The First Millennium C.E. in the Indo-Iranian Borderlands*. Wien: 389-406.

Fischer Klaus, "6. From the Rise of Islam to the Mongol Invasion". In F.R. Allchin & N. Hammond (eds), *The Archaeology of Afghanistan from earliest times to the Timurid period*. London-New York-San Francisco: 301-355.

Flood Finbarr Barry, *Objects of Translation. Material Culture and Medieval "Hindu-Muslim" Encounter*. Princeton.

Giunta Roberta, "Ġaznī. ii. Monuments and Inscriptions". *Encyclopaedia Iranica* , vol. 10/4: 385-388. URL: <http://www.iranicaonline.org/articles/gazni-#ii>.

Pinder-Wilson, Ralph, "Ghaznavid and Ghurid Minarets", *Iran*, 39, 2001, pp. 155-186.

Rugiadi Martina, "Ghaznavid art and architecture". The Encyclopaedia of Islam Three. Leiden-Boston: 103-109. https://referenceworks.brillonline.com/entries/encyclopaedia-of-islam-3/ghaznavid-art-and-architecture-COM_27452

Rugiadi Martina , "The Ghaznavid Marble Architectural Decoration: An Overview". Articles by the AKPIA@MIT Visiting Post-Doctoral Fellows, AKPIA@MIT (Aga Khan Project in Islamic Architecture, Massachusetts Institute of Technology). URL: <http://web.mit.edu/akpia/www/articlerugiadi.pdf>

Schlumberger, Daniel, Lashkari Bazar, une Résidence royale ghaznévide et ghoride; 1A l'Architecture (Mémoires de la Délégation Archéologique Française en Afghanistan 18), Paris 1978.

Online Resources:

<https://ghazni.bdus.cloud/>

(an online archive of archaeological investigations in Ghazni; the two main sites are a Buddhist monastery in use until the 9th century CE, and a Ghaznavid palace built in 1112 CE).

<https://shahimaterialculture.univie.ac.at/>

(a research project on the material culture of the Shahi period led by the University of Vienna).