

# **The Architecture and the Decoration of the Late Sogdian Palace at Sanjar-Shah**

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## **Abstract**

Our recent excavations at the Sogdian site of Sanjar-Shah near Panjikent (northern Tajikistan) have brought to light evidence of the construction of a monumental palace during the 740s CE. The palace was decorated with figurative wall-paintings and architectural elements made of carved wood. It was destroyed in the third quarter of the 8th century, possibly during the al-Muqanna' uprising.

The paper discusses the architecture, the wall paintings and the carved wood from the palace in context of transformation of Sogdian culture in the 8th century. Overall, there are twenty fragments of carved beams and panels with geometric, floral and zoomorphic designs. Most decorative patterns attested on the wooden fragments from the Sanjar-Shah palace find exact parallels in the materials from Panjikent and other Sogdian sites dated to the first quarter of the 8th century. Six fragments of panels were part of a freeze depicting juxtaposed, crouching ibexes. The Sanjar-Shah paintings are of the highest artistic quality and are new, outstanding monuments of Sogdian art. They include a complex floral freeze, a decorative ornament of crenelated antefixes, and a figurative composition of two priests worshipping a sacred fire.