THE UNIVERSITY OF TORONTO AT MISSISSAUGA

YEHAN NUMATA PROGRAM IN BUDDHIST STUDIES

DEPARTMENT OF HISTORICAL STUDIES

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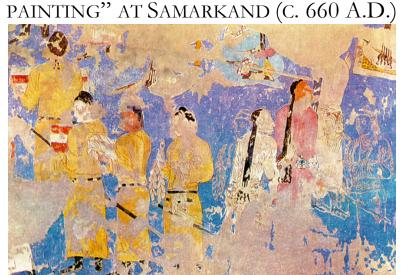
University of Toronto at Scarborough, Central and Inner Asia Studies at the Asian Institute, Department and Centre for the Study of Religion, Department of Near and Middle Eastern Civilizations, Canadian Society for Syriac Studies, and Toronto Initiative for Iranian Studies

presents

A Special Lecture Series on

Central Asian and Iranian Buddhism

NEW INTERPRETATIONS OF THE "AMBASSADORS"



Detail from the Ambassadors' Painting, Afrasiab, Courtesy of MAFOUZ

FRANTZ GRENET

Director of Research at the Centre National de la Recherche Scientifique (CNRS, Laboratory of Archaeology, Ecole Normale Supérieure, Paris); Professor at the Ecole Pratique des Hautes Etudes (Sorbonne, Paris), section "Religious Sciences"; Chair, Religions of the ancient Iranian world; Director of the French-Uzbek Archaeological Mission at Samarkand; Author of Les pratiques funéraires dans l'Asie centrale sédentaire de la conquête grecque à l'islamisation (Paris, 1984); A History of Zoroastrianism, vol. III: Zoroastrianism under Macedonian and Roman Rule, (Leiden, 1991), in collaboration with Mary Boyce and Roger Beck); and La geste d'Ardashir fils de Pâbag (Paris, Éditions a Die, 2003)

THURSDAY, NOVEMBER 10, 2005 | 4:00 P.M. Sidney Smith Hall, Room 2098 100 St. George Street

Lecture abstract: The so-called « Ambassadors' painting » (in fact, a whole cycle covering the four walls of a large reception room) is surely the masterpiece of Sogdian painting. It was discovered in 1965 on the archaeological site of Afrasiab, corresponding to the city centre of Samarkand before the Mongol invasion. Since then it has been the object of various and often conflicting interpretations. There is now a consensus about the "exotic" subjects of two of the walls, which portray China and India, respectively. One wall, and possibly two, illustrates the Zoroastrian New Year (Nowruz) royal ceremonies, which took place at Samarkand. The lecture will propose a possible key to the overall interpretation: an astronomical synchronism which occurred in 660 and 663, which put together the Sogdian "royal Nowruz", the summer solstice, and the Chinese festival of the "Dragon Boats".