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THE UNIVERSITY OF TORONTO AT MISSISSAUGA  
YEHAN NUMATA PROGRAM IN BUDDHIST STUDIES  
DEPARTMENT OF HISTORICAL STUDIES  
in collaboration with

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**

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NEW INTERPRETATIONS OF THE “AMBASSADORS’  
PAINTING” AT SAMARKAND (C. 660 A.D.)



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

**FRANTZ GRENET**

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**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”.

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