

Understanding connections and mobility in the ancient and medieval world

In discussions of ancient examples of long-distance connections and mobility, be it across the Indian Ocean, across Central and Inner Asia, or elsewhere, a lot of scholarly attention has been given over to discovering, describing and tracking various forms of contact, be it commercial, cultural, linguistic or technological. We often ask, in other words, what happened? Who and what went where? Where did this and that come from?

Less frequent, though no less important, are the questions of why and how. How did people cross such formidable natural barriers as the Indian Ocean or the Pamir mountains? How did Sogdian merchants communicate with locals at such diverse places as Khotan, Kroraina, Turfan and Dunhuang? Why were Indian scripts and languages taken up in large parts of the Tarim Basin, while Chinese dominated in others? Why did Buddhism not successfully spread westwards across the Indian Ocean or into Western Iran, but with great success towards the north and south-east?

This afternoon workshop would like to invite interested participants to five talks on connections and mobility in ancient and medieval Eurasia, followed by discussions of the hows and the whys.

Date/Time: Wednesday 28 May 2025 13:00–18:00 (JST)

Format: Hybrid

Venue: Conference Room (room 443), 4th floor, Institute for Research in Humanities, Kyoto University (Yoshidahonmachi, Sakyo-ku, Kyoto, 606-8501, JAPAN) and Online (Zoom)

Registration form: <https://forms.gle/BdSTBuDV2dnwrG3L9>

Contact: SilkRoMo@hvl.no

Workshop program

13:00 – Dr. Tomas Larsen Høisæter (Western Norway University) – *Introduction: A Road of Evil Demons and Hot Winds*

13:30 – Dr. Chao-Jung Ching (Kyoto University) – *Sogdians in Kucha: A few examples from unearthed documents*

14:00 – Coffee break

14:15 – Professor Eivind Heldaas Seland (University of Bergen) – *Animals and ancient trans- Eurasian trade.*

15:00 – Professor Anna Filigenzi (University of Naples “L’Orientale”) – *Physical and cultural mobilities across the ancient Buddhist world: Xuanzang in Purushapura and connected stories.*

15:45 – Coffee break

16:00 – Dr. Matthew Cobb (University of Wales Trinity Saint David) – *Primordial fears: How ancient Red Sea and Indian Ocean mariners coped with the psychological and practical dangers posed by the sea.*

16:45 – Per Jonas Jordfald (Western Norway University) – PhD project presentation “*From Global to Local: The Church of the East seen from Turfan*”