



MUGH, MOUNT

MUGH, MOUNT (*Kuh-e moġ* ‘Magus Mount’), site of the 7th-8th-century refuge of the rulers of [Panjikant](#) in Sogdiana, where an important archive of documents written in Sogdian was discovered in 1930s. The castle was built on a mound overlooking the confluence of the Zerafshan (Zarafšān) and the Qom rivers, at a height of 1500 m above the sea level and 150 m above the running waters. Its location is some 120 km east of Samarkand and 60 km east of Panjikant. It consisted of a walled structure rectangular in shape and surrounding a courtyard, and a two-story building upon a platform in its northeastern corner. It was protected on three sides by steep slopes, and was approachable only from a terrace between 20 and 50 m wide and several hundred meters long. A wall blocked the southern end of the terrace.

The rectangular building measured 18.5×19.5 m and included a row of five vaulted rooms. The doorways were arranged along one axis parallel to the northern wall. The castle had one entrance, located approximately in the middle of its northern wall. The foundation of the wall up to 60-80 cm was made of stones fixed with clay mortar; it supported the walls built of rectangular clay bricks. About 150 cm from the floor the wall developed into a cornice of slanting bricks. The famous Mugh documents were found on a level between 50-70 cm above the floor. The first investigators of the castle thought that it might have been a two-story structure and that the documents had fallen when the floor of the upper level had collapsed. No trace of a staircase had been found however, which made them suggest that originally a wooden ladder had been installed there. If there was any staircase, it could have been



only in the southwest corner of the building, where the remains of some solid brickwork 2.5 m long have been found. The western room is shorter than all other rooms by 3 meters. At first Vasilyev considered it an open terrace, but later it was found to be a closed chamber. The southern end of the brickwork discovered there could be the beginning of a staircase. The castle presented a good example of a 7th-8th centuries Sogdian building characteristic both of urban and rural architecture of that period. It differs from other structures of that type only by the absence of any chamber or corridor perpendicular to the row of its parallel vaulted rooms. The rooms on the ground floor were most often used as storerooms; they had no open hearths or *sufas* (benches of beaten clay running round the walls, from Ar. *Ṣoffa*). The walls were plastered, which suggests that the rooms could be used to store corn.

The castle became world-famous after 1932 when a local shepherd discovered among its ruins a basket with a Sogdian document. In 1933 the archaeologist F.I. Vasilyev, a member of the expedition directed by F.I. Freiman, investigated the castle. Later it was surveyed once more by A.Yu Yakubovski, and again by Yu. Ya. Yakubov. The famous archives consisting of seventy-four documents in Sogdian, one in Arabic, one Turkish runic script, and several in Chinese are now preserved in the St. Petersburg branch of the Oriental Institute of the Russian academy. The place was identified as the castle of Abḡar mentioned in an Arabic source (Ṭabari II, p. 1441), the last refuge of *Dēwāštič*, ruler of Panjikant. Besides the archives, the excavations of the castle revealed over 400 different objects, now preserved in the State Hermitage Museum in St. Petersburg. Particularly noteworthy are fragments of a shield made of wooden planks and covered with parchment. On its outer side there is a painted figure of a Sogdian armored mounted warrior, and on the other side is a painted imitation of a leopard skin. Wooden objects are plentiful and include plates, spoons, bowls and combs. Leather objects are represented by several pairs of shoes, coverings of wooden chests, and fragmentary leather and skin bags. There are over 100 fragments of cotton and about 40 pieces of silk textiles, one fragment of wool, fragments of carpets, and some hairnets woven of cotton threads. The presence of objects of organic materials (wood, leather, textiles), which survived because of the arid climate of the highland, makes this archaeological collection especially valuable.



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