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ATES Endorsed by UNESCO as a Programme of IDSSD

The "Association for Trans-Eurasia Exchange and Silk Road Civilization Development" (ATES), co-chaired by Prof. Fahu Chen from the Institute of Tibetan Plateau Research, Chinese Academy of Sciences (ITPCAS), Prof. Michael Meadows from Cape Town University/Nanjing University, and Prof. Juerg Luterbacher from Justus Liebig University Giessen, Germany, has been officially endorsed by UNESCO as a Programme of International Decade of Sciences for Sustainable Development (IDSSD).

Currently, ATES has developed a series of flagship activities such as the ATES Silk Road Civilization Forum, ATES Open Science Conference, ATES Workshops, and ATES sessions/exhibitions at international conferences. The "ANSO-MTA Silk Road Forum & 3rd ATES Open Science Conference" will be held in Budapest, Hungary, on September 9-10, 2025. This event will be one of the key IDSSD activities this year.

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2024 • 2033
International Decade of Sciences for Sustainable Development

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2024 • 2033
International Decade of Sciences for Sustainable Development

In August 2023, the United Nations General Assembly adopted the International Decade of Sciences for Sustainable Development (2024–2033) (IDSSD), executed by UNESCO, to enhance global awareness of science's role in sustainable development and mobilize stakeholders to advance related research and projects. ATES is supported by both the "CAS Pilot Program for Open Innovation on the Tibetan Plateau Earth System, Resources and Environment", and the "Excellent Research Group Program for Tibetan Plateau Earth System (formerly the Basic Science Center Program)" of the National Natural Science Foundation of China.

ATES: Association for Trans-Eurasia Exchange and Silk Road Civilizations Development
SCE: Commission of "Silk Road Civilizations and Environments (SCE)" in International Geographical Union (IGU)

Dietary diversity of Denisovans on the Tibetan Plateau

Denisovans, as a sister group to Neanderthals, have attracted widespread attention from researchers in archaeology, paleoanthropology, genetics and other fields. Beyond their first discovery site—Denisova Cave in the Altai Mountains of Siberia—an increasing number of Denisovan fossils have been recovered from East Asia, suggesting that Denisovans were once widely distributed across the eastern regions of Eurasia. However, due to limited archaeological evidence, we know little about their behaviours across the vast areas they likely occupied.

▲ PHOTO of Ganjia Basin.
A view on Baishiya Karst Cave on the edge of Ganjia Basin. Credit: Dongju Zhang's group (Lanzhou University).

In July of 2024, a paper published in Nature led by researchers from the Association for Trans-Eurasia Exchange and Silk Road Civilizations Development (ATES), provided important new insights into Denisovan subsistence strategies. They integrated proteomic and zooarchaeological analysis of the late Middle to Late Pleistocene faunal assemblage from Baishiya Karst Cave on the Tibetan Plateau where the Xiahe Denisovan mandible and Denisovan sedimentary mtDNA were found. Among their findings, a newly identified Denisovan rib fragment significantly extends the known presence of Denisovan hominins on the Tibetan Plateau. The faunal assemblage is dominated by Caprinae, together with megaherbivores, carnivores, small mammals and birds. The anthropogenic modifications on the bone surfaces show that Denisovans made full use of the available animal resources. These findings shed light on Denisovan behaviour and indicate how adaptable they were to the harsh and variable environment of the Tibetan Plateau.

▲ PHOTO from Pleistocene bone with cut marks.
Cut marks on the spotted hyena vertebrae indicate evidence of human activities. Credit: Dongju Zhang's Group (Lanzhou University).

▲ PHOTO from the rib.
Xiahe 2 is a Denisovan rib fragment identified through palaeoproteomics from Baishiya Karst Cave, dated to ~42 ka. Credit: Dongju Zhang's group (Lanzhou University).

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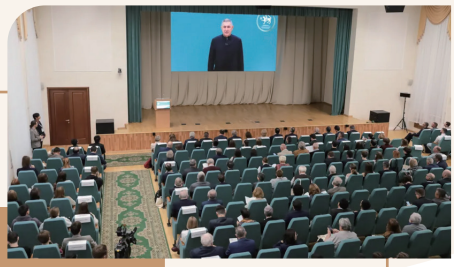
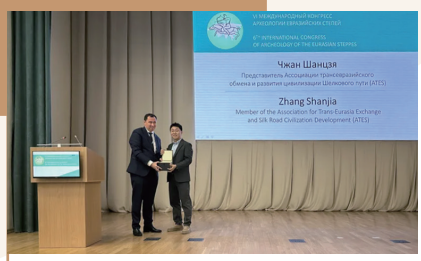
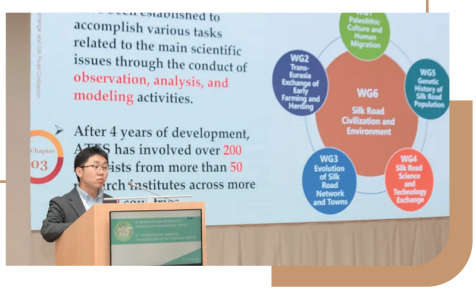
ATES Scientists Attend the 6th International Congress of Archaeology of the Eurasian Steppes







ATES scientists participated in “The 6th International Congress of Archaeology of the Eurasian Steppes” held from 29 October to 1 November 2024 in Kazan, Russia. The congress was organised by the Institute of Archaeology of the Tatarstan Academy of Sciences. The event attracted over 120 scholars from nine countries, including Azerbaijan, Bulgaria, Kazakhstan, China, Kyrgyzstan, Mongolia, Romania, Turkey, Uzbekistan, and Russia, featuring more than 110 presentations across six sessions.

A group of ATES scientists attended the congress on site, including Professor N. Gangbat from the Institute of International Studies of the Mongolian Academy of Sciences, Associate Professor CHEN Wei, Assistant Professor WANG Haolin from the Institute for the History of Natural Sciences at the Chinese Academy of Sciences (WG 4: Silk Road Science and Technology Exchange), and Dr. ZHANG Shanjia, a Young Research Fellow at Lanzhou University (WG2: Trans-Eurasia Exchange of Early Farming and Herding). Dr. ZHANG Shanjia delivered an opening speech on behalf of ATES, highlighting the scientific background and recent advancements of the initiative. Additionally, Dr. CHEN Wei presented a plenary keynote talk focusing on the supporting skills in the Mongolia-Xinjiang region, drawing insights from O. Lattimore’s travel notes.

On the following day, Prof. CHEN Fahu, Co-Chair of ATES, delivered an online presentation titled “Environmental Changes and Trans-Eurasian Exchange”; Prof. DONG Guanghui (WG2) presented an online talk on “Dispersal of Crop-livestock and Geographical-temporal Variation of Subsistence along the Steppe and Silk Roads across Eurasia in Prehistory”; Professor N. Ganbat shared insights from the excavation of the Baibarik site in Mongolia, while Dr. WANG Haolin discussed the conservation practices related to traditional Chinese architectural craftsmanship.

After the congress, the attendees visited the archaeological site and museum in Bolgar, which is located on the south bank of the Volga River at its junction with the Kama River. This site existed between the 7th and 15th centuries AD and served as the first capital of the Golden Horde during the 13th century. As a designated World Heritage site, the Bolgar represents centuries of historical and cultural exchanges and transformations across Eurasia, playing a key role to the development of civilisations, customs and cultural traditions.

Upcoming Events

ANSO-MTA Silk Road Forum & The 3rd ATES Open Science Conference

• Background:

The Silk Road traverses complex terrains and landscapes across Eurasia, representing rich histories of human migration, early globalization, and vibrant exchanges in religion, culture, and technology. It offers unique insights into long-term nature-human interactions, requiring interdisciplinary approaches to understand environmental impacts on ancient routes and inform modern climate adaptation. Amid geopolitical complexities, the Association for Trans-Eurasia Exchange and Silk-Road Civilization Development (ATES) was established in 2019 under ANSO to foster cross-disciplinary research on environmental changes and Silk Road civilizations.

By collaboration with MTA, HUN-REN RCH, and ELTE, the "ANSO-MTA Silk Road Forum & 3rd ATES Open Science Conference" will be held in Budapest on September 9–10, 2025, celebrating MTA's 200th Anniversary. The conference will convene experts to share research on human dispersal, agro-pastoral development, and trade route evolution, aiming to strengthen dialogue on sustainability, cross-cultural cooperation, and digitalization—with Hungary serving as a bridge for Eurasian collaboration.

• Date and Location:

Date: 9-10 September 2025 **Location:** Budapest, Hungary
Venues: Hungarian Academy of Sciences;
Research Center for the Humanities, Hungarian Research Network

https://conferences.koushare.com/ates2025

• Co-organizers:

- Alliance of National and International Science Organizations for the Belt and Road Regions (ANSO)
- Hungarian Academy of Sciences (MTA)
- Association for Trans-Eurasia Exchange and Silk Road Civilization Development (ATES)
- Research Center for the Humanities, Hungarian Research Network (HUN-REN RCH)
- Institute of Tibetan Plateau Research, Chinese Academy of Sciences (ITPCAS)
- Eötvös Loránd University (ELTE), Hungary
- Lanzhou University, China
- UNESCO International Decade of Science for Sustainable Development (IDSSD)

• Themes and Topics:

Themes

The Silk Road: a corridor of innovation, civilization, migration, culture, art, science, technology, environmental and climate change

Topics

1) Paleolithic culture and human migration
2) The origin of agriculture and trans-Eurasian diffusion of early farming and herding
3) Evolution and development of the transport network and towns
4) Genetic History of Silk Road Populations
5) Human, environmental and climate interactions: past, present and future
6) Silk Road culture and language studies, and East-West exchange on science and technology

Looking forward to seeing you in Budapest, Hungary in September 2025.

Contact Us

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