

SummerAcademy 2025

Exploring Polarities in Cultural Transformation: Workshop Overview

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How do societies balance tradition with transformation? Preservation with adaptation? Drawing from insights gained through recent archaeological fieldwork at a seventh- to eighth-century Uyghur urban site in Mongolia and research on Mongol Central Asia, this workshop explores the fundamental polarities that emerge when cultures meet, clash, and transform. Using engaging case studies, we will examine how communities navigated seemingly opposing forces—tradition versus innovation, resistance versus adaptation, local versus global influences.

Our archaeological journey will take us from nomadic societies on the Mongolian steppes to Syriac communities along the Silk Roads, where material culture reveals complex stories of cultural negotiation. Through hands-on activities, you will discover how past societies managed polarities that mirror our contemporary challenges.

Together, we will consider how studying these historical tensions can illuminate our understanding of cultural transformation in today's polarised world, and how archaeological research might offer paths forward.

No previous archaeological knowledge is required to participate—just bring your curiosity about how cultures can interact, adapt, and evolve.