SOGDIAN TRADERS

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SOGDIAN TRADERS



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SOGDIAN TRADERS

A History

BY

ÉTIENNE DE LA VAISSIÈRE

TRANSLATED BY

JAMES WARD

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GENERAL INTRODUCTION

The merchant voyager
On a celest wind the seafarer
On mission far away guides his boat
A bird covered in clouds
He has gone: no trace nor sign.

Li Bo 李白

The concept of "the Silk Road" has given rise to an abundant historiography concerning the commercial, religious and artistic contacts between the hellenized, then Muslim, Near East and East Asia. The strength of the image has led to a wide diffusion of the theme. Even so, no historical object that might be named "the Silk Road" has ever been defined with precision. Though certainly a necessary step in historiographical thinking, this idea does not rest upon any clear historical concept, and mixes commercial, diplomatic and religious features in an approach dominated by historical geography.

One of the possible ways to clarify this subject is to take an interest in the activity of specific social groups, of one or another of the merchant communities who are known to have traded over a geographical and temporal portion of the vast domain assigned too quickly to "the Silk Road." The long-distance commerce of a given social group would certainly form a historical object, which is to say a structure endowed with its own economic, social and cultural characteristics, whose evolution over time would be susceptible to analysis. Such a commerce will have been based on identifiable economic exchanges whose variations can be reconstructed, on mechanisms of control over great distances, on social hierarchies which must be deciphered, and also on shared rituals. Born in a precise historical context, it will have developed and transformed. It also will have declined, and then been replaced by other competing commercial endeavors. To identify and analyze the commercial activity of one such group would allow us to make a start at giving historical reality to the undifferentiated idea of "the Silk Road." This work, therefore, has as its goal the identification and definition of the long-term commercial activity of the Sogdian merchants, who originated in the region of Samarkand, in Central Asia.

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The Sogdians inhabited the fertile valleys, surrounded by deserts, that are situated between the Amu Darya and the Syr Darya, and in particular the valley of the Zarafshan, today located in Uzbekistan and Tadjikistan. Speaking an Iranian language, this people is attested for more than fifteen centuries, from the inscriptions of the Achaemenid sovereigns in the 6th century BCE to the texts of the Arab geographers of the 10th century CE, which note the irreversible decline of the cultural and linguistic identity of the Sogdians. Even though they founded Samarkand and Bukhara, the Sogdians have remained largely unknown to the general public, for they afterward melted into the mass of Islamic Iranian-speaking peoples. On the other hand, in the scientific literature dealing with the steppe and Central and East Asia during the first millenium CE, they have come to be seen as the people responsible for all commercial activity. If a long-distance commerce appears in the sources, or if a foreign influence turns up, the specialists invoke the Sogdian merchants as a last resort, often for want of anything better, even though Sogdian commerce has never been the subject of a historical study attempting to evaluate its real role in all its diversity. Here we shall attempt to fill that gap.

The extent of the Sogdian merchants' influence, once it has been freed from the matrix of an imprecise historiography, is genuine. Independently of all the economic and social questions which form the subject of this work, as well as political questions which I will address, it is sufficient here to give a few examples in the cultural sphere, and more specifically that of religion. The Sogdians were, together with the monks from the Indo-Iranian borderlands, the primary propagators of Buddhism in China in the 2nd and 3rd centuries CE. Four centuries later they introduced the new religions from the West, Manichaeism and Nestorian Christianity, into China and among the Türks. With the arrival of Islam, it was in the exclusive commercial area of the Sogdian merchants, in the steppe to the north of the Syr Darya, that the first conversions of the Türks to the new religion occurred, which led to the conversion of the Seljukids as well as the Qarakhanids, founders of the first Muslim Türk empire. Leaving the sphere of religion proper, one may also wonder about the role of the pre-Islamic cultures of Sogdiana—open to Indian and Chinese as well as to Iranian and Türk influences—in the education of the greatest savants of the Muslim world from the 9th to the 11th century. To mention only a few names, al-Bīrūnī, al-Farabī, Avicenna and al-Khwārizmī were all educated in Sogdiana or in the

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neighboring region of Khorezm. More broadly, the Sogdian merchant networks that I here propose to study made possible the circulation of people, techniques, products and ideas. This circulation of ideas in itself merits detailed studies, which are at present often only embryonic, and I will not deal with them here. But it is necessary to be aware of these movements, and also to ascertain the historical importance of the Sogdian commercial networks with regard to them.

The historian who would tackle the question of Sogdian commerce comes up against a major difficulty. In the western documentary setting, at least from the end of the Middle Ages, it is often possible to study the economic and social structures of a particular group's commercial history from both the inside and outside. The documentation abundantly provides intersecting perspectives: notarial archives, account books, marriage contracts and charters, laws, the dedications of guilds or patronages—all provide the necessary data. This is not the case in medieval Central Asia.

When I began this work, reliable evidence attested the presence of Sogdian merchants, around the year 700, in a region from Outer Mongolia to Northwest India, and from the Chinese capitals to the Aral Sea. Furthermore, the chronologies proposed for Sogdian commerce covered about fifteen centuries. Even supposing that a historian possessed all the required competencies—and they are linguistically and technically vast—the available sources are distinguished no less by their extreme scarcity and dispersion. The data also mainly come from external observers. These state that there were merchants at such-and-such a place and that they were Sogdians, rarely more, and this testimony might be as likely to be found in the biography of a Buddhist monk in 3rd century China as in a Turkic-Arabic dictionary compiled at Baghdad in the 11th century. The picture that can be drawn from these types of sources is chronological and geographical, enabling us to create a map of the Sogdian commercial presence, and of its evolution. Compared to this dispersed information, the Sogdian documents which are specifically commercial, or that issue from Sogdian merchant milieux, can be counted on the fingers of one hand. I have not been able to find any statements of accounts, nor texts of laws, nor have I had the means to put together a prosopography. It is thus essentially an *external* history of the expansion of the Sogdian networks in Asia which I have been able to relate—again, a map of their presence, and its evolution.

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A serious problem presented itself in the course of investigation, that of the coherence of the object of study in the context of a documentation at once essentially external and quite dispersed. An internal but dispersed documentation would at least have made it possible to make comparisons between the various Sogdian merchant milieux concerned. An external documentation concentrated on a limited time and region would quite legitimately have enabled me to suppose the existence of a single historical phenomenon. But in the Sogdian case, the disadvantages simply accumulated. The dispersal of largely external attestations over such a vast geographic area, over such a long period of time, and with such a low density did not guarantee that these attestations were all connected to one and the same historical phenomenon. It would have been easy to fall once again into the conceptual incoherence marring the notion of "the Silk Road," and to end up using an *a priori* idea of what a great medieval caravan commerce ought to have been, in order to plaster over all the documentary voids, fashioning from all the pieces a historical object without real internal coherence.

Geographical and chronological synthesis was not enough. The documentary research really had to result in an outline of the internal structure of Sogdian commerce in order to be able to consider building bridges over such great chronological and geographical voids with at least a minimum of historical relevance. This finally occurred at the end of my work on the sources, but was only just realized, the documentation being so limited. Two elements made it possible to reduce—but not completely eliminate—the difficulty.

While the majority of testimonies about Sogdian commerce are laconic, this is not the case with all of them, and in general they are independent of each other. Should two sources on either side of the Asian continent give the same information—even if limited—about the Sogdian merchants, this would very probably guarantee the existence of an objective fact. Some of this information reveals internal characteristics of the Sogdian society and economy. Furthermore, there exist a few documentary groups issuing directly from the Sogdian merchant milieux. They serve as internal foundation stones, rare but very reliable, which can make it possible to advance some hypotheses and tie them to descriptive elements provided by the external sources. It therefore seemed possible to me to demonstrate the coherence of a structure, of its continuity in time and space through a series of slow deformations. That which escapes the

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investigation is at least as important as that which is known, but—and this is the main thing—this missing information seems to be of such a kind that it can fit within this schematic structure without radically altering it.

Nevertheless, two stages in particular of the history of Sogdian commerce, at the beginning and at the end, continue to pose a problem—at the beginning, because, in order to determine the origins of Sogdian long-distance commerce in antiquity, I have had to be content with very little information, drawn entirely from external sources, in a very general attempt to chronologically fix the origin of the Sogdian networks; at the end, because the cultural impact of Islam and the languages which arrived with it in the 8th century was immense, to the point of making Sogdian culture disappear, which challenges the criterion by which I have selected the external sources. There were no more Sogdian merchants, for the major reason that there were no more Sogdians, which does not necessarily mean that Sogdian commerce did not survive under another name, that the structure did not simply lose some of its cultural elements while enduring in its other aspects. I have attempted to prove, on the basis of everything which has been established with regard to the preceding period, that the Central Asian commerce of the 10th century, Samanid commerce, had not only lost the Sogdian name, but also certain of the economic and social characteristics of the Sogdian commerce which had preceded it, in order to be able to conclude that the subject of my investigation had by that time undergone a definitive transformation.

Such a project clearly brings up the question of competencies. It cannot be a question of mastering all of the problems posed, which range from interpretation of Old Persian mineralogical terms of the 6th century BCE to the meaning of certain toponyms in the narrative of a Franciscan of the 13th century, meanwhile including the determination of the geographic origin of travellers to Nishapur in the 9th century, and the borrowings made by Chinese geographical texts over the centuries. The main historical theme chosen is in this regard a valuable safeguard, which sets limits, horizons of expectation, to multiple erudite discussions. But, and this is more important, it is also not a question of mastering all of the source languages, including classical Chinese, Sogdian, Arabic, Turkic, Persian and Greek, to name only the principal ones, leaving aside the equally essential texts

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in Armenian, Tibetan, or Middle Indic languages. The languages of eastern scholarship, such as Russian, Chinese and Japanese are also not the easiest. What is more, it was simultaneously necessary to have the requisite experience to handle textual, archaeological, iconographic and numismatic data. While in the course of this work I have learned Russian, in order to be able to have access to the archaeological literature, Arabic, in order to be able to read the Muslim sources, and have attained a mediocre level in Persian, Sogdian and Chinese, I must certainly admit that a large part of this research rests upon the use of translations. These have been checked in the text, but their use is unquestionably a potential source for errors, which I have no choice but to accept. I have also participated in archaeological excavations and in philological works, without in any way being able to claim to be an archaeologist or philologist, and, *a fortiori*, numismatist or art historian. Without the assistance that many researchers have had the kindness to provide me, these errors would have been much more numerous, and those that remain are entirely my own. This work is in many respects the product of a close collaboration with specialists in different neighboring spheres, probably more so than in the majority of historical researches. The subject certainly calls for it.

Frantz Grenet should be mentioned in the first rank of those who have helped me: by his kindness, his continuous availability and his immense knowledge, he has been my guide through the labyrinths of eastern scholarship. I would never have been able to write this work without his constant aid. Paul Bernard agreed to take on what was initially a thesis under his direction and, with Claude Rapin, Osmund Bopearachchi and Guy Lecuyot, warmly welcomed me into the UMR *Archéologie d'Orient et d'Occident*, at the École Normale Supérieure. The staff of the CNRS *Civilisation Chinoise* of the École Pratique des Hautes Études, based at the Collège de France, provided complementary support in the realm of Chinese studies, and welcomed me with scientific earnestness and with much kindness: Jean-Pierre Drège, Éric Trombert, Zhang Guangda and Richard Schneider gave me access to much information from Dunhuang and Turfan. Éric Trombert has, moreover, reread all of the translations from Chinese in this work, and has agreed to my use of the results of a jointly-written article in this English translation. Nicholas Sims-Williams and Yutaka Yoshida have helped me in the domain of Sogdian philology, and, together with Ilya Yakubovich and Takao

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Moriyasu, have provided me with many remarks on the first French edition of this book, which I have here integrated. Constantin Zuckerman has supported me in Byzantine and Khazar matters, and also revised the translations from Greek; Alastair Northedge and Monique Kervran agreed to discuss the question of caravanserais at length. In Russia, Gregori Semënov and Boris Maršak have very kindly shared their vast experience in the study of Sogdian civilization. In Uzbekistan, Djamal Mirzaaxmedov allowed me to participate in his excavations of the caravanserais of Paykent, and Pierre Chuvin welcomed me to the Institut Français d'Études de l'Asie Centrale on several occasions. Numerous other scholars, such as Stéphane Lebecq, François Thierry, Vladimir Livšic, Theodor Noonan (†), Françoise Micheau, Etsuko Kageyama, Margarita Filanovič, Yuri Karev, Pénélope Riboud, Michel Kazanski, Catherine Poujol, Isabelle Ang and Houda Ayyoub have given me their assistance in many ways. Many librarians, at the Collège de France, at Saint Petersburg, Tashkent, Cambridge and Samarkand have been very tolerant while faced with a research calling for large quantities of materials of many different kinds. My thanks to them all.

Leïla, Romain and Anne-Sophie know all the rest.

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PART ONE

The Ancient Network (From the Beginnings to 350 CE)

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INTRODUCTION

The first part of this work is structured around a unique collection of documents, the *Sogdian Ancient Letters*, which prove the existence of a Sogdian commercial network connecting the Chinese capitals, Gansu, the southern Tarim basin and Samarkand at the beginning of the 4th century of our era. The detailed analysis of this bundle of commercial and private letters, sent westward by Sogdians settled in different cities of the Gansu corridor, is the object of the second chapter. One of these letters is addressed to Samarkand. More than 3,000 km and eight months of travel over caravan routes separated the expatriate Sogdians in the Chinese capital, Luoyang, from Samarkand. Goods, merchants and news nevertheless circulated, even during the troubled period in which these letters were written.

The existence of a commercial network on such a scale implies a formative period prior to the 4th century. This period was certainly long, but historiography has enlarged it to an extreme degree while proposing the most various dates. The first chapter attempts to establish the chronology before the *Ancient Letters*, and tries to show how the network, attested in the 4th century, was progressively built up, thanks to the encounter between Chinese diplomacy, anxious to find allies against the nomads, and Central Asian populations situated at the end of the Himalayan barrier, who found great profit in exchanging the silk brought by the Chinese embassies for the products of India.

India was assuredly the major partner in Asian commerce in antiquity. In gaining a foothold in great commerce, the Sogdian merchants followed the example of their predecessors, the Indian and Bactrian merchants. In the third chapter, therefore, I have analyzed the extent of this influence, which is manifest in the vocabulary and familial connections presented in the *Ancient Letters*. Another documentary collection—caravaneer graffiti in the passes of the Upper Indus—shows the growing importance of this first Sogdian network in the commerce between India and China from the 3rd to the 5th century CE.

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CHAPTER ONE

THE ORIGINS OF THE SOGDIAN NETWORK: AN ATTEMPT AT CHRONOLOGICAL DELIMITATION

The corpus of sources, by its very limited nature, hardly lends itself to lengthy analyses of the history of commerce before the *Ancient Letters*. Investigation of them is rather rapidly made: the Achaemenid texts concerning Central Asia from the 6th through the 4th centuries BCE are very few in number and are not economic. The Greek sources, which are tied to the conquest of the Persian Empire and Central Asia by Alexander the Great and are concerned with the end of the 4th and the 3rd centuries before our era, are no more economic than the Achaemenid texts. It is necessary to look to the Chinese texts starting from the end of the 2nd century BCE and to the *Geography* of the Alexandrian Ptolemy (middle of the 2nd century CE) to find data that are a little more substantial.

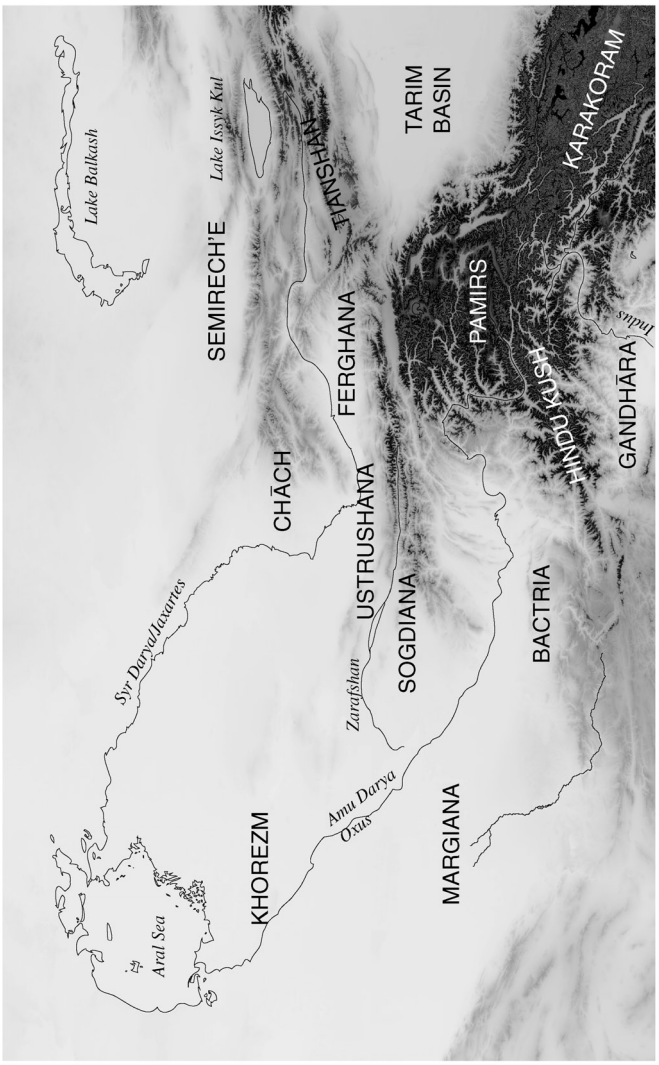
Therefore this first chapter is presented in the form of a fragmentary series of little studies, each bearing upon a particular point, thereby reflecting the hardly favorable chance that has presided over the conservation of sources. As a consequence, my intention here is not to write a history of the genesis of Sogdian commerce in antiquity: this goal is out of reach for want of sources. The chapter is much more modestly concerned with briefly introducing the Sogdians, delimiting the chronology and advancing a few hypotheses. Only this limited objective can justify discussing eight centuries, from the 6th century BCE to the 2nd century CE, in a few pages.

1. *Sogdiana in Antiquity: A Commercial Economy?*

For Want of Sogdian Merchants: Sogdiana from Cyrus to Alexander

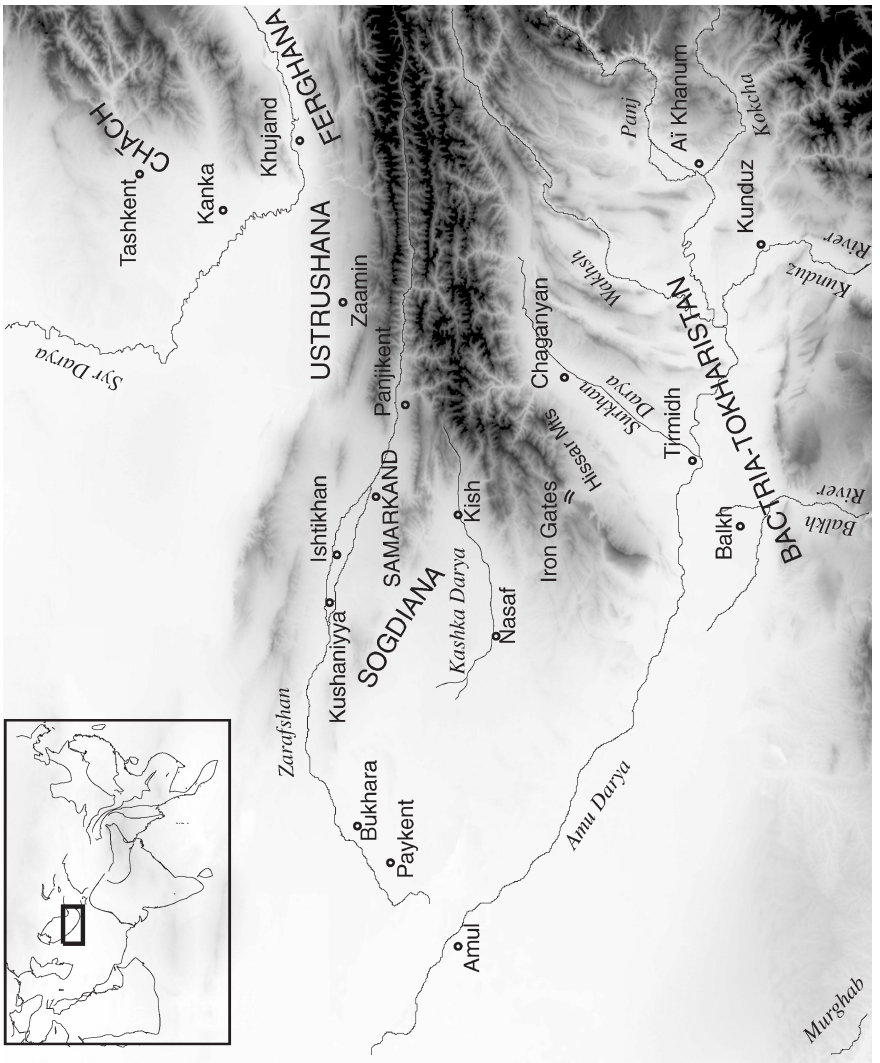
The Achaemenid sources of the 6th century BCE are the first to mention Sogdiana and its inhabitants, the Sogdians. The individualization of this people in the texts demonstrates the existence of an ethnic identity before a linguistic reality, for if in this work we define

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Map 1. Central Asia General Map

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Map 2. Central Asia (detail)

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the Sogdians as those who spoke Sogdian as their native language, we must note that the separation of Sogdian from the other Iranian languages probably took place only very progressively in the course of the Achaemenid period.

The exact limits of the Sogdian region are poorly known. The Syr Darya (Jaxartes) to the north and the Amu Darya (Oxus) to the south certainly provided it with natural frontiers. To the west Sogdiana joined the middle course of the Amu Darya, but its central zone, the marshy lower valley of the Zarafshan, was still sparsely populated. The rise of Bukhara only occured much later, in the 5th century CE. To the southeast, Sogdiana touched the Pamirs.[1]

In Central Asia the immediate neighbors of the Sogdians to the south were the Bactrians, on the opposite bank of the Amu Darya, which today forms the north of Afghanistan. Beyond that, India could be reached via the high passes of the Hindu Kush. To the southwest, contact with the Iranian plateau was made by crossing the Amu Darya and reaching Merv, in today's Turkmenistan, by way of the desert. To the northwest was found Khorezm, the region surrounded by the desert at the deltas of the Amu Darya and Syr Darya, near the Aral Sea. By way of semi-desert and steppe one then reached the Volga and the Black Sea. To the north, beyond the Syr Darya, was found the steppe of the Saka nomads, together with oases of sedentary life on the piedmonts such as those of Čāč, where modern-day Tashkent is found. Via the steppe one could reach the Black Sea to the west, while to the east, passing north of the Tianshan mountains around the Tarim basin, one could reach Mongolia and, far to the south, China. Finally, to the northeast of Sogdiana was found the Ferghana Valley, and beyond, by way of the passes of the Tianshan, the deserts of the Tarim basin with its points of population distributed along the piedmonts. At its eastern extremity was the narrow Gansu corridor, from which one could reach central China by passing south of the Gobi desert.

Sogdiana was situated on the border of the sedentary world and was in constant contact with the nomads of the steppe. It was on these lands that the Achaemenids and the Greeks confronted the Saka. Sogdian society, in so far as archaeological results make its description possible, was an agricultural society based upon irrigation of its very

[1] See Bernard and Francfort, 1978, pp. 5–11.

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fertile loess soil. The rivers descending from the mountains to the south and east provided the necessary water. The nomads built their kurgans on the periphery of the oases, and economic relations—products of animal husbandry in exchange for those of farming—were important.

Cyrus conquered Sogdiana around 540 BCE. He advanced as far as the Syr Darya, and moreover met his death in battle against the Saka. Sogdiana was incorporated into the Achaemenid Empire from that time until its conquest by Alexander the Great at the beginning of the year 329 BCE. The generals who succeeded the conqueror kept control of the region until 247 BCE. Then the Graeco-Bactrian sovereigns, descendants of local Greek colonists, seized their independence and, on the far side of the Parthian Empire which had driven the Greeks from the Iranian plateau, maintained a Greek culture in the middle of Central Asia. They controlled the whole of Sogdiana until approximately 140–130 BCE, at which time several waves of invasions caused it to pass into the hands of nomads arriving from the north (Iranian-speaking Saka) or by long migration from the east (the Yuezhi). Sogdian political history then vanishes almost completely from view for several centuries.

The Achaemenids found in Sogdiana an urban civilization. Along two divergent canals fed by the Zarafshan, the proto-Dargom and the Bulungur, two gigantic sites, Afrasiab-Samarkand and Kök Tepe—each covering more than two hundred hectares—were occupied from the 8th or 7th century before our era.[2] The valley of the Zarafshan had already known an earlier urban phase at the site of Sarazm, a small distance upstream from Samarkand, but this phase had ended a millenium before.[3] Kök Tepe declined rapidly, but Samarkand became for two millenia the greatest city of Sogdiana, and, with Merv and Bactra, one of the very great cities of western Central Asia. The Achaemenids brought writing to Sogdiana, and the written language long remained the Aramaic of the Achaemenid Empire. More than a millenium after the disappearance of that empire, in the 7th century CE, it is still the administrative formulae inherited

[2] I thank Claude Rapin for supplying me with this information. It seems that in Kök Tepe the settlement is earlier and might even go back to the second millenium BCE.

[3] For the prehistory and protohistory of Central Asia, one may consult Kohl, 1984, and Lyonnet, 1997.

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from Babylon that we find employed in Sogdiana.[4] It was only in the 1st or 2nd century of our era that Sogdian writing was developed from the Aramaic alphabet in a variant close to Parthian.[5] The writing of Bukhara, moreover, remained very close to Parthian writing.[6] Finally, the Greeks gave to Sogdiana its first real coinage, because Achaemenid darics are nearly absent from Sogdiana, as they are from all of eastern Iran. Certain Greek coin types were maintained in Sogdiana in a debased form until the 5th century CE.

The Charters of Susa *and the History of Sogdian Commerce*

The commercial history of Sogdiana begins with the 6th century BCE in a passage in the *Charters of Susa*. These tablets describe the conditions under which a palace of Darius I (522–486) was constructed at Susa, and were discovered in the foundations of the palace. They enumerate the various provinces of the Achaemenid Empire and the materials furnished by each, in order to glorify the riches of the empire:

> The rare stones which (were) of lapis lazuli and also of carnelian, which were worked here, were brought from Sogdiana.[7]

This is not a situation involving a commercial economy, but rather tribute. Nevertheless, the attribution to Sogdiana of materials called *Kāsaka Kapautaka* and *Sinkabruš*, translated here by lapis lazuli and carnelian, is interesting. The first stone is incontestably lapis lazuli. The only working mine in antiquity was found in Badakhshan,[8] at the southeastern limit of Sogdiana, in the foothills of the Pamirs. The identification of the second material is more difficult. It is without doubt a stone of red color, in which some have wished to see carnelian.[9] But the carnelian of the ancient eastern world originated

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[4] Sims-Williams, 1991.

[5] Gharib, 1995, pp. XIII–XXIX.

[6] See Livšic, Kaufman and D'jakonov, 1954.

[7] Translated from Elamite in Vallat, 1971, pp. 53–9, excerpt cited pp. 57–8. Text reproduced in Briant, 1996, p. 184.

[8] Bernard and Francfort, 1978, pp. 49–51. There existed other mines of similar blue stone, but of much lesser quality (Delmas and Casanova, 1990). For the export of lapis lazuli, one can consult Briant, 1984, p. 21, and above all Herrmann, 1968, particularly pp. 21–9, which give a map, photographs and the plan of the mines.

[9] See principally Bleichsteiner, 1930, pp. 93–104. See also Herzfeld, 1938, pp. 303–4, and Kent, 1953, p. 209: *sinkabru* in Old Persian, *šï-in-qa-ab-ru-iš* in Elamite

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from Gujarat, in India.[10] One would therefore have to postulate the existence of a commerce which imported carnelian into Sogdiana in sufficient quantity for the province to be charged by the Achaemenid sovereigns with supplying the court. Otherwise one would not understand why Sogdiana, so far from Gujarat and separated from it by several other Achaemenid provinces, would be responsible for furnishing this stone. The account would then be extremely precious, since it would be the first reference to long-distance Sogdian commerce.[11]

The term *Sinkabruš* is mentioned only in the *Charters of Susa*, and the reasoning of the linguists is in fact based only on the identification of a color.[12] In addition to lapis, however, Badakhshan produced a red stone, famous in antiquity and the Middle Ages, the so-called "ruby" of Badakhshan, which was garnet. But if *Sinkabruš* is garnet, it is difficult to find a use for it in a list of decorative materials. It is necessary to point out that the term *Sinkabruš* has passed into Western languages: *cinnabar* is derived from it.[13] It may be supposed that we are here concerned with the latter. The use to which it could have been put in a palace, in mural painting, is apparent, and this is also the case with lapis, itself frequently employed in painting.[14] Finally, it must be emphasized that if *Sinkabruš* were indeed carnelian, we would have to exercise the greatest caution before using carnelian finds to retrace the commercial routes between India and the rest of the world.[15] It would require certainty about the absence of other carnelian mines—it was a rather common stone—in the immediate vicinity of Sogdiana before hypothesizing the existence of such a trade between Sogdiana and Gujarat. This is a certainty we do not possess. The documents from Susa cannot be used with assurance for the history of Sogdian commerce.

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and *ṣi-in-ga-+ru-ú* in Akkadian. Carnelian, like lapis lazuli, lent itself well to marquetry and has been recovered in significant quantity at other Achaemenid sites, for example at Persepolis.

[10] The commercial diffusion of carnelian is attested by archaeology since the third millenium BCE (Majizadeh, 1982).

[11] Bernard and Francfort, 1978, pp. 9–11.

[12] Fleming, 1982.

[13] Data drawn from Herzfeld, 1938, p. 304.

[14] These materials were very commonly used in later Central Asian paintings, for example at Halčajan (Lapierre, 1990, p. 33), or in the Sogdian great painting at Samarkand.

[15] A thousand years later, embassies from Samarkand and Tukharistan brought carnelian to the Tang court, particularly in the form of uncut pieces (Schafer, 1963, p. 228).

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Other sources speak of the Sogdians, but they do not deal with trade.[16] The amount of tribute paid by the eastern satrapies of the Achaemenid Empire has been the subject of various subtle analyses, but there too nothing touches upon the matter of commerce.

The Diffusion of Lapis Lazuli in the World of the Saka

The *Charters of Susa* nevertheless demonstrate that the Sogdians controlled the mining of lapis, even if we do not know who was responsible for its diffusion afterward. But archaeological excavations make it possible to reconstruct this distribution of lapis lazuli. They do not themselves provide the identity of the merchants. Southwards, towards Iran or India, the immediate presence or close proximity of the Bactrians makes all examination of archaeological data fruitless in advance, since the Bactrians engaged in long-distance commerce, as is proved by the reference in Ctesias to a Bactrian dealer of precious stones on the Indus. Only a text would allow us to attribute the distribution of lapis on these routes to the Sogdians.[17]

Yet there was one geographic zone with which the territory of the Sogdians was contiguous, namely the steppe of the Saka nomads to the north of the Syr Darya. The Bactrians were situated well to the south, and it does not seem extravagant to suppose that the Sogdians controlled at least their own domestic market for lapis. If, by way of hypothesis, lapis lazuli had been diffused in the vast band of steppe inhabited by the Saka, those responsible for its spread would have been either the Sogdians or the Saka, probably (but not certainly) to the exclusion of any other people.

Data concerning contacts between the Saka and the Sogdians along the Syr Darya are relatively numerous.[18] These contacts on

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[16] Thus we know of Sogdian craftsmen—*kurtaš*—at the building sites of Persepolis: Briant, 1996, p. 446. Furthermore, Sogdians could have been included among the Iranian-speaking immigrants settled in Anatolia by the Achaemenid power. Nothing indicates that they were merchants (Arrian, IV, 3, reported and analyzed in Briant, 1984, pp. 94–6).

[17] The sole document referring to large-scale commerce in Central Asia in the Achaemenid period does not concern the Sogdians, but rather a merchant from Bactra whose precious stones were cast into the Indus, according to information from the Greek physician Ctesias, who held a position at the Achaemenid court: "Four hundred seventy precious stones and other expensive stones were thrown into the river [Indus]. They were the property of a merchant from Bactra." (Ctesias, 1991, p. 106).

[18] It is therefore possible that Alexander's desire to sever Sogdiana from its

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the Syr Darya are attested by several objects—among them a carpet with Achaemenid motifs[19]—which were recovered from the frozen kurgans of Pazyryk in the Altai, now dated to the 4th and 3rd centuries BCE.[20] It is usually supposed that this carpet issued from a Sogdian or Bactrian atelier due to the quality of its workmanship, which argues for an urban workshop, while the dye is the kind used by the steppe nomads—hence the hypothetical provenance which geographically reconciles these two indices.[21] The overall context was thus extremely favorable to contacts between Sogdians and Saka. But the striking thing in an examination of the Saka kurgans is not the spread of lapis lazuli to the north, but quite the contrary, the complete absence of lapis lazuli.[22] Later, the Sarmatians used another blue stone, turquoise, when they wished to enhance their work in precious metals.

Lapis lazuli is by force of circumstance the only material for which it is possible to combine archaeological and textual sources. The result of this test is negative. Bearing on only one criterion, it is of course of limited worth. Let us note, however, that if we accept the identification of *Sinkabruš* with the garnet of Badakhshan, this hardly seems more widespread, and we thus obtain the same negative results.

Other goods were circulated, as shown by the discoveries at Pazyryk, but they are not analyzable in commercial terms. In other words, the carpet from Pazyryk could have been, for example, the gift of an embassy sent by the satrap of Bactra to a nomad leader. The spread of exceptional objects of this type does not in general permit us to conclude the existence of commerce in the absence of a text specifying that fact: tribute, plunder or diplomacy could have been responsible for their transport. It would be otherwise if we had

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nomadic hinterland by founding a Greek fortified town on the Syr Darya had disrupted the economic complementarity between Sogdians and Saka, and could thus have been the real cause of the great Sogdian revolt of 329, the most difficult revolt that Alexander had to suppress throughout the old Achaemenid territories (Mandel'štam, 1977, pp. 219–220; Briant, 1982, pp. 226–234, endeavors to relativize this analysis, which nevertheless seems to me to retain its worth).

[19] See also the parallels established between Bactrian art and the kurgan finds in Kuz'mina, 1977, pp. 213–4.

[20] Schiltz, 1994, p. 263.

[21] Briant, 1996, p. 767 and Schiltz, 1994, pp. 277–284.

[22] Véronique Schiltz has confirmed the following information for me: while turquoise was circulated, the objects of the steppe world were not embellished with lapis lazuli. On the history of the "gold-turquoise" style, see for example Treister and Yatsenko, 1997–8, pp. 52–3.

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noted the diffusion throughout the steppe of small lapis lazuli beads of little individual worth, but such is not the case.

According to data currently available—and it being understood that I am not here dealing with local trade—nothing allows us to speak of large-scale Sogdian commerce in the direction of the nomads. The hypothesis of such trade in the Achaemenid period is for now deprived of all foundation.

Alexander the Great and Sogdian commerce

With the conquests of Alexander, our information about ancient eastern Iran is increased considerably. None of it bears on long-distance Sogdian commerce.[23] Nevertheless, the hypothesis has been made that the conquests could have been at the root of that commerce.

Chang'an, the Chinese capital, bears the name of Khumdān in the *Sogdian Ancient Letters*. But Khumdān is the phonetic transcription into Sogdian of the name of the ancient capital of the Qin dynasty (221–206 BCE), Xianyang 咸陽, as it was pronounced then. This city was situated not far from Chang'an (modern Xi'an), and was abandoned in favor of the latter about 200 BCE. The Sogdians could therefore have been acquainted with China at the time Xianyang was its capital, in the 3rd century before our era, and could have preserved the name by applying it to the new capital. This reasoning has been developed further.[24] Today the common opinion is that this first contact between China and the Sogdians, which must have taken place before the abandonment of Xianyang, was connected to the ravages of Alexander's conquest.[25] The Sogdians could have fled the Macedonian troops as far as the Tarim basin before finally arriving in China.

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[23] In particular the reference in Arrian, VI, 15, 4 (trans. Brunt, p. 145) to Sogdians on the Lower Indus should be corrected following Diodorus (XVII CII 4, trans. Goukowsky, p. 139) to Sodras, which would properly be identified with the Śudras of Indian texts.

[24] Evidence mentioned in favor of this hypothesis includes the influx of Indo-Iranian concepts into Chinese thought in the 4th and 3rd centuries BCE, as well as the presence of Chinese nickel in Graeco-Bactrian coins of the 2nd century BCE, minted in Sogdiana and Bactriana (Henning, 1948, p. 608, citing a letter from Haloun). But the nickel contained in the Graeco-Bactrian coins is not of Chinese origin (Raschke, 1978, pp. 706–7), and the notion of Indo-Iranian concepts is too vague to prove anything.

[25] See for example Čuguevskij, 1971, or Gharib, 1995, p. XV.

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This analysis is highly disputable. The conquest of Alexander, severe as it was, did not propel thousands of refugees on so distant a road. One asks why they would have had to surmount the passes to China, when reaching Ferghana and Čāč would have been sufficient to place them beyond the reach of the Macedonian. From a more general point of view, this hypothesis seems too centered on the Greek world: the conquest of Alexander was without doubt a major event, but nothing allows us to attribute such consequences to it in regions which had witnessed succeeding waves of invasions.

Besides, it seems possible to positively show that the knowledge and vocabulary associated with China were actually obtained by the Sogdians through intermediaries and only at the end of the 3rd or during the course of the 2nd century BCE. Like us, the Sogdians designated the Han people by a derivative of the name of the Qin 秦[26] dynasty, *cyn*. China, or the region of Khumdān, is designated in Sogdian by the name *cynstn*, or "land of the Qin." One will agree without difficulty that the names of the people, the capital and the country belong to the same group of meanings and that they reached the Sogdians simultaneously. This excludes all possibility of contact at the time of Alexander, as the Qin dynasty reigned a century after the Macedonian, between 221 and 206 BCE. Only then did it become the representative par excellence of the Han ethnos, the Chinese. The dynasty fought effectively against the nomad Xiongnu 匈奴 of Mongolia and built the Great Wall. The Chinese texts show clearly that the Xiongnu used the term "men of Qin" to designate the Chinese during the subsequent Han dynasty,[27] while the Chinese, among whom the Qin had left extremely negative memories, did not use it. The Xiongnu would have been absolutely plausible intermediaries, and their empire, which took shape in the course of the 2nd century BCE in order to respond to the attacks of the Qin and the Han, extended at least nominally to Central Asia. The transmission of the name could have included several successive intermediaries to the west, such as the Wusun or Saka, both western vassals of the Xiongnu. The Sogdians, like all the peoples of Central Asia, received

[26] Concerning the name "China" in Western languages see Pelliot, 1912, Pelliot, 1913, and Bodde, 1986, p. 21. In his note of 1913 Pelliot points out that there is some indication that the appellation "men of Qin" was used in Ferghana to designate the Chinese (*Shiji*, chap. 123, p. 3177) in the 2nd century BCE.

[27] Pelliot, 1912, pp. 736–9.

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the names of Khumdān and Qin through the mediation of peoples of the steppe and of the Tarim basin at the end of the 3rd or the beginning of the 2nd century BCE.

All things considered, the results of this assessment are extremely slight: examination of the *Charters of Susa* gives no analyzable trace of extensive Sogdian commerce. The test proposed concerning the spread of lapis lazuli comes up negative in the regions with which the potential Sogdian merchants could have traded. The name Khumdān in Sogdian texts does not allow us to conclude the existence of early direct contacts with China. These negative results make it possible, at least as a likely hypothesis, to chronologically limit the date at which the Sogdian network originated: it does not appear to have existed in the Achaemenid period or at the time of Alexander's conquest. We must cross two more centuries to reach the first sizeable collection of sources.

2. *Local Sogdian Trade in the Chinese Sources*

The history of Sogdian commerce truly becomes susceptible to analysis beginning with the 2nd century BCE, thanks to Chinese sources. Chinese armies took control of Gansu and the eastern end of the Tarim basin at the close of the 2nd century BCE, and pushed as far as Ferghana in 108. The Chinese intervened with varying degrees of success in the Tarim basin throughout the following three centuries. Because of their repetition, the contacts established between Han China and Central Asia provide important data concerning the political, ethnic and economic situations in the region. Two major problems, on the other hand, create considerable difficulties for the use of these texts, problems which concern the identification of toponyms and the relationships maintained among the various sources;[28] before proceeding further we must attempt to identify Sogdiana and its towns in the Chinese texts in order to be able to examine the question of trade.

[28] Han historiography is presented conveniently by Hulsewé, 1961.

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Identification of Sogdiana

Two Chinese texts deal with Central Asia: the first is chapter 123 of the *Shiji* 史記 (*Historical Memoirs*) of Sima Qian 司馬遷, while the other is the *Han shu* 漢書.[29] The *Shiji* is the first history of China. It was written by the great astronomer of the Han court, Sima Qian, who died around 90 BCE. In chapter 123, which deals with the lands of Central Asia, he gathered information supplied by Chinese embassies and foreigners who traversed the region in large numbers beginning in the 130s BCE, and particularly the report of Zhang Qian 張騫, the first Chinese envoy beyond the Tarim basin, which was drafted upon his return to the capital around 125 BCE. The second text, the official history of the Former Han dynasty, the *Han shu*, was written nearly two centuries after the *Shiji*. It was compiled from the year 36 CE onward by Ban Biao 班彪 and continued by his son Ban Gu 班固 and his daughter Ban Zhao 班昭, on the basis of the official archives. The *Han shu* was completed in 121. The accounts therein are often parallel to those of the *Shiji*, but it distributes the text of chapter 123 of the *Shiji* between two different chapters, 61 and 96. It adds to these much historical information dating after the composition of the *Shiji*, and for every state described gives the history of its relations with China in the 1st century BCE.[30]

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[29] These passages have been translated and annotated in Hulsewé and Loewe, 1979.

[30] The authenticity of the whole of the *Shiji*, and in particular of chapter 123, is contested (Hulsewé, 1961, 1975, and Hulsewé and Loewe, 1979). Hulsewé has strongly defended the hypothesis of a late reconstruction of chapter 123 of the *Shiji* from the later text of the *Han shu*. Other Sinologists have to the contrary defended the authenticity and primacy of the *Shiji* (thus Pulleyblank, 1970, or again Leslie and Gardiner, 1982). See also Daffinà, 1982. While chapter 96 of the *Han shu* has come down to us in good condition, this is not the case with chapter 61—the biography of Zhang Qian—nor of chapter 123 of the *Shiji*. But the corruptions seen in these texts are exactly alike. One has therefore been reconstructed following the other. Chinese texts before the invention of paper were written on thin strips of wood gathered together with ribbon. It seems that, for the *Shiji* at least, it may be possible to identify sequences displaced by 23 characters, which could correspond to a mix-up of strips of 23 characters. The debate between Sinologists has not been resolved with regard to which text was copied from the other. The question is important for those who wish to clarify the exact date of the scenario presented by the Chinese sources. I certainly do not have the means to resolve the problem of the genesis of these texts, but the historical and geographical structure of chapter 123 of the *Shiji* possesses a high degree of coherence, which weakens the notion of a reconstruction on the basis of the *Han shu*.

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The curiosity of Sima Qian and Ban Biao extended far beyond the primarily military and political context of the diplomatic missions whose results they narrate. The data—summary indeed, but nevertheless unequalled for that time—enable us to broach some economic questions. Thus, the *Shiji* states:

> Anxi 安息 is situated several thousand *li* west of the region of the Great Yuezhi 大月氏. The people are settled on the land, cultivating the fields and growing rice and wheat. They also make wine out of grapes. They have walled cities like the people of Dayuan 大宛, the region containing several hundred cities of various sizes. The kingdom, which borders the Gui 嬀 River, is very large, measuring several thousand *li* square. Some of the inhabitants are merchants who travel by carts or boats to neighbouring countries, sometimes journeying several thousand *li*. The coins of the country are made of silver and bear the face of the king. When the king dies, the currency is immediately changed and new coins issued with the face of his successor.[31]

We also read:

> Daxia 大夏 is situated over 2,000 li southwest of Dayuan, south of the Gui River. Its people cultivate the land and have cities and houses. Their customs are like those of Dayuan. It has no great ruler but only a number of petty chiefs ruling the various cities. The people are poor in the use of arms and afraid of battle, but they are clever at commerce. After the Great Yuezhi moved west and attacked and conquered Daxia, the entire country came under their sway.[32]

Lastly, it gives the following text:

> Although the states from Dayuan west to Anxi speak rather different languages, their customs are generally similar and their languages mutually intelligible. The men all have deepset eyes and profuse beards and whiskers. They are skilful at commerce and will haggle over a fraction of a cent.[33]

These texts clearly attest to the existence of an important and varied commercial activity in Central Asia at the close of the 2nd century BCE. The whole problem lies in the identification of the places and

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[31] *Shiji*, chap. 123, p. 3162, trans. Watson, p. 234; the corresponding text of the *Han shu* (chap. 96 A, p. 3889) is found in Hulsewé and Loewe, p. 116. Less precise than the passage in the *Shiji*, it nevertheless provides some additional informations.

[32] *Shiji*, chap. 123, p. 3164, trans. Watson, p. 235.

[33] *Shiji*, chap. 123, p. 3174, trans. Watson, p. 245; identical text in the *Han shu*, chap. 96 A, p. 3896, trans. Hulsewé and Loewe, p. 136.

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peoples described. Some are certainly identifiable, such as Daxia (Bactriana) or Anxi (Parthia); others have been subject to contradictory identifications. This is particularly the case with Dayuan, in which the majority of commentators have seen Ferghana, but which others believe to be Sogdiana,[34] and with Kangju 康居, centered on Čāč,[35] which for some includes Sogdiana and for others does not.[36] The stakes are clear: if Dayuan is Ferghana, the skillful merchants living to the west of Dayuan, between it and Parthia, can only be the Sogdians, and we would then have the founding text for the history of Sogdian commerce. A study of the map and topographical relief show without any possible ambiguity that Sogdiana, as all historical texts designate it from the conquest of Alexander to the Arab geographers—that is, the region included between the Middle Syr Darya to the north and the Middle Amu Darya to the south—Sogdiana and it alone is to be found on the route between Dayuan and Anxi. Of primary concern here is the mention of a route "from Dayuan west to Anxi" 自大宛以西至安息, and not a remark of general character about all the lands to the west of Dayuan. The importance of this matter is an inducement to enter into the details of these arguments and identifications.[37]

Archaeology and geography confirm the identification of Dayuan with Ferghana. According to the Chinese texts, Dayuan was inhabited by ancient nomads who had become sedentary and who were still perfect masters of the techniques of mounted warfare. They are not said to have engaged in commerce, but it is clearly stated that they grew grapes and wheat and that they had fine pastures and a good urban system. Now, beginning precisely in the 2nd century BCE in Ferghana, the Kugai-Karabulak culture entered into a wider network of exchange, since Han silks have been found there in the tombs.[38] Large urban sites have been discovered, such as Akhsikent. This culture reached its agricultural zenith from the 1st to the 4th centuries CE. At that time the population chiefly farmed torrential cones reshaped and extended by canals, for the excessively powerful

[34] Pulleyblank, 1970.
[35] The region of present-day Tashkent.
[36] Pulleyblank, 1970; Daffinà, 1967, pp. 48–63, using Shiratori, 1928, pp. 84–90 and Haloun, 1937, p. 252.
[37] See Bernard, 1996b, pp. 345–6, for another formulation of the same problem.
[38] Lubo-Lesničenko, 1978. These silk goods are invaluable for the study of Han techniques, which are rather poorly known.

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Syr Darya was difficult to employ for irrigation. They possessed rice and viticulture. Chinese objects, concentrated in the southwest of the valley, as well as coins were imported.[39]

The presence of rice and vine cultivation in Ferghana, and of wide pastures and large towns as well as multiple discoveries of Chinese objects—all of these confirm a geographical identification consistent with the relative disposition of the various states in the Chinese texts. It is supported further by the identification of the ancient state of Dayuan with Ferghana (Poluona 破洛那[40]) in the later dynastic histories.[41] In addition, Ferghana possessed better pastures than Sogdiana.

Sogdiana and the Sogdians are thus referred to in the passage from the *Shiji* which I have quoted above. To the west of Ferghana, on the route to Parthia, the Sogdian merchants—speaking a dialect different from that of the inhabitants of Ferghana but nonetheless comprehensible to them, ready to haggle over a fraction of a cent—first appear to history already endowed with the psychological and physical traits (avaricious, with aquiline noses, deepset eyes, and beards or mustaches) which would constantly be theirs in the later historiography and iconography of the Tang. At that time the Sogdians did not possess a structured state. Sogdiana and Samarkand, stripped of all political autonomy, were therefore not likely to be made the object of a specific note in the fundamentally political and military reports which formed the basis for the chapters on the West in the dynastic histories. It is in a simple aside which refers in passing to the peoples situated between Ferghana and Parthia that the Sogdians are mentioned.

Commercial Contacts?

The Chinese texts do not only furnish the first observations to speak of Sogdian merchants, they also lend themselves to an analysis of the state of commercial relations between Central Asia, and more particularly the Sogdians, and China.

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[39] Gorbunova, 1986, pp. 176–7 and p. 205.

[40] At the time, according to Pulleyblank's work on the reconstruction of Medieval Chinese phonology, Poluona was pronounced P^ha^h lak na^h (see Pulleyblank, 1991b). See also Daffinà, 1982, p. 325.

[41] The *Wei shu* (chap. 102, p. 2270) and the *Bei shi* (chap. 97, p. 3221).

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The establishment of contact had certainly been occurring gradually,[42] but this movement accelerated considerably with the embassy of Zhang Qian. At that time China was seeking alliances in order to attack the nomadic Xiongnu from behind. From the north of Central Asia and Mongolia, these nomads were a constant threat to the heart of the Chinese Empire, the valley of the Yellow River. The Chinese sought to create a protective buffer to the west of their new possessions in the Tarim basin, in order to affirm the universal character of the empire and to procure rare goods.

> Thus the emperor learned of Dayuan, Daxia, Anxi, and the others, all great states rich in unusual products whose people cultivated the land and made their living in much the same way as the Chinese. All these states, he was told, were militarily weak and prized Han goods and wealth. He also learned that to the north of them lived the Yuezhi and Kangju people who were strong in arms but who could be persuaded by gifts and the prospect of gain to acknowledge allegiance to the Han court. If it were only possible to win over these states by peaceful means, the emperor thought, he could then extend his domain 10,000 *li*, attract to his court men of strange customs who would come translating and retranslating their languages, and his might would become known to all the lands within the four seas.[43]

The Chinese embassies, together with enormous quantities of silk, crisscrossed the area, particularly at the end of the 2nd century BCE:

> The emperor was very fond of the Dayuan horses and sent a constant stream of envoys to that region to acquire them. The largest of these embassies to foreign states numbered several hundred persons, while even the smaller parties included over 100 members, though later, as the envoys became more accustomed to the route, the number was gradually reduced. The credentials and gifts which the envoys bore with them were much like those supplied to the envoys in Zhang Qian's time. In the course of one year anywhere from five or six to over ten parties would be sent out.[44]

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[42] Thus, Chinese texts mention Kangju a little before the mission of Zhang Qian (Hulsewé and Loewe, 1979, pp. 123–4 n. 298). Éric Trombert moreover informs me that wine, which had not existed in China but was present in western Central Asia, is also mentioned by Chinese poets before the return of Zhang Qian. See Trombert, 2005, forthcoming.

[43] *Shiji*, chap. 123, p. 3166, trans. Watson, p. 236.

[44] *Shiji*, chap. 123, p. 3170, trans. Watson, pp. 240–1.

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Zhang Qian, during an embassy to the Wusun 烏孫, had at his disposal

> [. . .] about ten thousand cattle and sheep and carried gold and silk goods worth 100,000,000 cash.[45]

The texts also provide certain details about the personnel of these "embassies":

> When the envoys returned from a mission, it invariably happened that they had plundered or stolen goods on their way or their reports failed to meet with the approval of the emperor. [. . .] The officials and soldiers who had accompanied them on a mission would in turn start at once enthusiastically describing the wealth to be found in the foreign nations. Those who told the most impressive tales were granted the seals of an envoy, while those who spoke more modestly were made assistants. As a result all sorts of worthless men hurried forward with wild tales to imitate their example. The envoys were all sons of poor families who handled the government gifts and goods that were entrusted to them as though they were private property and looked for opportunities to buy goods at a cheap price in the foreign countries and make a profit on their return to China. The men of the foreign lands soon became disgusted when they found that each of the Han envoys told some different story and, considering that the Han armies were too far away to worry about, refused to supply the envoys with food and provisions, making things very difficult for them. The Han envoys were soon reduced to a state of destitution and distress and, their tempers mounting, fell to quarrelling and even attacking each other.[46]

Above all, the attitude of the Central Asian populations appears on several occasions:

> Whenever a Xiongnu envoy appeared in the region carrying credentials from the Shanyu, he was escorted from state to state and provided with food, and no one dared to detain him or cause him any difficulty. In the case of the Han envoys, however, if they did not hand out silks or other goods they were given no food, and unless they purchased animals in the markets they could get no mounts for their riders. This was because the people considered the Han too far away to bother about. They also believed that the Han had plenty of goods and money and it was therefore proper to make the envoys pay for whatever they wanted. As may be seen, they were much more afraid of the Xiongnu envoys than of those from the Han.[47]

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[45] *Shiji*, chap. 123, p. 3168, trans. Watson, p. 238.
[46] *Shiji*, chap. 123, p. 3171, trans. Watson, p. 242.
[47] *Shiji*, chap. 123, p. 3173, trans. Watson, p. 244.

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The attitude of the Central Asian populations toward the Chinese envoys, and the attitude of the latter, treated as two separate problems in the official Chinese text, were actually two sides of the same phenomenon. The official historiography displays the point of view of the men of the Han state, anxious to develop their diplomatic relations with the lands of the West. They complain as if in passing about the conduct of the Chinese envoys who, helping themselves to the bounties of the Treasury that were intended for the nomadic military elites of the West, took the liberty of reselling them and trading for their personal profit. In a parallel way, the officials were shocked at the easy attitude of the westerners who, eager for gain, made the Han envoys pay all that they could. The key point here is the enthusiasm displayed by these envoys, who were ready to attempt the adventure on repeated occasions. This enthusiasm shows that, while the Chinese Treasury suffered from such an attitude, such was not the case with the envoys. A real commercial circuit was established at the margins of the official diplomatic circuit, and was maintained at its expense: the populations of Central Asia intended to be remunerated for their services, and the Chinese envoys wished to buy in the West, in exchange for the silk of their government, those precious products whose resale would make them rich in China. That which the official Chinese texts call plunder or want of respect was in reality a form of commercial organization. At the margins of the far-reaching diplomatic exchanges between the nomadic military elites and the Chinese state, these commercial contacts brought profit to the Central Asian merchants and to the Chinese gentlemen of fortune.

These commercial contacts made possible the distribution of silk in social strata which it might otherwise have escaped. The silk left the diplomatic world and entered into that of commercial exchange, and this innovation was extremely important. It is certainly possible that in the hands of the nomadic military elites the silk could, through the internal circulation of the societies involved, have finally ended up in the possession of the merchants and then given rise to commerce, but of this process no source speaks and we know nothing of it. On the other hand, the Chinese texts as I have interpreted them provide manifest proof of the establishment of a local trade in Chinese goods in Central Asia at the end of the 2nd century before our era. The quantities involved in this trade may have been very limited, especially in comparison with the colossal quantities of silk

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which the Chinese state supplied to the Xiongnu further to the east.[48] But we are dealing here with the first attested commerce, which owed its structure to the means available to Chinese diplomacy.

The Sogdians were splendidly situated on the route from Dayuan to Anxi, mentioned several times in the sources. There is no reason to suppose that they were excluded from these exchanges. Located on the periphery of all the states involved, the Sogdians had need, perhaps more than the others, to obtain by commerce those precious Chinese products which they would otherwise hardly have had a chance of being offered, which was not the case with populations in direct contact with the ruling nomadic elites, as in Bactriana or in the Parthian Empire.

These events transpired as if the Sogdians had been excluded from official diplomatic contacts. The Chinese texts do not mention Sogdiana, for the country at that time was without any diplomatic status, and they are content to indicate the mercantile character of its inhabitants in a passing phrase. It was with the menials and the supply personnel that the Sogdians had dealings when the Chinese embassies crossed their lands with disdainful regard, and the contacts with these subordinates—who were afterward so enthusiastic to return to trade in Central Asia—were reduced to the barest economic aspects: to extort as much silk as possible in exchange for the exotic commodities that were worth so much on the Chinese market. High diplomacy was left to others. In the shadows and on the margins, the Sogdians may then have taken the full measure of the importance of their geographical position as the last urbanized territory before the world of the steppe and, by virtue of this fact, an obligatory route for some of the Chinese embassies and the precious products they carried with them.

[48] Raschke, 1978, pp. 606–622. It is necessary to note that the hypothesis developed by Raschke to explain the passage of the silk paid in tribute from the hands of the Xiongnu to those of the "enterprising Sogdian merchants" does not rest on any concrete proof (p. 622). One might certainly wish to accept that hypothesis because of the role it gives to the Sogdians, but it is preferable to suppose the existence of social mechanisms involving direct contacts between the Chinese and the merchants, as these are better established by the texts.

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Archaeological Data Concerning the Second Century before Our Era

While the Chinese sources incontestably show the development of a commerce, they nevertheless also mention the existence of another commerce antedating the arrival of the Chinese. Among the other commercial peoples of Central Asia, the Sogdians certainly appear to have been the least advanced. They seem to be the low wage earners in comparison to their Bactrian and Parthian neighbors: the *Shiji* specifies that the market of Bactra was well supplied with merchandise from every source,[49] and the inhabitants of the Parthian Empire were long-distance merchant sailors. This only means that the arrival of Chinese objects did not create commercial activity in Sogdiana *ex nihilo*. Only archaeological data can be used to clarify the origin of this local commerce, which existed before the massive influx of silk into these areas, for the Chinese texts do not enable us to specify the nature of the commerce they mention. But archaeology hardly strengthens the hypothesis making merchants of the Sogdians and the Bactrians. It is true that Bactra has been the object of but few archaeological digs, but the excavations of the Graeco-Bactrian town of Ai Khanum, at the foot of the Pamirs, indicate the relative commercial isolation of Greek Bactriana in every direction.[50] Yet lapis lazuli, found in unworked blocks at Ai Khanum, was diffused at that time throughout the Indian subcontinent.[51]

In Sogdiana, sondages reaching the layers of the 2nd century BCE are too limited to be able to generalize the information they provide. The only non-military Greek building found at Samarkand is a millet granary. Let us note however that the Greek levels at Samarkand have yielded numerous fragments of turquoise as well as several carnelian beads.[52] At the citadel in particular a workshop for

[49] *Shiji*, chap. 123, p. 3164, trans. Watson, p. 235: "The capital is called the city of Lanshi 藍市 (Bactra) and has a market in which all sorts of goods are bought and sold."

[50] Rapin, 1992, pp. 295–9. This assertion should be qualified due to the presence of some rare fragments of olive oil amphorae and black glaze vases. Graeco-Bactrian coins are quite rare south of the Hindu Kush and in the West (see Bernard, 1985, pp. 107–113 and p. 158).

[51] See Lahiri, 1992, for a study of the distribution of archaeological tracers (rare stones, etc.) in India up to around the year 200 BCE.

[52] Personal communication from the excavators (Olga Inevaktina, Lauriane Martinez-Sève, Frantz Grenet).

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the production of turquoise was probably in operation in the first half of the 2nd century BCE. Among other locations, turquoise was a product of Khorezm, but also of the region of Khujand, at the gates of Ferghana,[53] and its presence therefore does not imply the existence of long-distance commerce.[54] Naturally we know nothing about trade in perishable goods. The existence of sizeable populations with a relatively high standard of living—as is attested by an abundant production of high-quality ceramics,[55] which was maintained at Samarkand without major discontinuity—could have been a factor in commerce, but this is more to be supposed than archaeologically confirmed, and the people involved remains unknown. It must finally be pointed out that coin discoveries are extremely rare for the ancient periods on the site of Samarkand.[56] Greek Sogdiana of the first half of the 2nd century BCE, just before its fall to the Yuezhi nomads, and some decades before its description as given by Zhang Qian, seems to have possessed an essentially agricultural rather than commercial economy. It is therefore likely that Sogdian large-scale commerce, in contrast to Parthian or Bactrian commerce, did not antedate the massive influx of Chinese merchandise beginning at the close of the 2nd century before our era. To the contrary, the Chinese texts seem to argue for a not particularly glorious birth on the basis of a local or regional commerce, of which the working of turquoise from Khujand at Samarkand is perhaps an example. On the whole, the chronological framework has been clarified considerably.

3. *Sogdiana on the Sidelines: The Commercial Routes at the Beginning of Our Era*

Five more centuries separate this first contact of the peoples of Central Asia with the products of the Middle Kingdom from the composition of the *Sogdian Ancient Letters*, at the beginning of the 4th century

[53] Bernard and Francfort, 1978, pp. 73–4 nn. 45 and 46. This deposit was being worked at least since the Islamic period, as it is mentioned by Ibn Ḥawqal.

[54] It has also been found at Ai Khanum, where it seems to have come from Khorezm. More generally, the site has yielded much semiprecious stone debris, particularly in the treasury: this could be from booty brought back from India by Eukratides. See Rapin, 1992, pp. 171–182.

[55] See Grenet, 1996b, pp. 367–9, and Lyonnet, 1997, for the cups on small pedestals.

[56] See Bernard, 1996b, p. 347.

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CE. To the Chinese and archaeological sources are now added classical Western sources. For the two or three centuries which surround the beginning of our era, studies of the "Silk Road" have significantly clarified the picture, and it is without doubt during this period that the image possesses the most truth. There was in fact a great commerce, notably in silk, between China and the Roman Empire, primarily through the intermediaries of Bactriana and India, but also via Iran under Parthian domination. In what measure did the Sogdians take part in this commerce?

The Merchant Peoples of the South

Chinese and Western sources basically agree in their descriptions of the commerce at the beginning of our era. The *Periplus Maris Erythraei*,[57] like the *Han shu* on the Chinese side, testifies to the existence of an organized southern trade between China and India, across the passes of the Upper Indus and Bactriana. Concerning an embassy from Jibin 罽賓 (probably Gandhāra or more generally Northwest India),[58] the *Han shu* cites a report by the statesman Du Qin 杜欽, around 25 BCE:

> There are no members of the royal family or noblemen among those who bring the gifts. The latter are all merchants and men of low origins. They wish to exchange their goods and conduct trade, under the pretext of presenting gifts.[59]

A century after the establishment of diplomatic contact, the merchants of Northern India had already travelled the route to the Chinese capitals. Foreign merchants were rather frequently mentioned at the capital.[60] The *Periplus*, for its part, states:

> At the northernmost point, where the sea ends somewhere on the outer fringe, there is a very great inland city called Thina [China] from which silk floss, yarn, and cloth are shipped by land via Bactria to Barygaza and via the Ganges River back to Limyrikê. It is not easy to get to this Thina, for rarely do people come from it, and only a

[57] *Periplus Maris Erythraei*, ed. and trans. Casson, 1989. The text is now dated to the second third of the first century CE (see Robin, 1991 and Fussman, 1991); it was written by a captain willing to put in writing his knowledge of the commercial routes of the Indian Ocean.

[58] See Daffinà, 1982, pp. 316–318 and Kuwayama, 1987.

[59] *Han shu* 96 A, p. 3886, trans. Hulsewé and Loewe, p. 109.

[60] Examples in Yü, 1967, p. 212.

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> few. The area lies right under Ursa Minor and, it is said, is contiguous with the parts of the Pontus [Black Sea] and the Caspian Sea where these parts turn off . . .[61]

Other sources could be cited regarding this commerce. The Bactrians are sometimes mentioned in the Greek and Latin texts, and they are associated with the Indians and Scythians in a context which seems to be connected to the commercial milieu of the Indian Ocean. At the end of the 1st century CE, Dio Chrysostom (III, 32, 40) reports the presence of Bactrians, Scythians, Persians and a few Indians in the audience of the theater at Alexandria, and (V, 72–3) the presence of Bactrians, Persians and Parthians at Rome. The other references to Bactrians in the Greek and Latin texts simply have the goal of emphasizing the renown of the Roman Empire, which had reached even the ears of that quintessentially far-off people—thus the references to them at a later date in the *Augustan History*.[62] These references have given rise to important discussions which would take me too far away from my present subject.[63] It will be sufficient here to point out that, during the first centuries of our era, the principal commercial route with China passed to the south of Sogdiana, reaching India by way of the Pamirs and the Hindu Kush.

Bactriana undoubtedly took part in this commerce, and it benefitted further from the existence of another route, across the Parthian Empire.[64] Indeed, the Alexandrian geographer Ptolemy, who composed his *Geography* around the year 150 CE, describes a route taken in the 1st century CE by merchants from the Roman Empire, which led from the Euphrates to Bactra and then crossed the mountains toward China.[65] It is to those merchants, through his predecessor

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[61] *Periplus Maris Erythraei*, ed. and trans. Casson, 1989, §64, p. 91.

[62] *Histoire Auguste* [*Augustan History*], Hadrian 21, 14, trans. Callu, p. 42; Aurelian, 33, 4, trans. Paschoud, p. 44 and 41, 10, trans. Paschoud, p. 52.

[63] See the fundamental article by Raschke, 1978, pp. 637–650. The step-by-step argument backwards—which successively eliminates the Chinese, the Sogdians, the Kushans and the Parthians in order to end up with only the populations of the Eastern Mediterranean as commercial intermediaries—is not very convincing, despite its erudition. On the commerce between the Kushan Empire and Egypt, see Šerkova, 1991.

[64] See Šerkova, 1991, pp. 15–50.

[65] Ptolemy notably improved upon the knowledge of his predecessors concerning Central Asia, as found in particular in books XI and XV of the *Geography* of Strabo (XI, 9; XI, 13; XV, 1, 4–27; XV, 2, 8 and XV, 73) and book VI of the *Natural History* of Pliny the Elder (VI, 49, 52, 54–55, and 88).

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Marinus of Tyre, that he owed his remarkable if confused information about Central Asia.[66] The geographer did not have access to astronomical data and relied solely on travel accounts and the amount of time taken by the journey. His whole coordinate system is worked out on the basis of that information:[67]

> And it is through commerce that knowledge of this route has been acquired. He [Marinos] indeed says that a certain Maês, also called Titianos, a native of Macedonia and a merchant like his father, recorded this measurement in writing, although he had not been himself as far as the Seres but had only sent some of his people there.[68]

It is in relation to this pre-eminence of the regions to the south of Sogdiana—particularly Bactriana and Northwest India—that we must analyze Sogdian commerce.

The Northern Routes

The evidence concerning a possible Sogdian commerce at the beginning of our era is extremely confused and scattered. The clearest text is found in the *Han shu*:

> If in view of these considerations, we ask why [Kangju] sends his sons to attend [at the Han court], [we find] that desiring to trade, they make use of a pretence couched in fine verbiage.[69]

This passage is taken from a report by the Chinese Protector-General in the Tarim basin about the fact that the king of Kangju sent his son together with presents to the court in the year 11 BCE. The report advises breaking off relations with Kangju. A commentator adds that a similar attempt was made by Kangju in 29 BCE.[70] If, in the *Shiji*, Kangju is described as a small nomad state confined to the Middle Syr Darya in the 2nd century BCE, which nothing allows us

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[66] See Bernard, 1996b, pp. 341–345 and Bernard and Francfort, 1978, pp. 45–8 and 93–5. The paragraph devoted to Sogdiana is in Ronca, 1971, pp. 31–6 (Greek and Latin text with a German translation) and pp. 106–7 (English translation).

[67] See also Pliny the Elder, *Natural History*, I, 2 and Shiratori, 1957, pp. 3–4 for his critique of Berthelot, 1930, p. 202.

[68] *Geography*, I, 11, 5–6, trans. Coedès, 1910, reprinted 1977, p. 29.

[69] *Han shu*, chap. 96 A, p. 3893, trans. Hulsewé and Loewe, p. 128. The passage is in fact ambiguous and the translation could be made differently. In any case, the ambassadors from Kangju spoke of commerce.

[70] Hulsewé and Loewe, n. 307 p. 126 of the translation.

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to identify with Sogdiana,[71] there is on the other hand good reason to think that Kangju included Sogdiana at the time of these embassies.

In fact, while Kangju continued to border Dayuan on the north, as it did in the *Shiji*, the new fact presented in the *Han shu* is that it henceforth also formed the northern border of Anxi, the Parthian kingdom. The Yuezhi no longer occupied the central position that they still had during the journey of Zhang Qian. From this time on, Kangju extended from Ferghana to the Amu Darya near Merv and therefore encompassed Sogdiana. This information is moreover dated by the description of coins which can only have been, in the Parthian Empire, those of Phraates V (from 2 BCE to 4 CE).[72] Thus it was between the mission of Zhang Qian and the beginning of our era that Kangju came to dominate Sogdiana. The later *Hou Han shu*[73] furthermore explicitly includes Sogdiana in the kingdom of Kangju.[74]

If one is indeed willing to accept that this takeover took place before the year 11 BCE, shortly after the departure of the last Yuezhi migrants for Bactriana, the commercially-inclined embassies of Kangju mentioned in the *Han shu* were probably conducted by merchants from Sogdiana. In other words, the dispatch of fake embassies, so sharply denounced by Du Qin in the case of the merchants from Jibin, is here employed by the Sogdians.

All the merchant peoples mentioned in the *Shiji* thus undertook the journey to China, including the Sogdians. Under diplomatic cover, the beginnings of long-range Sogdian commerce can thus be firmly dated to a few decades before our era, following a century of

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[71] A passage in the *Shiji* (chap. 123, p. 3158, trans. Watson, p. 232) has given rise to confusion: the text states that Zhang Qian, in search of an alliance with the Yuezhi against the Xiongnu, went from Ferghana to Kangju, then from there to the Yuezhi. Sogdiana was located between Ferghana and the Yuezhi, which might lead one to believe that Kangju incorporated Sogdiana. But the king of Ferghana, whose territory had been ravaged some years earlier by the passage of these same Yuezhi, had simply played for time and rid himself of this burdensome envoy by sending him to the king of Kangju, who paid homage both to the Yuezhi and the Xiongnu, as stated precisely in the *Shiji* . . . In this way, the king of Ferghana put the king of Kangju in the position of having to choose between his allegiances.

[72] Leslie and Gardiner, 1982, p. 280 n. 51.

[73] This work was written by Fan Ye 范曄, who died in 445 and who was said to have been inspired by a report written about 125 CE by Ban Yong 班勇, son of the general Ban Chao 班超 and nephew of the historian Ban Gu 班固. He adds several later events which occurred between 150 and 170.

[74] Trans. Chavannes, 1907, p. 195, correcting (with Shiratori, 1928, pp. 94–100) Liyi 栗弋 to Suyi 粟弋, pronounced *Sukdok*, Sogdiana.

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commercial contacts in Sogdiana between Chinese envoys and petty Sogdian traders.

The Chinese text says nothing more, and the other sources never explicitly mention Sogdian commerce. The contributions of archaeology are for their part very scattered. In fact, they hardly allow us to imagine great commerce north of the Amu Darya, or at least nothing beyond that found in the other regions of Central Asia. Silk has not been preserved. Objects from the Roman Mediterranean world—often Egyptian faience beads,[75] or small bronze statuettes—are found primarily in northern Bactriana and secondarily in Khorezm, Sogdiana, Ustrushana and Ferghana.[76] The order of magnitude of these finds is not equal to that of Southern India, where thousands of Roman coins have been found. On the other hand, amber at that time reached Central Asia from the Baltic.[77] Finally, from the east a certain number of objects reached Central Asia, and from there the Pontic steppe. Thus, in a princely kurgan recently excavated to the north of Samarkand, and dating from about the beginning of our era, a Chinese silver mirror has been found with other precious objects.[78] We do not know whether it came to be there in a commercial context or, more probably, through diplomatic channels. Objects of Central Asian origin, or that at least passed through Central Asia, are found in tombs to the north of the Black Sea from the end of the 1st century CE onwards.[79]

Archaeology therefore gives evidence of a timid expansion, and this development of contacts between Central Asia north of the Amu Darya and the Black Sea via the steppe almost immediately finds expression in Chinese and Greek sources: the *Hou Han shu* describes a part of this route on the basis of information gathered in the first quarter of the 2nd century CE,[80] and the *Wei lüe*, in the 3rd century,[81] extends it as far as the Roman Empire:

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[75] Litvinskij, 1973, pp. 128–152.

[76] See Šerkova, 1991, pp. 64–74 and the map p. 24; see also Staviskij, 1995, pp. 192–200.

[77] See Bubnova, 1991 and 1997.

[78] Information from the excavator, Claude Rapin, to whom I give many thanks.

[79] A convenient list can be found in Simonenko, 2001.

[80] *Hou Han shu*, chap. 88, p. 2920.

[81] Composed between 239 and 265 by Yu Huan 魚豢, an unofficial historian, this text is lost, but long extracts from it have been preserved in the commentary to the *Sanguo zhi* published in 429 by Pei Songzhi 裴松之. These passages have been translated by Chavannes (Chavannes, 1905).

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> The kingdom of Yancai 奄蔡 which is also called Alan 阿蘭. They have all the same customs as the people of Kangju 康居. To the west it adjoins Daqin 大秦. To the southeast, Kangju.[82]

The Alan are the Alans, and Daqin, here, is the Roman Empire. For his part, Ptolemy knew the regions north of the Caspian remarkably well. He was also the first to make of the Caspian a closed sea, which could be circumvented by a land route to the north, and he gives a list of the rivers that flow into it.[83] Furthermore, he describes Ferghana and the Tarim basin. For the Zarafshan valley, however, the texts are rare. Ptolemy in particular commits enormous errors with regard to Sogdiana, and his information seems much better further to the south or further to the north. The *Hou Han shu* describes Merv as the gateway to Parthia, which argues for a secondary route passing through the Zarafshan valley and ending at Merv.[84] Later, the *Wei lüe* seems to again describe this route from Dayuan to Anxi.[85] The only real proof of the existence of a relatively regular trade between Central Asia and the Black Sea is found in the Graeco-Roman lapidaries: these are familiar with several varieties of blue stones, of which the best, called Scythian *cyanos*, was imported via the Black Sea and certainly corresponds to the lapis lazuli of Badakhshan. Pliny the Elder writes, during the 1st century CE:

> The best [*cyanos*] is that of Scythia [. . .] *Cyanos* is also divided into male and female. It sometimes contains a golden dust, different from that of sapphires. In these, in fact, the gold shines in specks.[86]

The pyrite contained in lapis lazuli corresponds exactly to this description. There was thus a regular circulation of lapis, necessarily through Sogdiana, in the direction of the steppe and then the Black Sea. The Sogdians could have participated in this commerce.

These long strides through the history of antiquity in Central Asia have had the single goal of making the chronology more precise, which leads us to reject the earlier dates in favor of the 1st century BCE, when, following the Chinese ventures of the preceding century,

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[82] *Sanguo zhi*, chap. 30, p. 862, trans. Chavannes, 1905, pp. 558–9. The close similarities between the coinage of the kingdom of the Bosphorus, on the Black Sea, and the coinage of Khorezm has been noted. See Vajnberg, 1977.
[83] See Berthelot, 1930, p. 225.
[84] Chavannes, 1907, p. 177.
[85] Trans. Chavannes, 1905, pp. 555–6, *Sanguo zhi*, chap. 30, p. 860.
[86] Pliny the Elder, *Natural History*, XXXVII, 119.

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the Sogdians and the other merchant peoples in southern Central Asia crossed the passes leading to the Tarim basin. At that time a range of routes passed through Central Asia, whether they connected India and China, Iran and China, or the steppe and China. Three great groups are discernable, the principal being to the south via Bactriana, the second to the north via the Syr Darya, and the third via Sogdiana. Points of contact between them existed, as is shown by the circulation of lapis by way of the Zarafshan valley followed by the northern route. The text concerning the merchants of Kangju cautions us against overly minimizing the possible role of the Sogdians, particularly in the Zarafshan valley and on the northern group of routes, perhaps in the lapis trade. If the great commerce passed further to the south, if the Sogdians controlled only a secondary route, at least they participated, even from a distance, in the development of commerce in the first centuries of our era. The commercial opening resulting from Chinese political enterprises among the neighboring nomads was not totally lost for want of contacts. Given the current state of our documentation—and this caveat is important, as the smallest discovery could profoundly challenge this model—there is no reason to look elsewhere for the origins, modest in comparison to the ventures of the neighboring peoples to the south, of the Sogdian network.

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CHAPTER TWO

ABOUT THE *ANCIENT LETTERS*

The *Sogdian Ancient Letters* are a documentary collection altogether unique in the history of Sogdian commerce, and by themselves establish a significant portion of the logical framework of this study. In fact, *Ancient Letter II*, addressed from Gansu to Samarkand, is one of the only documents proving the existence of a Sogdian *network*, and not simply an aggregate of petty Sogdian merchants, with all that the notion of network implies in terms of an economic and social structure intended to control commercial operations at a distance. Additionally, these texts are the earliest Sogdian commercial documents. Sogdian commerce thus suddenly emerges from obscurity in the quite advanced form of a network. The goal of this second chapter is both to make use of the information provided by the *Ancient Letters* and to try to dispel that obscurity.

1. *The* Ancient Letters *and the Sogdian Network*

Ancient Letter II

The text of *Letter II* deserves to be cited in full because it is simultaneously the most important document in the history of Sogdian commerce and one of the essential documents for the history of the 4th century CE, because of the name it gives to the Xiongnu who sacked Luoyang, *xwn*, the Huns, sixty years before they swept across the borders of the Roman Empire:

> To the noble lord Varzakk son of Nanai-thvār of the family Kānakk, 1,000 and 10,000 blessings and homage on bended knee, as is offered to the gods, sent by his servant Nanai-vandak. And, sirs, it would be a good day for him who might see you happy and free from illness; and, sirs, when I hear news of your good health, I consider myself immortal!
>
> And, sirs, Armat-sāch in Cwcn [Jiuquan] is safe and well and Arsāch in Kc'n [Guzang/Wuwei] is safe and well. And, sirs, it is three years

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since a Sogdian came from "inside" [i.e., from China]. I settled Ghōtam-sāch, and he is safe and well. He has gone to Kwr'ynk . . . and now no one comes from there so that I might write to you about the Sogdians who went "inside," how they fared and which countries they reached. And, sirs, the last emperor, so they say, fled from Srγ [Luoyang] because of the famine and fire was set to his palace and to the city, and the palace was burnt and the city [destroyed]. Srγ [Luoyang] is no more, 'nkp' [Ye] is no more! Moreover . . . by the Huns (?), and by them . . . 'xwmt'n [Chang'an], if indeed they held (?) it (?) . . . as far as N'yn'ych and as far as 'nkp' [Ye] these (same) Huns [who] yesterday were the emperor's subjects! And, sirs, we do not know whether the remaining Chinese were able to expel the Huns [from] 'xwmt'n [Chang'an], from China, or whether they took the country beyond (?). And [. . . in . . . there are] a hundred freemen from Samarkand . . . in . . . there are forty men. And, sirs, [. . . it is] three years since [. . . came] from "inside" . . .

And from δrw''n [Dunhuang] up to Kmzyn [Jincheng/Lanzhou] . . . to sell, linen cloth (?) is going [= selling well?], and whoever has unmade cloth or woolen cloth . . .

And, sirs, as for us, whoever dwells in the region from K[. . .] [Lanzhou or Wuwei?] up to δrw''n [Dunhuang], we only survive so long as the . . . lives, and we are without family, old and on the point of death. If this were not so, [I would] not be ready to write to you about how we are. And, sirs, if I were to write to you everything about how China has fared, it would be beyond grief: there is no profit for you to gain from it. And, sirs, it is eight years since I sent Saghrak and Farn-āghat "inside" and it is three years since I received a reply from there. They were well . . ., but now, since the last evil occurred, I do [not] receive a reply from there about how they have fared. Moreover, four years ago I sent another man named Artikhu-vandak. When the caravan left Kc'n [Guzang/Wuwei], Wakhushakk . . . was there, and when they reached Srγ [Luoyang] . . . the Indians and the Sogdians there had all died of starvation. [And I] sent Nasyan to δrw''n [Dunhuang] and he went "outside" (i.e., out of China) and entered Dunhuang, but now he has gone without permission from me, and he received a great retribution and was struck dead at Kr''cyh.

Lord Varzakk, my greatest hope is in your lordship! Pēsakk son of Dhruwasp-vandak holds IIIII[II]II–iiii staters of mine and he put it on deposit, not to be transferred, and you should hold it . . . sealed from now on, so that without my permission . . . Dhruwasp-vandak . . .

[Lord] Nanai-thvār, you should remind Varzakk that he should withdraw this deposit, and you should both count it, and if the latter is to hold it you should add the interest to the capital and put it in a transfer document, and you should give this too to Varzakk. And if you think it fit that the latter should not hold it, then you should take it and give it to someone else whom you do think fit, so that this

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money may increase. And, behold, there is a certain orphan . . . and if he should live and reach adulthood, and he has no hope of anything other than this money, then, Nanai-thvār, when it is heard that Takut has departed to the gods, the gods and my father's soul will be a support to you! and when Takhsīch-vandak is grown-up, give him a wife and do not send him away from you. . . . And day after day we are expecting to be killed or robbed. And when you need cash, then you should take 1,000 or 2,000 staters out of the money.

And Wan-razmak sent to δrw''n [Dunhuang] for me 32 (vesicles of) musk belonging to Takut so that he might deliver them to you. When they are handed over you should make five shares, from which Takhsīch-vandak should take three shares, and Pēsakk should take one share, and you should take one share.

This letter was written when it was the year 13 of Lord Chirth-swān in the month Taghmīch.[1]

Context and Date

This text is one of a group of letters found, still sealed, in 1907 by Sir Aurel Stein, in a rubbish heap obstructing one of the corridors of a ruined Han guard tower (no. XIIa) 90 km west of Dunhuang, almost at the western extremity of the Chinese *limes*.[2] Written on paper in the Sogdian language and script, the letters are partially damaged.[3] They were edited in 1931.[4]

The date of these *Sogdian Ancient Letters* has been the subject of numerous debates.[5] In fact, the second letter mentions the sack of Luoyang, one of the Chinese capitals. This city was pillaged on three

[1] Trans. Sims-Williams, 2001, with contributions from Frantz Grenet, Xavier Tremblay, Étienne de la Vaissière.

[2] See Stein, 1921, vol. II, pp. 669–67 and Stein, 1921, vol. V, map 74 for the location. All geographic references in this chapter have been plotted on the map between pp. 66 and 67.

[3] There are also several fragments: to those found with the *Ancient Letters* proper, we must add a fragment of twenty lines of a letter, found to the southwest of Loulan by Aurel Stein: document LM II ii 09, see Stein, 1928, I, p. 195 and II, p. 1031; Plate in vol. III, CXXIV, and location vol. IV, map 29. From a paleographical perspective, this letter seems to date from the same period and mentions, like *Ancient Letter II*, the Huns (line 5). The writing is difficult. This fragment has never been edited or translated. Written by a woman, it basically speaks of comings and goings, and seems to give a few pieces of information linked to commerce (the verb for "sell" *pr'yδ* line 13).

[4] Reichelt, 1931. The letters are now in the British Library (Or. 8212/92–101).

[5] Henning, 1948, proposed dating them to 313. J. Harmatta has defended the date of 196 CE (Harmatta, 1979a, 1979b and 1992). Grenet and Sims-Williams, 1987, have shown that we should return to Henning's hypothesis.

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occasions, in 190, 311 and 535. While there are multiple reasons for rejecting the latest date[6]—based on paleography, quality of the paper, and so on—it is difficult to choose between 190 and 311, as the events referred to in the text (the burning of Luoyang and Ye, famine, departure of the emperor, the role of the Xiongnu) can refer to either situation. On the whole it seems that events in China in 311 correspond more closely with the letter of the text than those of 190: in particular, it was indeed the emperor who fled in 311 in the context of a famine, while in 190, it was the dictator Dong Zhuo 董卓 who made him quit the capital, and the famine began only in 193. This leads us to date the letter to 313.

At that time, the merchants travelling from Central Asia to China went by way of the Pamirs and passed through the kingdom of Khotan, and especially that of Loulan, before reaching Chinese territory not far from the place where the *Ancient Letters* were found. Chinese garrisons still controlled the indianized kingdom of Loulan.[7] Loulan, by the shores of the Lob Nor, was then a cosmopolitan city which accomodated various communities, among them Indians, Chinese, Sogdians and surely Bactrians as well. Afterward, from Dunhuang, the merchants entered the territory of the Western Jin and travelled through the towns mentioned in *Ancient Letter II*—Jiuquan, Wuwei/Guzang, Lanzhou—before reaching central China, then in complete anarchy.

A Postal Network

These letters were found together, but they came from different places: the first and the third letters were written by the same person, at Dunhuang, and were probably destined for Loulan. The second letter was bound for Samarkand and was composed in the Gansu corridor, although we cannot further specify precisely where. The fifth letter was sent from Wuwei. We do not have any such information about the other letters.

The purely Sogdian character of these letters, as well as their diverse places of origin, attests to the existence of a system by which

[6] Grenet and Sims-Williams, 1987, p. 105.

[7] This is proven by the Chinese documents found both on the site of the capital, Loulan/Krorayna, and in a distant province, Niya, in the center of the Tarim basin not far from the Khotanese frontier.

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mail was collected and transmitted within the Sogdian milieu. The person who transported these letters passed from one Sogdian community to another, while excluding the other ethnic communities: no Chinese or Indian letter, for example, was associated with the Sogdian letters. We do not know if the messengers were professionals or, more probably, merchants taking on the task of postal delivery. The circulation of mail was rather frequent, since there are several references to letters expected or received from Sogdian correspondents. Furthermore, the presentation of the addresses on the sealed letters is standardized. Lastly, *Letter I* and *Letter III* were both written by a woman, Miunai, the first to her mother, Catisa, the second to her husband, Nanai-dhat, with a postscript from her daughter Šaina. The existence of private letters, which were moreover written by women, shows that contacts were frequent and regular. *Letters IV* and *V* are of a commercial nature and imply, like *Letters I* and *III*, rather rapid responses. We are therefore dealing here with a regional postal network, well-developed and serving to maintain economic and familial connections among the communities.

Four letters among the five that have been preserved in good condition do not give a precise address. It seems probable either that the messenger personally knew the persons to whom the letters were addressed and therefore did not have need of the recipients' addresses, or that they were intended to reach the same Sogdian community, perhaps that of Loulan.[8] *Letter II*, the only letter explicitly destined for a more distant city, Samarkand, was also the only one to be doubly enclosed, in a linen cover and a silk cloth. The fragmentary linen cover bears the words ". . . to send to Samarkand . . .," a few words which are essential to the history of Sogdian commerce [see plate I, ill. 1]. The names of the people for whom it was intended are written on the back of the letter. We have here a system employing two addresses: one may suppose that the letter was to have been sent to a first person at Loulan, who would then have been responsible for seeing that it reached Samarkand. From this we can deduce

[8] The location of the letters' discovery, on the route between Dunhuang and Loulan, supports an argument in favor of this destination, which is furthermore mentioned in a context which is impossible to clarify in *Letter VI*, line 5. Besides, one of the addressees bears a name which is found in the documents from Niya (on the latter see below, n. 17). Finally, Sogdian documents have been unearthed at Loulan, such as the document LM II ii 09, cited above p. 45 n. 3.

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that the person charged with postal delivery did not travel to Samarkand, but must rather have been limited to a route between Gansu and Loulan, and that from Loulan a caravan could have been found to take it to Samarkand. But reference is made in this same letter to musk sent from Dunhuang to Samarkand: there was thus a separation between the postal circuit and that of merchandise, which was probably slower. By its external appearance, by its address and by its contents, *Letter II* clearly belongs to a different sphere than the other letters, of a much larger scope. These documents belong to two distinct levels of the network, one regional (including Gansu and the kingdom of Loulan), made up of communities which maintained frequent contacts, the other—that of *Letter II*—operating on an international scale, in this case between Samarkand and Gansu.

The Network as a Whole

In *Ancient Letter II*, three hierarchical levels within the merchant society seem to be distinguished: Varzakk son of Nanai-thvār, at Samarkand, Nanai-vandak, the manager of the network in Gansu and China, and finally the local agents, such as Armat-sāch at Jiuquan, Arsāch at Wuwei, or again Ghōtam-sāch, Farn-āghat, Saghrak, Artikhu-vandak and Nasyān. Some of the latter were older than the others and had had time to settle in their cities, like Armat-sāch and Arsāch, while others had been sent more recently.

The exact connection between Varzakk and Nanai-vandak is not precisely established: the text seems to evoke a relationship of subordination, and expressions of great respect abound. Even so, it does not seem necessary to accord too much importance to the latter, which are very largely set expressions. Moreover, Nanai-vandak seems on several occasions to address Varzakk as an equal. That the father of Varzakk should partially inherit from the father of Nanai-vandak, and that the latter should entrust his son to him,[9] seems to argue in favor of the existence of family connections between them. At a lower level of the structure, perhaps the names of the three subordinates ending in -sāch (Armat-sāch, Arsāch and Ghōtam-sāch) should also be interpreted this way. Varzakk seems to personally know these subordinates, with the exception of Artikhu-vandak, as Nanai-vandak speaks of them without otherwise specifying their identities. And

[9] *Ancient Letter II*, line 50.

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Nanai-vandak maintained contacts with Samarkand independently of Varzakk and Nanai-thvār.[10] In addition, he sent musk to the latter.

The text makes several references to periods of time. Nanai-vandak takes care to inform his correspondents of events three years old, and indeed eight years old with regard to his dispatch of Saghrak and Farn-āghat. The absence of news from China for three years, a hiatus linked to political events, is explicitly abnormal, and the events from still older time periods are thus probably included as parts of a summary. In view of the importance of business at Samarkand in the letter of Nanai-vandak, it is impossible that epistolary contacts should have taken place only once every three, five or eight years. These time periods are mentioned in the first part of the letter, which has the character of a report or assessment concerning the success of their commercial enterprise, recapitulating the events which had occurred since the operation began. In the second part of the letter the nature of the content is closer to that found in the other texts, such as *Letter IV* or *Letter V*: here the author is concerned with current business with Samarkand, and the time periods dealt with are shorter.

Did Varzakk thus have interests in the Chinese branch of the network? The fact that Nanai-vandak sent him an assessment covering several years argues rather for quite a large degree of autonomy on the part of the Chinese branch, which depended only on Nanai-vandak, but whose personnel were known to Varzakk. It is curious that the expansion of the Sogdian network, proceeding under the orders of Nanai-vandak, is expressed here in terms of persons and not of totals, losses or profits. The portion of the letter dealing with strictly commercial aspects (lines 23–25) is limited to Gansu and is quite small in comparison to the information dealing with personnel. Perhaps the latter pertains to the family, but even so this is not a letter of a familial nature. Given the facts available, the autonomy of the pyramid structure controlled by Nanai-vandak seems to have been complete. Only one passage allows us to assert that Varzakk was indeed connected to commerce in Gansu and China, at lines 29–31: "And, sirs, if I were to write to you everything about how China has fared, it would be beyond grief: there is no profit for you to gain from it."[11]

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[10] *Ancient Letter II*, lines 41–2.

[11] This passage is still slightly ambiguous, for it could also be understood to mean

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The most plausible interpretation is the following: this letter is a response addressed to Varzakk, a colleague and probably a relative of the sender, Nanai-vandak, in response to a request for information concerning the state of affairs on the Chinese route, in Gansu and beyond.[12] Varzakk had been absent from the area for several years and was contemplating a return there, for which reason he was trying to learn about the current situation. Nanai-vandak independently managed his commercial network in the various Chinese cities.

2. *The Local Settlements*

Ancient Letter V

The *Ancient Letters* provide several instances of relations on a more daily basis. *Ancient Letter V* is an example of the letters[13] which must have been the everyday share of smaller-scale Sogdian merchants, quite different from the contacts over several thousands of kilometers attested by *Ancient Letter II*.

> To the noble lord Aspandhāt, blessing (and) homage. And (it would be) a [good] day [for him] [2]who might see you healthy (and) safe, happy, free from illness (and) content. Fr[om Frī-khwatāw] your [3]servant. And [for me the] day (would be still) better if [I might see] you [my]self [and] [4]might pay homage to you from nearby, [as] (homage is offered) to the gods.
>
> [From] inside (China) [I] [5]have heard worse—not better—(news) day (by) day, and whatever I might write concerning A[khurmaztakk] (?), [6]how he himself went (away) and what he had . . . [7]I have become isolated, and, behold, I stay here in Kc'n [Guzang/Wuwei] and I do not go hither (and) thither, [8]and there is no caravan (?) (departing) from here. In Kc'n [Guzang/Wuwei] (there are) 4 bundles of "white" [lead?] for dispatch, [9]and 2,500 (measures of) (?) pepper for dispatch, and a

"and it would be of no use for you [that I continue to speak about this]." Henning, 1948, p. 607, n. 4, has already pointed out the ambiguity and opts for commercial wealth, and Yutaka Yoshida, consulted on this point, has told me that the word used, *pryγ'w*, has a rather concrete meaning.

[12] This interpretation can be inferred from the following passage: "He has gone to Kwr'ynk . . . and now no one comes from there so that I might write to you about the Sogdians who went 'inside,' how they fared and which countries they reached" (lines 8–10).

[13] The letter is philologically and historically annotated in detail in Grenet, Sims-Williams and de la Vaissière, 2001.

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double *prasthaka* of *n(. . y)t*, [10]and 5 *prasthakas* of *rysk*, and ½ stater of silver. When Ghāwtus [11]went (away) from Kc'n [Guzang/Wuwei] I went after him, and I came to [12]δrw''n [Dunhuang], (but) I was prevented (?) from straying (?) outside (China). (If) . . . Ghāwtus [13]had seen (= found?) a level route, then I would have brought out the "Blacks." [14]Many Sogdians were ready to leave, (but) they could not leave, [15]for Ghāwtus went by (?) the mountains. I (?) would (have) remain(ed) at δrw''n [Dunhuang], but [16]they (= the Sogdian inhabitants?) were destitute. I depend (?) on charity (?) from your *'pr'k*, [17]for I am serving (?) . . . in Kc'n [Guzang/Wuwei], and [they . . .] me, [18]and they make me . . ., and [19]they obtain my . . ., [and] they increase (it) with our . . . And . . . I am very wretched, [20]and . . . the . . .

I [21]heard thus: Kharstrang [owed (?)] you 20 staters of silver, and he [22]declared (?) thus: I (will) bring (?) (it). He gave me the silver, and I weighed it, [23]and (there were only) 4½ staters altogether. I asked: If he [sent] me 20 staters, [24]why do you give me 4½ staters? He said thus: [25]Aspandhāt found me on the way and [26]he gave (it) to me (?). ‹*Addition above the line*: He said thus: (There are) 7½ staters of silver.› And for 4 staters I [27]obtained 4 loads of *'st(k)[.](m)*. And the "Blacks" took the silver, [28]for they said thus: We (?) have no money. [29]For (according to them it is) better (that) I should be wretched than they! (If) you [30]should hear how Akhurmaztakk has done me harm, [31]then you should pay heed (to this) too.

Sent by your servant Frī-khwatāw. [32]This letter was written from Kc'n [Guzang/Wuwei] in the third month on the thirtieth (day).

Address on the reverse:
To the noble lord, the chief merchant Aspandhāt.—[Sent] by your servant [Frī-khwatāw].

Commercial Aspects

The goods which were traded are cited in four of these texts. *Letter II* mentions linen clothing (?), woolen cloth and musk,[14] *Letter IV* gold and wine, *Letter V* pepper, silver metal and goods which are poorly-identified (*rysk*, rice? *'spytc*, white lead?),[15] and *Letter VI* camphor.[16]

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[14] I am unaware of the reasons that led Harmatta, 1979a, p. 163 to read in lines 42–3 "rolls of silk" and "scented products."

[15] *'spytc*, literally "little white," could be the white lead powder that the Sogdians traded in the 6th century, and that is known as "barbarian powder" 胡粉 in the Chinese texts (but see *contra* Laufer, 1919, p. 201).

[16] References to camphor and pepper demonstrate the existence of commercial contacts with regions as distant as Southeast Asia and India (Laufer, 1919, pp. 374–5 and 478–9). Musk came from the Tibetan borders of the Gansu corridor.

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While silk is absent from this group, this is perhaps simply due to the fragmentary nature of these texts. Silk is in any case represented by the cloth which enclosed *Ancient Letter II*: it was thus an integral part of the daily life of these merchants. A contemporary document, found further to the west, at Niya,[17] is explicit on this point:

> At present there are no merchants from China, so that the debt of silk is not to be investigated now [. . .] When the merchants arrive from China, the debt of silk is to be investigated.[18]

Silk played an important economic role as far west as the remote provinces of the kingdom of Loulan, and the sole suppliers were merchants who had come from China.[19]

The merchandise mentioned in the *Ancient Letters* is quite varied, but consists of a significant number of luxury goods, which seems to have been normal with regard to the products mentioned in letters addressed to distant correspondents.[20]

Ancient Letters IV and *V* lend themselves to an analysis of the local balance of east-west exchange in Gansu: from the west came silver and gold, while pepper, silver, wine, rice (?) and white lead powder (?) were ready to be sent to the west. In the direction of Samarkand, only vesicles of musk are mentioned. This inventory matches up well with the data available from other sources, whether contemporary, as at Niya—with exchanges involving wine and pepper—or later Sogdian data such as those found in the *Register of the Customs at Turfan*, which I will analyze in chapter V.

Indications of quantity are rare. Sometimes a unit of measure must be inferred. This is notably the case for the musk of *Ancient Letter II* and the pepper of *Ancient Letter V*. For musk, the natural unit is here

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[17] This very important documentary collection (several hundreds of documents), composed in a prakrit of Northwest India, and written in kharoṣṭhi, dates from the second half of the 3rd century and the beginning of the 4th century (Brough, 1965, p. 599 ff.). Unfortunately, their content is of a fiscal or administrative character in an economy that was primarily agricultural and largely based on barter. Some of these documents have been translated by Burrow, 1940. Occasionally, however, signs of a more commercial economy appear.

[18] Burrow, 1940, p. 9, document 35.

[19] But nothing says they were Chinese, *contra* Atwood, 1991.

[20] With the exception of the linen cloth of *Ancient Letter II*, if this is indeed the meaning of this rather obscure passage. Liu Bo, 1995, pp. 152–3, cites a certain number of Chinese texts from the Han dynasty or later that mention similar products: fabrics made from wool, cotton, silk, perfume products, etc.

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quite obviously the vesicle. One vesicle supplied 25 g of musk on average, and Nanai-vandak would therefore be sending about 0.8 kg of pure musk. If, by way of hypothesis, we suppose that the price did not vary greatly among the Chinese frontier towns, we can calculate the price of this musk in silver. At Turfan in 743, a *fen* of musk, or 0.41 g, had an average value of 110 Chinese coins, or 3.43 silver coins (the ratio of silver to Chinese coins was then 1:32), which would give a price of 8.4 silver coins per gram.[21] Assuming that the price had remained stable, Nanai-vandak would therefore have sent from Dunhuang the equivalent of 6720 silver coins of about 4 g apiece, or 27 kg of silver, a very handsome sum, three-fifths of which formed his son's entire inheritance and was to pay for his education and establishment in society. A comparison with contemporary data shows that the sum was not an aberration:[22] on the western perfume market, musk was worth three to five times its weight in gold, and in 1972 in Nepal, near the areas of its production, musk was worth a little more than its weight in gold. Now, taking 1:20 as the ratio of gold to silver (attested during the first half of the 8th century in Dunhuang and China), 27 kg of silver corresponded to 1.35 kg of gold and 0.8 kg of musk, which is quite within the expected order of magnitude.

The problem is trickier in the case of pepper. The peppercorn cannot be implied as a unit of quantity, for "2500 peppercorns" gives only a ridiculously small quantity. However, when a unit is explicitly stated in these texts, it is generally the stater, inherited from the Greek period in Central Asia, abbreviated as *s*, but sometimes written out fully (*styr* in *Ancient Letter V*).[23] Greek weights were preserved in Central Asia from the 3rd century BCE until the 8th century: in Sogdiana, the merchants who, from the 6th to the 8th century, inscribed the weight of the metal on silver dishes did so in drachms and staters. When the dishes remain whole, a simple weighing shows that the stater and the drachm were still equal to about 16 and 4 g, their weights in the Attic system of measurement.[24] The

[21] See the document in Ikeda, 1979, p. 458, col. 286.
[22] See Holmes, 1999.
[23] *Ancient Letters II*, 42; *V*, 10, 21, 24 etc. The connection between the abbreviation *s* and *styr* is furnished by *Ancient Letter V*. lines 24–26 where mention is made of 4.5 *styr* and then 7.5 *s*.
[24] See Livšic and Lukonin, 1964, p. 176, for these calculations and dishes.

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system was therefore in use in the 4th century, and the *styr* of the *Ancient Letters* measured about 16 g. The stater could thus have been the unit here, which would give about 40 kg of pepper. On the other hand, in the documents from Niya, pepper is weighed in drachms, which would here make 10 kg of pepper.[25] In each case we are dealing with a shipment that is both precious and of an acceptable weight. We also find reference to the Indian *prastha*, but this is too heavy to have been applied in this instance.[26]

The stater is also a monetary unit in the *Ancient Letters*. Such a system is also attested in the documents from Niya, in which we find staters of gold that clearly refer to coins, but in which the drachm and the stater are also used to measure weights.[27] We must draw a distinction between *styr*, used for weight, and *styrch*. No indication of material is given at line 42 of *Ancient Letter II* when the *styrch* is mentioned, and the context clearly indicates a monetary transaction:

> Pēsakk son of Dhruwasp-vandak holds IIIII[II]II–iiii staters (*styrch*) of mine and he put it on deposit, not to be transferred . . .

It has been proposed to identify this stater with the only Sogdian coins of the time that could possibly be called staters, the Bukharan imitations[28] of the tetradrachms of Euthydemos.[29] Writing to Samarkand, however, the author of *Ancient Letter II* was only able to reckon with coins in use at Samarkand, or at least with a pan-

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[25] Document 702, trans. Burrow, 1940, p. 141.

[26] *Ancient Letter V*, lines 9 and 10. In India this measured about 1.5 kg.

[27] Atwood, 1991, p. 190 shows that these staters are units of weight in certain documents (such as document 702, trans. Burrow, 1940, p. 141). But document 12 also shows that staters could be coins, here of gold, that could be found hidden by chance in containers. The Sino-kharoṣṭhī copper coins of Khotan, struck in the 1st or 2nd century CE, weighed an ounce, or 15.6 g, under the Han, according to their legends in Chinese. The smallest coins weighed a quarter that amount. They thus formed a system identical to the stater/drachm system which prevailed in Bactriana, and it may be supposed that not only did they weigh a stater or a drachm, they also bore the name of the respective unit of measurement (Cribb, 1984, pp. 149–150, an analysis accepted by Zeimal, 1991–1992, pp. 145–6).

[28] A conventional appellation, as the place at which they were struck—located in the oasis which was centered on Bukhara from the 5th century CE onward—is unknown.

[29] A solution accepted by Grenet and Sims-Williams, 1987, p. 114. Let us note, however, that no specimen has been found in the Tarim basin, and very few outside of western Sogdiana: see Ernazarova, 1974, pp. 171–2, Zeimal', 1983, p. 253, Bopearachchi, 1991–1992, and Rtveladze, 1984.

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Sogdian currency. But the tetradrachms of Euthydemos are extremely rare outside the oasis of Bukhara. Moreover, the casualness with which Nanai-vandak authorizes his correspondent to take 1000 or 2000 staters in order to cover current expenses (line 57) argues very strongly for a weak value for this unit: if it had been a matter of Bukharan tetradrachms, then weighing 12 g,[30] it would be necessary to accept that Nanai-vandak gave him the choice, without wavering, between 12 and 24 kg of silver, and that simply to cover a need for liquid assets.

Up to the 5th century, Samarkand minted coins known as "archer coins," of very weak unitary value (0.6 g of silver in the 4th century).[31] They dominated monetary circulation at Samarkand. It would be quite logical to see in them the *styrch* mentioned by Nanai-vandak, which would allow us to divide by 20 the quantities of silver mentioned, and reduce the largesse of Nanai-vandak from 12 kg to 0.6 kg of silver. Incidentally, the appellation *styrch*, which is not further attested in this form, does not necessarily encompass the same reality as *styr*, and could be understood as a diminutive. The *styrch* could be to the *styr* as small coins "piécettes" are to coins "pièces" in French. In the later Uighur texts, *stir* clearly has the general meaning of "coin," and is a borrowing from Sogdian.

In addition, *Ancient Letter IV* mentions the *rwδk*, the copper (lines 3 and 8), a name which very probably designates the Chinese copper coin, as a local coin is involved there.

The Sogdian Communities

The letters show the importance of family connections within the merchant communities. Indeed, out of these six letters, perhaps three were sent by members of the same extended family. *Letters I* and *III* were sent by Miunai to her mother and to her husband, and mention a person named Farnxunt among the members of the "family council," while a Farnxunt also sent *Letter VI*. If this is the same person—Farnxunt is a very common name—we can better consider the distribution of roles among members of the family, and especially the

[30] Bopearachchi, 1991–2, p. 8.

[31] They weighed between 1 and 1.5 g during the first period, and did not weigh more than 0.2 g during periods 3 and 4, after the 4th century CE (Zeimal', 1983, p. 251).

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economic status of women. In this regard it is notable that *Letter III* may not be without commercial elements.[32] For all that, Miunai seems to be under a double guardianship, that of her husband and that of the family council, and she does not appear to have personal resources at her disposal. But she could possibly travel alone. On the other hand, *Letter VI* of Farnxunt, who was clearly the head of the family at Dunhuang, seems to be of a commercial nature, even though it is poorly preserved: economic power was in the hands of the men. It is very interesting to note that *Letter III*, sent by Miunai and her daughter, was apparently written by two different hands, which could argue in favor of female literacy. It could also have been written by two successive scribes. Also, Nanai-thvār at Samarkand appears to have played the same role as guardian of the son of Nanai-vandak that Farnxunt played in relation to Miunai. The basic unit of commercial society therefore seems to have been the extended family, in which the directing role was vested in a head of the clan and a family council. Ties of patronage were woven among its members, which strengthened economic connections, but which did not exclude the conduct of business for the benefit of closer family: Miunai speaks of her husband's business. Finally, the subgroup possibly formed by *Letters I*, *III* and *VI* also proves the existence of marriages between different Sogdian expatriate communities.

The reference to a priest[33] in *Letter I*, line 10, leads one to think that the Sogdian community at Dunhuang was sufficiently important to have a place of worship with a priest in charge of it. It is difficult to clarify the identity of the "authorities" (*'yps'r*) mentioned in *Letter III* (lines 8 and 12): this term, like that of "tax collector" (*β'zkr'm*) cited in the first letter, line 4, could refer to the internal organization of the Sogdian community.[34] The numbers of people mentioned in *Ancient Letter II* (lines 19–20)—one hundred free men from Samarkand in an unknown town of China, and forty men in another town—in any case reflect numerous communities.[35] These

[32] Mention of clothes, line 18, mention in the postscript of a quantity, line 32. In document LM II ii 09 women are not excluded from economic activity (mention is made of selling, of comings and goings in China).

[33] See Sims-Williams, 1996c, pp. 48–9, text in Sims-Williams, 2005.

[34] This is the interpretation of Sims-Williams, 1996c.

[35] Henning, 1948, p. 606, n. 9, estimates that it is necessary to multiply these figures by ten to arrive at the real number of Sogdians in these towns, but perhaps he is optimistic, all the more so as Nanai-vandak is not here describing the

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communities were without doubt predominantly made up of merchants and caravaneers, as attested in the *Ancient Letters*, but it is possible that they also included groups of farmers in search of virgin lands: in *Ancient Letter V*, the Blacks, poor wretches trying as best they could to return to the west, might have been farmers, at least if their nickname referred to the color code prevalent throughout Central Asia which characterized peasants by dark colors.[36]

Relationships with the Chinese authorities were difficult. If the idea that the *Ancient Letters* could have been a collection of letters confiscated by the Chinese military administration of the Jade Gate is only a hypothesis, on the other hand *Ancient Letter III* shows that the worst of fates for a Sogdian woman abandoned at Dunhuang was to have to learn Chinese manners and enter into service with the Chinese. One member of the community, Farnxunt, seems to have been obliged to hide himself from the Chinese police for a matter of debts, which may have been commercial.[37] Rivalries could have existed between Chinese and Sogdian merchants.[38] The names of the Chinese companies of the frontier zone and the kingdom of Loulan ("who devour the *hu*," "who crush the *hu*," "who suppress the *hu*," "who oppress the *hu*")[39] seem, it is true, to clearly state the terms of the problem, since *hu* 胡 is the Chinese word designating the populations of the Northwest. The Sogdians were obviously isolated from the Chinese government: the news reported by Nanaivandak was communicated through Sogdian channels, and lacks the freshness and precision that regular contact with Chinese officials could have brought.

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community of Dunhuang, contrary to Henning's belief: it could have been a matter of single merchants in inner China, far from their families, on the model of the traders cited in the remainder of the letter. Frī-khwatāw, in *Letter V*, line 7, says that he is isolated at Kačan. While the figures cited demonstrate a significant Sogdian presence, we should be cautious about trying to read them too precisely.

[36] Grenet, Sims-Williams and de la Vaissière, 2001, p. 100.

[37] The passages are translated in Henning 1948, p. 612 no. 5, p. 607 no. 2 and p. 615 no. 2: line 20 reads "I should learn how to be polite with the Chinese"; line 33: "Farnxunt has absconded: the Chinese have sought him but did not find him"; line 35: "through the guilt of Farnxunt (or "through his debts") we have become the servants of the Chinamen, I as well as my mother."

[38] A very fragmentary Chinese document from Loulan clearly seems to be commercial: see the translation in Chavannes, 1913 p. 188 (no. LA VI ii 0229): ". . . traded at Dunhuang. 20,000 coins."

[39] Chavannes, 1913, p. X: respectively Tun hu 吞胡, Po hu 破胡, Yan hu 厭胡, Ling hu 淩胡.

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Geography of the Settlements

Sogdian presence in the kingdom of Loulan, and more generally along the southern route, is proven not only by the toponymy of the *Ancient Letters* and the place of their discovery, but also by fragments of Sogdian documents recovered at Loulan.[40] Sogdians are also mentioned in documents composed in other languages: thus the Nanivadhag'a mentioned in a document from Endere (Kh 661) dating from the second half of the 3rd or the beginning of the 4th century—a kharoṣṭhī transcription which probably conceals a Sogdian Nanaivandak.[41] This document is extremely interesting, as it is dated according to the regnal years of a king of Khotan. Now, not only was the Sogdian Nanai-vandak one of the witnesses, but the buyer himself is described as *sulig'a*[42] and bears a name which seems to be Sogdian, Vag'iti-vandak,[43] while the seller has an Iranian name, Khvarnarse.[44] This contract for the sale of a camel was most likely composed at Khotan and then transported to Endere, perhaps by the Sogdian buyer. In any case, it testifies to the presence of a Sogdian community at Khotan, of which we possess at least two names.

The data available to us concerning Sogdian settlements at the time of the *Ancient Letters* is incorporated into a map on the following page.

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[40] See Stein, 1921, vol. I, p. 383, for a small Sogdian fragment from Loulan, reproduced in vol. IV, pl. CLIII. Stein, 1928, II, p. 1031, cites a second one, reproduced in vol. III, pl. CXXIV (in which one can read only "(')D ßγw xwt'w ßγ'(')[ny BRY . . .]," the normal introductory formula for Sogdian letters: on this point, see Sims-Williams, 1991, and for the location of the site of discovery 50 km south-southwest of Loulan, see map 29 in vol. IV, Stein, 1928). See also LM II ii 09, and Stein, 1921, vol. III, p. 652, vol. IV, pl. CLVII for a symbol (in the etymological sense) inscribed in Sogdian.

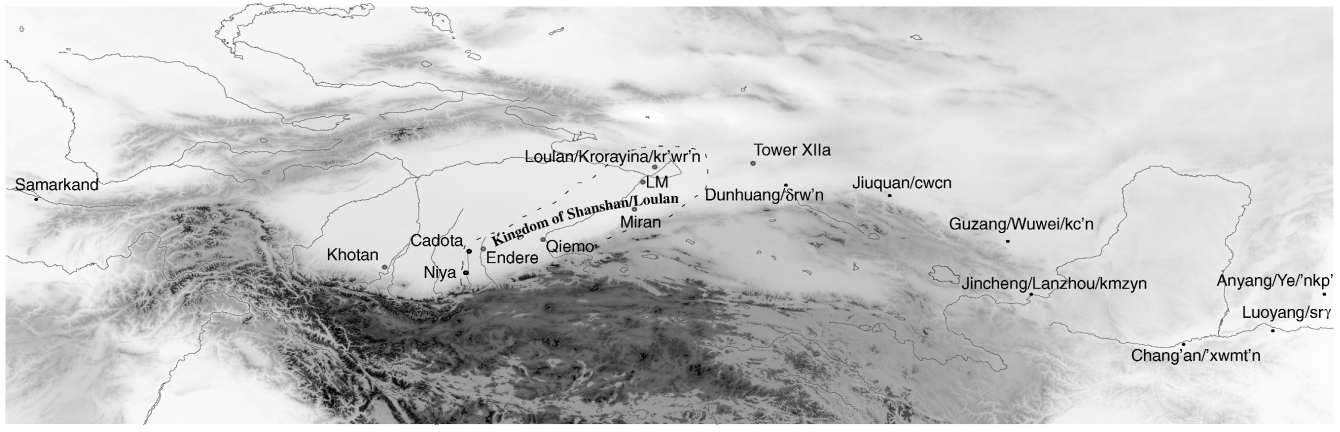
[41] Brough, 1965, p. 594.

[42] Bailey, 1982, p. 23 gives the classical Khotanese form *sūlī*, but refers to the Pahlavi form *sūlīk*. See Noble, 1931, for an analysis of this text: the translation, p. 453, of *sulig'a* from Tibetan *S'u-lig* "inhabitant of Kashgar" should be corrected. For a recent clarification, see Emmerick and Skjærvø, 1987, pp. 148–9. See also Burrow, 1940, p. 137. The end of the document is translated in Noble, 1931: "in the presence of SPA S'A NA. The witnesses were Nani Vhadhag'a, S'as'ivaka, Spaniyaka."

[43] *βγyšt(y)βntk*, see Grenet, Sims-Williams, de la Vaissière, 2001, n. 3.

[44] See Burrow, 1934, pp. 514–5. The third witness also had an Iranian name, Spaniyaka.

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Indicated places are:
1) mentioned in the *Ancient Letters* (black dots, with the Sogdian name);
2) places of discovery of Sogdian documents or mentioning Sogdians (grey dots).
Loulan is both. the *Ancient Letters* were found in Tower XIIa, many documents were discovered at the site LM, 50 km south south-west of Loulan, among which LM II ii 09. A document from Endere mentions a Sogdian. This same text, dated according to the regnal year of a Khotanese king, proves that Khotan should be added to the list. Frontiers of the Shanshan kingdom in the third century AD have been drawn in black (according to Brough, 1965). Niya and Cadota are here only for information.

Map 3. Sogdian commercial presence (*Ancient Letters* period)

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3. *The Sogdian Network on the Borders of China*

The *Ancient Letters* suddenly reveal the existence of the Sogdian network in Gansu and the interior of China. Yet for all that, can a history of the Sogdian network in China be contemplated? The responses to that question can be drawn only from fragmentary data, such as religious texts concerning the role of Sogdian monks in the spread of Buddhism in China, a few epitaphs, references in the dynastic histories to names with a western sound, and lastly archaeological information, primarily monetary, about contacts between Central Asia and the Chinese world. While the first chapter showed the first tenuous signs of a passage from diplomacy to commerce, these sources should allow us to recount the following stage in the extension of Central Asian commercial networks toward Chinese territory.

A Chronological Reference Point

In the *Ancient Letters* we are not simply dealing with convoys of foreign merchants that travelled across Chinese territory between the frontier and the capital without settling, but indeed with a network of settled resident communities, with women, children and a community structure, in numerous towns. The reference cited earlier to the commercial goal of the embassies from Kangju is not sufficient to account for these settlements, all the more so since a very early witness mentions them, about a century before the *Ancient Letters*: in 227, during the troubled period which followed the fall of the Han dynasty, the heads of the Yuezhi and Sogdian communities of Liangzhou, in the middle of Gansu, vied with each other to be the first to welcome a conquering army from interior China.

> The various kings of Liangzhou 涼州 sent more than twenty men, among them Zhi Fu 支富 and Kang Zhi 康植, the *hu* lords of the Yuezhi 月支 and of the Kangju 康居, in order to receive the military commander. When the grand army advanced to the north, they fought to be the first to receive us.[45]

At the time, these *hu* from Kangju can only have been Sogdians. Their community was therefore of sufficient importance for its chief

[45] Text cited in Rong, 2000, p. 134. This is from a passage in a commentary to the *Sanguo zhi* by Pei Songzhi in 429. Chinese text in the *Sanguo zhi*, 4, p. 895.

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to be responsible for negotiations with the invader. The text does not specify that this was a merchant community, but it is hard to imagine any other hypothesis. Moreover, the term *Yuezhi* might not here designate the local "Small Yuezhi," distant cousins of those "Great Yuezhi" who had long since left Gansu to invade Bactriana. We could thus be dealing with merchant communities of the Kushan Empire (heir of the Great Yuezhi in Central Asia and Northern India), which, according to all the texts, were established everywhere along the routes to China.[46] The principal information provided in this passage is of a chronological nature. While Sogdian commerce during the 1st century CE does not seem to have been very developed, at least if one believes the data of Ptolemy, at the beginning of the 3rd century it had grown to the point that the Sogdian merchants played an important political role at a distance of more than 3,000 kilometers from Sogdiana.

Constitution of the Network in the Neighborhood of China

After the passage from the *Han shu* about the merchants from Kangju, the Chinese dynastic histories hardly provide much food for thought for the period before the *Sogdian Ancient Letters*. The *Sanguo zhi* states that the annual embassies from Kangju were relatively well maintained under the Wei (220–265).[47] The *Jin shu* also mentions an embassy from the king of Kangju during the period 265–274.[48] The emperor Wu (265–290) maintained relatively regular contacts with Central Asia, and he even awarded the title of king to the ruler of Ferghana in 285.[49]

The other documents basically come from the biographies of important people in the Chinese administration. All of the dynastic histories include a chapter of biographies. Some of these upper-level functionaries were of western origin, and examination of their genealogies can make it possible to determine chronologies, geographical reference points, and indeed strategies of social advancement that sometimes go back to the period of the *Ancient Letters*, or at least claim to do so. These potential sources, as well as the numerous

[46] *Contra* Rong, 2000, p. 134.
[47] *Sanguo zhi*, chap. 30, p. 840, trans. Zürcher, 1968, p. 371.
[48] Enoki, 1955, pp. 51–2.
[49] Zürcher, 1972, vol. 1, p. 58.

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funerary stelae which provide biographical elements, have never been studied with this purpose, and I will simply give a few examples here.[50]

The biography of An Tong, political counsellor to the first sovereign of the Northern Wei (Tuoba Gui, 370–409), as given in the *Wei shu*, states:

> An Tong 安同 was an Iranian 胡 from Liaodong. His ancestor was Shigao, who at the time of the Han entered Luo[yang] as an "attending son" (*shizi* 恃子) of the king of Anxi [at the court of the Chinese emperor]. Throughout the Wei (220–265) and into the Jin (265–317, 317–420) [the descendants of An Shigao] sought refuge from disorder in Liaodong, and they eventually settled there.[51]

Liaodong is located at the Korean frontier. In the same text we later learn that An Tong was a merchant before becoming the political counsellor of the Tuoba Gui emperor,[52] and that his father was the friend of a merchant, it not being known if he was one himself.

Another example: in the *Xin Tang shu*, regarding a Tang Minister of War, Li Baoyu (767–777), we read:

> The Li family from Wuwei was originaly the An family. [. . .] At the end of Later Han, [the king of Anxi guo 安息國] sent his son Shigao 世高 who entered the court and, consequently, lived in Luoyang. During the Jin (265–317) and the Wei (220–265), the family stayed at Anding (Gansu). Later they moved to left of "Liao" (Liaozuo, that is, Liaodong) in order to escape disorder. Again they moved to Wuwei. During the Later Wei (386–556), there was [An] Nantuo [安]難陀. His grandson [An] Poluo [安]婆羅 during the Zhou (557–581) and the Sui (581–618) lived at Wuwei in Liangzhou acting as *sabao*. He fathered . . .[53]

And Kang Xun 康絢 (464–520), honored with a biography in the *Liang shu*, claimed descent from a royal hostage from Kangju during the Han, who was restored to civil status and who settled in Gansu.

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[50] To my knowledge, Antonino Forte is the only one to have taken up, in a Western language, the problem of elites of western origin in the way in which it really should be treated, which he briefly does in an article and in the conclusion to a work which is very rich, although oriented toward other goals (Forte, 1995 and 1996).

[51] *Wei shu*, chap. 30, p. 712, trans. A. Forte, 1995, pp. 14–5.

[52] Forte, 1995, p. 16, from the same passage in the *Wei shu*.

[53] *Xin Tang shu*, chap. 75 B, pp. 3445–3446. Trans. Forte, 1995, pp. 26–7.

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His family too must have subsequently migrated between Gansu, Lantian 藍田 (to the east of Chang'an), then southward to Hubei.[54]

These biographies and genealogies are not to be taken literally.[55] They were embellished for the purposes at hand. In the genealogies presented by the members of these great Sino-occidental families, no name in fact goes back beyond the Gansu of the 4th or 5th century. The royal ancestors, hostages under the Han, seem to be mythical and mentioned above all for purposes of prestige, in order to establish ties with a glorious epoch. But it nevertheless remains that these families preserved the memory of the period of turmoil and dispersal in the 3rd and 4th centuries. Even if the genealogies are false, difficulties like those described so clearly in the *Ancient Letters* were still remembered in families of foreign origin in these later periods. These vague memories were preserved in community memory more than in that of the family—these communities transmitted information about their beginnings in China under the Later Han to new immigrants who had arrived from the end of the 4th century onward. If the details are false or embellished, the historical evolution at the root of these accounts cannot be contested.

The parallels between the cases of the An and Kang families emphasize the multiplicity of the western settlements in China. The An families at that time had come from Parthia; only the Kang families were Sogdian.[56] The unique feature of the Sogdian network was that it survived over the long term: in no way was it an exclusive intermediary, nor even a privileged one, during the first centuries of commerce between China and the West. *Ancient Letter II* mentions an Indian community at Luoyang in addition to that of the Sogdians.[57] If we except the *Sogdian Ancient Letters*, nothing enables us to differentiate the position of the Sogdians from that of the other peoples of sedentary

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[54] *Liang shu*, chap. 18, p. 290; see also the *Wei shu*, chap. 59, p. 1316, chap. 64, p. 1425 and chap. 3, p. 1635. Cited by Eberhard, 1956, p. 150. My sincere thanks to Éric Trombert for his kindness in translating the genealogical passage from the *Liang shu*.

[55] This is the main criticism that can be levelled against the study by Antonino Forte (1995): he puts too much trust in these texts, without taking account of the well-established practice of embellishment.

[56] See the discussion below concerning Kang Seng hui, p. 72 and p. 73 n. 9.

[57] Line 37. It is possible that a third people is mentioned in this mutilated passage, since an "and" (*'PZY*) precedes the reference to the Indians (*'yntkwt*) and (*'PZY*) Sogdians (*swγdykt*): "the people X and the Indians and the Sogdians . . ."

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Central Asia in the 4th and preceding centuries. The preservation of the *Ancient Letters*—which occurred quite by chance—should not lead us to minimize the role played by these other peoples. When the *Hou Han shu* writes

> The *hu* who engaged in commerce and the foreigners who conducted business struck every day at the foot of the Gate[58]

nothing allows us to consider these *hu* to have been Sogdians alone—that would require "*hu* of Kangju"—but nothing allows us to exclude the Sogdians either.

In these texts we see foreign communities in the process of establishing themselves in China, and more particularly in Gansu, the very place in which *Ancient Letter II* speaks of Sogdian communities. Thanks to these genealogies, a connection is made between the embassies echoed by the dynastic histories and the communities of the *Ancient Letters*. After the first missions, the "ambassadors" settled in China, especially in Gansu and in the capitals, and founded communities sustained by immigration from the West. While the Chinese sources do not otherwise comment on this process of settlement, the caustic remarks made by Du Qin in 25 BCE enable us to give an account of it. These princes were in fact merchants who quite understandably wished to remain near their suppliers, which would be more surprising for actual princes anxious to return to their own countries. There was no break in the history of the Indian and Iranian communities in China between the period of the embassies and that of the merchant communities, but indeed a progressive movement from the one to the other.

The Economic Context

By mingling with embassies or by creating them, the merchants were able to cross the mountain passes and establish themselves on Chinese territory. This surely had the goal of freeing their commerce from its dependence on the good diplomatic will of the Chinese. In fact, one can reasonably suspect that the Chinese gifts had created a very demanding market in the 1st century BCE, notably for silk goods, and that the Central Asian merchants accordingly went to seek them

[58] Trans. Chavannes, 1907, pp. 216–7. *Hou Han shu*, chap. 88, p. 2931.

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at their source, in order to avoid extreme fluctuations in price. In this regard, a passage from the *Shiji* is very instructive:

> By this time, however, so many envoys had journeyed to Daxia by the northern route out of Jiuquan that the foreign states in the area had become surfeited with Han goods and no longer regarded them with any esteem.[59]

There is other data that can contribute to our understanding of the settlement process. After the end of a difficult 2nd century, in the 3rd century Gansu and the region of Dunhuang unquestionably benefitted from an agricultural and mercantile expansion, based on the conversion of agricultural surpluses due to improvements in irrigation, which strengthened their capacity as areas of transit between the West and China. Several passages from the economic chapter of the *Jin shu* describe this process. Thus, in connection with a governor of Liangzhou 涼州 (Wuwei in Gansu) around 230, we read that:

> During the reign of the emperor Ming of the Wei, Xu Miao 徐 邈 was governor of Liangzhou. In that region there was little rain and it often suffered from a want of grain. [Xu] Miao suggested restoring the salt marshes at Wuwei and Jiuquan so that grain could be bought from the barbarians. He also had numerous fields irrigated and engaged the poor to work there as farmers. Each household was in abundance. The granaries filled up and overflowed. He organized the use of the military surpluses of the province to buy gold, brocade, dogs and horses, and to generally supply that which was consumed in China. It is thanks to Xu Miao that the people of the West came to bring tribute and that silver and merchandise circulated.[60]

In the *Sanguo zhi*, in connection with the "various *hu* of the Western Regions," we also find that:

> [If the merchants] wished to go to Luoyang, the government gave them passports to cross the frontier posts; if they wished to return to their own countries, the government bought all their goods with official goods and at market price, and made sure that they were well looked after en route.[61]

The role of silk as a medium of payment in China as well as in the Chinese colonies and garrisons in Gansu and the Tarim basin enable

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[59] *Shiji*, chap. 123, p. 3171, trans. Watson, p. 241.
[60] Trans. Yang, 1945–47, p. 154. *Jin shu*, chap. 26, p. 784. See also Zürcher, 1972, vol. 1, p. 59.
[61] Text translated in Rong, 2000, p. 128. *Sanguo zhi*, chap. 16, p. 512.

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us to understand the advantage that existed for the Sogdians and others in establishing themselves on the spot. As long as the the Han controlled the Tarim basin, the armies and functionaries received their salaries in silk, which was a much lighter medium to send from central China than coins or cereals. The merchants therefore found substantial quantities of it and were able to buy it at a low price in exchange for western products. The "Silk Road" was probably not commercial over the first part of its extent: it existed there only thanks to the very specific monetary system which prevailed in China, which made a certain number of derivative commercial activities possible.[62]

When the Chinese presence ebbed to the east, after the middle of the 2nd century, the merchants had to settle extensively in Gansu and central China in order to continue to obtain silk. At that time the costs were much higher.

4. *The Communities in China*

Ancient Letter II highlights the impact of dramatic events on the Sogdian network, such as the disappearance of the Sogdian community at Luoyang due to famine. While it has been possible to retrace a (very) relatively coherent history of the establishment of the Sogdians in China, the text of *Ancient Letter II* equally invites us to look into the evolution of the Sogdian communities of China in the course of the 4th century.

The Situation in China: Problems of Chronology

The embassies recorded in the dynastic annals—taking into account their ambiguous status between merchant caravans and diplomatic missions—provide good means for determining whether contacts persisted between Central Asia and China, particularly in the period of troubles. For this purpose we must consult the various dynastic histories that concern the period under consideration, which was, in

[62] Yü, 1967, p. 195 thus gives the example of Chinese nobles placing orders to the west.

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the 4th century, one in which the territory of China was greatly divided politically. In consequence, the histories are as numerous as the dynasties.[63] During the 4th century the embassies were limited to two brief periods: in 331, the king of Gansu allowed an embassy to pass through from Ferghana, bearing cotton and coral among other things to the court of Shi Le, of the Later Zhao (329–352).[64] Then, between 376 and 383, several embassies occurred between the West (Ferghana, Kangju, etc.) and the court of the Qin, which, under Fu Jian, dominated the North.[65] Another interruption of some fifty years then took place before more numerous contacts resumed in 435. Embassies from Sogdiana (Sute 粟特) were notably present at the court of the Northern Wei in 435, 437, 439, 441, 457, 467, 474 and 479, and those from Samarkand alone in 468 (twice), 473, 476, 479, 480, 487, 491, 502, 507 and 509. These embassies even reached the courts of southern China: an embassy from Sogdiana (transcribed Sute 肅特) is mentioned at the court of the Song in the year 441.[66]

In themselves these data are not sufficient: by their very nature the state annals presupposed the existence of a minimum of political stability, and hardly lent themselves to the recording of information about periods as troubled as the 4th century in China. While we can directly deduce information from them about the opening up of the routes, the reverse is not true: the merchants could have tried to avoid paying tribute on account of the troubles.

It is necessary to combine the diplomatic accounts with other sources. To that end, the Buddhist texts are invaluable. An examination of the table of translators of the Buddhist canon shows that no pilgrim arrived in or departed from China between the years 310 and 380. We count 10 western pilgrims during the Later Han (ruling from 25 to 220), of whom 4 were Indians; 15 between 220 and 316

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[63] See Frankel, 1957. This very handy work gives a list of all the translations of passages from the dynastic histories into western languages.

[64] See Thierry, 1993, p. 108, citing the *Jin shu*, chap. 105, p. 2747, and Trombert, 1996, p. 212, citing the *Taiping yulan* 太平御覽 (*juan* 20, p. 3653), an encyclopedia of the 10th century.

[65] See Thierry, 1993, p. 108, following the *Jin shu*, chap. 113, p. 2900 and 2904.

[66] See Thierry, 1993, p. 122 and 130, who gives a list of all these embassies. Eberhard, 1948, does the same for the Wei alone, providing the references in the *Wei shu*.

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(among them 4 Indians) and 3 Chinese pilgrims in the opposite direction; 27 between 380 and 420 (17 Indians) and 51 Chinese pilgrims; and 32 between 420 and 589 (of whom 22 were Indians).[67] The spread of Buddhism in China at the end of the 4th century and over the course of the 5th century is striking, and many monks made the journey by the land route beginning in the 380s: this leads us to greatly relativize the hypothesis of a second period of interruption between 383 and 435.

The 4th century was unquestionably a troubled period for the communities and families mentioned above, in which they were tossed from one end of North China to the other. Thus, the biography of An Tong notes that his family had to flee the disturbances. The memory was preserved of these troubled times and the tribulations that the westerners had to endure, forced to roam between Gansu and Liaodong. Taken together with the text of *Ancient Letter II* and the absence of western embassies, these examples suggest a phase of partial fragmentation of the western networks in China in the middle of the 4th century, over one or two generations. Nevertheless, the renewal of the Buddhist influx by way of Gansu, as well as the trajectories of the families I have mentioned, lead us to note on the one hand that this fragmentation can hardly have extended beyond the last third of the 4th century, and on the other hand that the situation in Gansu was different from that within the interior of China.

The Tarim Basin and Gansu in the 4th Century

In the Tarim basin, a fragment proves the continuity of the Sogdian presence at Loulan twenty years after the *Ancient Letters*. This document mentions a delivery of grain in 330 to a *Sute hu* 粟特胡, a barbarian from Sogdiana.[68] Moreover, another Sogdian fragment, perhaps dating from the same period, has been found, probably at

[67] Liu Xinru, 1988, p. 147.

[68] Document LA I iii 1. Chavannes, 1913, p. 182 and pl. XXVII, not read as Sute. The reading has since been corrected: see Rong, 1993, p. 12 and n. 28, and Yoshida, 1996. Éric Trombert has been kind enough to check this for me. This document is also the latest Chinese document recovered at Loulan: it dates to the eighteenth year of the *jianxing* 建興 era, which in fact ended in 316 in central China, but was locally continued by the Liang.

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Loulan.[69] It must also be noted that the interruption of contacts with the West in the middle of the 4th century only concerns China proper. The towns of the Tarim basin were spared from the invasions which struck North China and western Central Asia, and preserved very strong connections with India: thus the young Kumārajīva, who would become one of the great transmitters of Buddhism in China, travelled with his mother between Kucha and Gandhāra in the middle of the 4th century.

The *Sogdian Ancient Letters* testify to the density of the network in Gansu at the beginning of the 4th century. We have no reason to suppose any decline afterwards, indeed quite the contrary. At the very time that the *Sogdian Ancient Letters* were composed, an embassy from the Roman East arrived at the court of the Earlier Liang (313–376) which had assumed its independence in Gansu.[70] More generally, after the region's development in the 3rd century mentioned earlier, Gansu and the eastern Tarim basin appear throughout the 4th century as an oasis of prosperity and relative peace, kept apart by the Liang from the troubles that were tearing China apart.[71] Buddhism expanded there. An essential text shows, at the very end of the period under consideration, that the Sogdian merchants continued to travel there in large numbers:

> The country of Sute is situated to the west of Congling (Pamir). [. . .] Merchants of that country used to come in great number to the district Liang(-chou, the present Wu-wei) to trade. When Guzang (i.e. Wuwei) was conquered (by the Wei in 439) all of them were captured. In the beginning of the reign of Gaozong (452–465) the king (of Sute) sent embassies to ask for their ransom, which was granted by the order of the emperor (Gaozong). Since then no embassy came (to the court of Wei) to pay tribute.[72]

Present in large number in Gansu in 313, as they were in 439, the Sogdian merchants had not ceased to be there in the meantime, and the text stresses the continuity of their presence. It also provides an additional piece of information: not only did the Sogdian merchants

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[69] Yoshida, 1996.

[70] See Thierry, 1993, p. 122, which does not provide the reference. On the Byzantine coins found in China, see Thierry and Morisson, 1994.

[71] See Franke, 1936, II, p. 60 ff.

[72] *Wei shu*, chap. 102, p. 2270, trans. Enoki, 1955, p. 44. According to the *Wei shu*, chap. 5, p. 116, the embassy occurred in 457.

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still frequent the large towns of Gansu a century after the *Ancient Letters*, but they continued to be in contact with their home country. In other words, the network had indeed survived the crisis of the 4th century *as a network*. Contact with Samarkand had not been broken, or, if it had been, it was renewed.

One would of course like to have more information about the Sogdian communities of Gansu in the 4th century. The sources are unfortunately silent and even archaeology provides no information. No western coins have been found in the area from the periods prior to the Tang,[73] while several hoards at Turfan contain Sassanid coins of the 4th century.[74]

From the outset, the Sogdian communities were part of a movement of foreign settlement in the Tarim basin, in Gansu and in China, probably originating from the Indo-Iranian fringes (Gandhāra, Bactriana . . .). During the great period of the Han, the Sogdian merchants, like their neighbors further to the south, sent numerous embassies to China. When the Chinese administrative and military presence retreated to the east, they created an unbroken network of settlements in towns at every stage of the route between Central Asia and China in order to compensate and continue to supply their markets. In this regard, the crisis of the 4th century functioned as a filter which allowed only the communities in Gansu to continue and scattered the foreigners in China itself. When contacts were renewed at the end of the 4th century, the Sogdians seem to have become the principal merchants, as evidenced by the *Wei shu* and all the later texts. We can therefore discern two stages in the constitution of the Sogdian network, and *Ancient Letter II* certainly describes an important event in its history. The interesting continuity in the historical memory of the Sogdian communities, which, even if in very vague and mythical terms, extended back before the crisis, shows nevertheless that we are here dealing with a phenomenon more in the nature of a withdrawal than a rupture. China continued to be the major market that it had been before the invasions.

[73] See Thierry, 1993, pp. 98–9.
[74] See Thierry, 1993, p. 104.

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CHAPTER THREE

TRADE WITH INDIA

The *Ancient Letters* provide information not only about the extension of Sogdian commercial lines toward China, but also on another branch of Sogdian commerce. As I have shown in the first chapter, the development of the Sogdian network in China occurred within a broader context of commerce involving the countries to the south of Sogdiana. The Sogdians seem to have been the northernmost of the peoples who settled in China for commercial reasons around the beginning of our era. Until now I have left aside the question of how the Sogdian network joined with commercial routes that were generally situated further south and primarily benefitted the inhabitants of Gandhāra or Bactriana. This question in fact poses the problem of Sogdian participation in the trade with India. In analyzing this issue I will take account of data from the *Ancient Letters* of which I have not yet made use.

1. *Sogdian Merchants, Kushan Merchants*

Kang Seng hui

Once again, it is a Chinese text which best enables us to approach the problem. The *Gao seng zhuan* 高 僧 傳, or *Lives of Eminent Monks*, in fourteen chapters written about 530 by Huijiao 慧 皎 (497–554), presents five hundred biographies of monks active between the middle of the 1st century CE and 519. It is a reliable work, even though it is not always exempt from hagiographical embellishments.[1] Of these biographies, that of Kang Seng hui 康 僧 會 is particularly important:

> The ancestors of the Sogdian Seng hui were people originally from Kangju (Sogdiana) who had lived in Tianzhu 天竺 (India) for several

[1] Zürcher, 1972, p. 10, and Demiéville (dir.), 1978, p. 266.

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> generations. His father went to Jiaozhi 交趾 (Tonkin) in order to trade there. When [Seng hui] was about ten years old, both his father and his mother died. After having grieved with great filial piety, he left the world.[2]

Kang Seng hui was a Sogdian, recognizable from his family name, which was an abbreviation of Kangju. Many other examples are known of this manner of naming foreigners in China. When, in the middle of the 3rd century, this same Kang Seng hui spoke of his predecessor An Shigao 安世高, he wrote: "There was a bodhisattva [named] An Qing whose *zi* was Shigao. He was the son of a king of Anxi . . ."[3] The rarity of these characters (An and Kang in particular) in Chinese onomastics of the time allows us to suppose that monks so named were of western origin, a hypothesis which is strengthened by Chinese works dealing specifically with family names.[4] Moreover, a functionary from Nanking described Kang Seng hui as a man who had come from the land of the *hu* (*hu ren* 胡人, that is, from the lands of the Northwest).[5]

Born at the beginning of the 3rd century, and profoundly sinicized, Kang Seng hui was familiar with the Six Classics. He arrived in the southern capital in 247 and there played an important role as a translator.[6] His biography mentions the presence of Sogdian merchant families in India during the 2nd century CE, at the same time that other Sogdian families were settling in China. Kang Seng hui, a young orphan, nonetheless knew himself to be of Sogdian origin, which argues for the existence of a structured Sogdian emigration in India that maintained its identity. There is hardly anything more that we can discover about the Sogdians in that region from the Chinese sources, but they do cast rather more light on the presence of western foreigners, and not only Sogdians, in mainland and insular Southeast Asia:[7] other *hu*, for example, are found with the relatives

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[2] Trans. Chavannes, 1909, pp. 199–200.
[3] Trans. Forte, 1995, p. 68.
[4] See Forte, 1995, pp. 18–9, and also Pelliot, 1903b.
[5] Chavannes, 1909, p. 203.
[6] Zürcher, 1972, pp. 51–5.
[7] Part of the data has been collected in Grenet, 1996a. For the history of the region, and particularly economic history, see Hall, 1992. See Pelliot, 1903b on the kingdom of Funan 扶南, in the Southeast Asian peninsula.

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of Kang Seng hui in Tonkin.[8] In 245–250 the Chinese envoy Kang Tai 康泰[9] mentions with reference to Sumatra:

> The Yuezhi merchants are continually importing them [horses] to the Jiaying 加營 country by sea (or ship). The king buys them all. If one is dead during the voyage, it is enough for the groom to present its head and hide, and the king buys it half-price.[10]

Embassies between India and Southeast Asia were frequent, and some of them brought Yuezhi horses.[11] An engraving decorating a bell, found on the island of Sangeang off Sumbawa (in the Lesser Sunda Islands) and dating from the 2nd or 3rd century, depicts two people dressed like Yuezhi warriors of Central Asia with a horse. The trade in horses in the Indian world, including mainland and insular Southeast Asia, is therefore well attested at this time,[12] and it could have brought about the movement of merchant populations to these thriving markets. It is possible that Buddhism was propagated in Annam by a Yuezhi monk around 255.[13] As for trade in the reverse direction, the merchants could have found various local products, notably Indonesian pepper and camphor, cited in the *Ancient Letters*, with which to balance accounts. In this regard, it is remarkable that during the first centuries CE, pepper should have reached China not by the more direct sea route, but by land, as is indicated by its name, *hu jiao* 胡椒, which includes the character *hu* 胡 referring to the populations of Central Asia.[14]

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[8] Zürcher, 1972, vol. II, p. 336, n. 148 points out that several members of the local court are called *hu* 胡, a term reserved for the barbarians of the West, and not *man* 蠻, the name for the barbarians of the South.

[9] We know nothing about him. Pelliot, 1903b, p. 275 draws attention to the rare and foreign character of this name. A perusal of the indices of the *Shiji* and the *Han shu* in fact reveals that the name Kang does not appear if not in the form of a title. Only a slave named Kang appears, a little before the beginning of our era, in the *Han shu*, chap. 59, p. 2655. At that time, he could certainly have been a Sogdian.

[10] Trans. Mukherjee, 1970, p. 37, with corrections, from the *Taiping yulan*, chap. 359, p. 1650a. See also Hall, 1992, p. 194.

[11] *Liang shu*, chap. 54, p. 798, cited by Pelliot, 1903b, p. 271, regarding an episode dating from the time of the Wu 吳 (222–280): "[The king of India] delegated two persons, among them Chensong 陳宋, to thank [Fan] Zhan 旃 (the king of Funan) for the gift of four horses [from the country] of the Yuezhi."

[12] For other data, see Malleret, 1960, p. 315, and 1962, pp. 363–79 and pl. XC–XCV and XCVIII–C.

[13] Giap, 1932, pp. 213–4.

[14] Yung-ho Ts'ao, 1982, p. 222.

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The text concerning Kang Seng hui and the other pieces of evidence collected above prove that Sogdians participated in the trade with India and Southeast Asia. Even so, there is no question of imagining a Sogdian network for this region: an isolated account, even within a set of indications that westerners were present in the area, is not sufficient to prove the existence of a network. We lack the equivalent of *Ancient Letter II* to support such a theory. In India, on the other hand, while other elements may not allow us to conclude the existence of a formal network, they at least enable us to demonstrate that contacts were frequent over a long period of time.

Sogdian Contacts with India

The short biography of Kang Seng hui shows the settlement of a Sogdian family in India over several generations. It naturally leads us to examine the Indian sources.

The Indian texts are very difficult to date. Products of successive compilations which at times extended over more than a millenium, they provide information from quite different times. In a very general manner, it seems that many texts were partially composed during the first centuries CE, or that they used data from that period. These texts do indeed mention the Sogdians, the Cūlikā, but never in a commercial context.[15]

To take a very representative example of these references, the *Mahābhārata* thus refers to the Cūlikā:

> And the Tuṣāra, the Yavana and the Śaka, along with the Cūlikā, stood in the right wing.[16]

This reference to the Sogdians/Cūlikā in the army of the Kurus at the time of their great battle with the Pāṇḍava—associated with the Greeks (Yavana) and the Śaka, and mentioned after the Bālhika (the Bactrians) and the Kamboja[17]—thus fits within the framework of a

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[15] The identification of the Sogdians in classical Indian texts was made decades ago. In 1910, R. Gauthiot showed that the Cūlikā of the *Mārkaṇḍeya Purāṇa* and the *Matsya Purāṇa*, whose country was crossed by the Cakṣu (Vakṣu) River—the Oxus—were the Sogdians (Gauthiot, 1910, pp. 541–2). In 1930, P. Bagchi listed the Indian texts in which this people is mentioned (Bagchi, 1930, pp. 1–10). See also the notes of Singh, 1972, pp. 177–8.

[16] *Mahābhārata*, VI 75 20, in the critical edition of Poona, trans. Roy, 1887, p. 276. The translation of van Buitenen does not extend to book VI.

[17] Fussman, 1974, p. 33 places them in the mountains around Ghazna and in the upper valley of the Arghand-āb.

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complete list of all the peoples known to the Indians who lived to the northwest of India, a list which corresponds to what we know of the political context of the 2nd or 1st century BCE. In the Puranic literature also, the Sogdians are only one people of the Northwest among many others.[18]

The Indian texts thus mention them, but we cannot derive any information about Sogdian commerce from these references. It is in no way certain that commerce was responsible for such an acquaintance on the part of the Indian authors (the Greek or Saka invaders could have brought this knowledge), and no source states that such an assumed commerce was indeed Sogdian rather than Indian, Bactrian or Gandhāran. It will lastly be noted that, poorly informed about the Sogdians as the Indians were, they do not seem to have known Sogdiana itself any better. A comparison of the toponyms from the Puranic texts with those of Central Asia reveals that they have no point in common, although attempts have been made to harmonize them.[19]

The Indian sources are hardly forthcoming on the subject of the Sogdians. It would be a slightly different matter with the Bactrians,[20] who gave their name to certain products exported to India[21] and are sometimes cited as foreigners in the texts. But this is not our subject here.

It is therefore necessary to seek other sources, and here too the *Ancient Letters* are shown to be particularly valuable. Indeed, the conflicting relations between Sogdians and Chinese described in this

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[18] The difficulty of dating texts which have been so often reworked should be noted: each passage could well be dated separately. The *Mārkaṇḍeya Purāṇa* mentions the Sogdians in LVII 35–42 (trans. Pargiter, 1904, pp. 311–324) and again in LVIII, 37. The other Puranic texts give the same type of list. Thus the *Vāyu Purāṇa* mentions the Cūlikā among other peoples of the North in XLV 121, and the Carmakhaṇḍika in XLV 115–9. The *Brahma Purāṇa* does the same in XXV 44–50. The *Matsya Purāṇa* (L 76) cites them in a more interesting context, as it numbers them among the kings who had originally come from India, but the list found there is again stereotypical. The Cūlikā are also mentioned in the *Bṛhat Saṃhitā* of Varāhamihira (IX, 15 and 21, X, 7, XIV 23, XVI 35, XIV 8) and the S*aṃhitā* of Caraka (30 6).

[19] See in particular Ali, 1973: according to that author, if one identifies Mount Meru with the Pamirs, one can read the whole geography of Asia in the *Purāṇa*. The demonstration on this basis on pp. 97–8 is completely counterproductive. That Sogdiana may be designated by the term *Ramaṇaka* is pure speculation (Ali, 1973, pp. 83–4, 87).

[20] Discussion in Singh, 1972, pp. 123–7.

[21] Prasad, 1984, p. 128.

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collection of documents, which I have already touched upon, contrast with their close connections with the Indians:[22] the Sogdian and Indian communities of Luoyang are mentioned together, after having been decimated together.[23] These Indians either came from Northwest India or were indianized inhabitants of Loulan, using the prakrit revealed in the documents from Niya. It was probably for Loulan that the bearer of the letters was heading. The name of the addressee of the first letter, *c't'ysh*, is attested in the documents from the kingdom of Loulan in the form Catisa,[24] which is evidence of familial connections between Sogdians and Indians at Loulan, as the daughter of this Catisa married a Sogdian.

The Indian words which had passed into Sogdian and are present in the *Ancient Letters* are:

- *s'rth* from Sanskrit *sārtha*: "caravan" (*Ancient Letter II*, l. 36);
- *s'rtp'w* from Sanskrit *sārthavāha* through a Bactrian intermediary (ending in *-ao*[25])?: "caravaneer" (*Ancient Letter V*, address);
- *prstk* from Northwest (Gāndhārī) prakrit *prastha*: a unit of measure for quantity (*Ancient Letter V*, ll. 9–10);
- *mwδy* from Northwest prakrit *mūlya*: "price" (*Ancient Letter IV*, l. 5);
- *δykh* from Northwest prakrit *lekha*: "letter" (*Ancient Letter V*, l. 32, *Ancient Letter I*, l. 12);
- *pδ'pδ[y]h* from the Sanskrit of Khotan *pitpalī*: "pepper" (*Ancient Letter V*, l. 9).[26]

The connections attested by these loan words are important and of a commercial nature, as is shown by the words used for "caravan" and "price."

Examination of the sources has given evidence for contacts between Indians and Sogdians at Tonkin and Dunhuang. In between those two regions, two documentary collections will clarify this history.

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[22] This aspect has already been analyzed on several occasions: see Henning, 1948, p. 603, n. 3 and Sims-Williams, 1996c, p. 49.

[23] *Ancient Letter II*, lines 36–38: ". . . when they reached Srγ [Luoyang] . . . the Indians and the Sogdians there had all died of starvation." The *Ancient Letters* say nothing about other merchant groups. Only the document LM II ii 09 mentions a Hun at line 5, in an unknown context.

[24] See Henning, 1948, p. 603, n. 3. Sims-Williams, 1996c, p. 52 mentions the hypothesis that she was an indianized Bactrian woman, due to the ending in *-isa* of her name.

[25] Sims-Williams, 1996c, p. 51.

[26] Sims-Williams, 1983, p. 135.

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2. *Settlement in Northwest India*

The Buddhist Sources

The first corpus has been known for quite a long time, but its commercial implications have not been completely examined. Buddhism, which was established in China during the Han at the beginning of our era, was at first preached there by foreign monks from Central Asia and India. The Buddhist tradition, which has preserved the names and biographies of these saintly people, is thus an important source for those who wish to study the flow of westerners into China. Certain of these monks bore the family name characteristic of Sogdians, Kang. While these monks indeed came from families originally from Kangju, this does not mean that they came from there directly. To the present day, historiography has hardly called into question the place of origin—and not the ethnic identity—of these monks named Kang. But it seems doubtful that they could have come directly from Sogdiana.

There is nothing which enables us to speak of Buddhism in Sogdiana at this time. Quite to the contrary, the Sogdian Buddhist texts which have been preserved are later; moreover, they were translated from Chinese rather than from Indian languages.[27] From an archaeological point of view, Buddhism reached the Oxus at the end of the 1st or the beginning of the 2nd century CE, as it did at Karatepe near Termez, but it is only attested in Sogdiana in the 7th century. The Kang monks were from Sogdian families, but from Sogdian families which had emigrated to Bactriana or south of the Hindu Kush, in precisely those regions where great commerce and diffusion of Buddhism overlapped.

The same probably applies to the monks named An, and in particular to the great An Shigao 安世高.[28] His Chinese name evokes the Parthian Empire, but it is more likely for an Arsacid prince reigning over the Indo-Parthian borderlands to have been a Buddhist in the middle of the 2nd century than a Parthian prince of Iran, for Buddhism itself was still not established at Merv at this time—it seems that Buddhism did not spread to Merv before the 4th century,

[27] Weller, 1934.
[28] Forte, 1995, p. 69, n. 13.

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and not during the 2nd century as was previously thought.[29] The Chinese text, generally translated as "he was the son of the king and queen of Parthia" 安息王嫡后之子, could just as well be translated "he was the son of an Arsacid king and queen," and An Shigao could consequently have come from the Indo-Parthian kingdoms of western India.[30]

The Chinese texts conform to this interpretation of the origin of the Kang monks. Certainly they furnish very little information about the families of the monks, but when they do, the texts specify that it is the ancestors of the monks who came from Kangju, in other words, that these monks were in fact from emigré families. Such was the case with Kang Seng hui, but also with several other Kang, such as Kang Mengxiang 康孟詳 "whose ancestors were people from Kangju,"[31] or Kang Baoyi 康寶意.[32] These monks learned the Indian languages in the emigration, and this enabled them to translate the Buddhist texts into Chinese without going through a Sogdian intermediary. This emigration was one of merchant families, explicitly so in the case of Kang Seng hui. It can be assumed that this was also the case for the others.

We must account for a very striking fact: how can we explain that these Iranian-speakers, An or Kang, played such a great role in the diffusion of Buddhism in China, while the Indians were relatively unobtrusive in this sphere of activity during the 2nd and 3rd centuries?[33] The most likely hypothesis is that the monks of Kang or An origin travelled as far as China because they belonged to social groups that were accustomed to travelling these routes, while the Indian monks, who were definitely not less Buddhist, perhaps came less systematically from merchant families, and might have been less inclined to such journeys among different linguistic areas with which their family traditions had not familiarized them.[34] In the absence of a well-established Buddhism in Sogdiana and Parthian

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[29] See most recently Callieri, 1996, and for a bibliography Callieri, 1998.
[30] Text cited by Forte, 1995, pp. 67–8.
[31] Cited by Zürcher, 1972, vol. 1, p. 23.
[32] *Gao seng zhuan*, trans. Shih, p. 155.
[33] See the comments by Kuwayama, 1987, p. 705.
[34] The connection between the spread of Buddhism and the travels of merchants has often been pointed out. See notably Liu Xinru, 1988, p. 143 for examples of Indian monks in China at the end of the 4th century utilizing the services of merchants to send for incense or manuscripts.

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Iran, this is the only way to understand the role played by the monks Kang 康 and An 安. Thus, the Buddhist sources, which mention Kang propagators of the law of the Buddha, also mention several An, certain of whom were explicitly merchants before devoting themselves to translation: An Xuan 安玄 was a merchant who arrived in Luoyang in 181 and there became a monk.[35]

The Sogdian Inscriptions of the Upper Indus

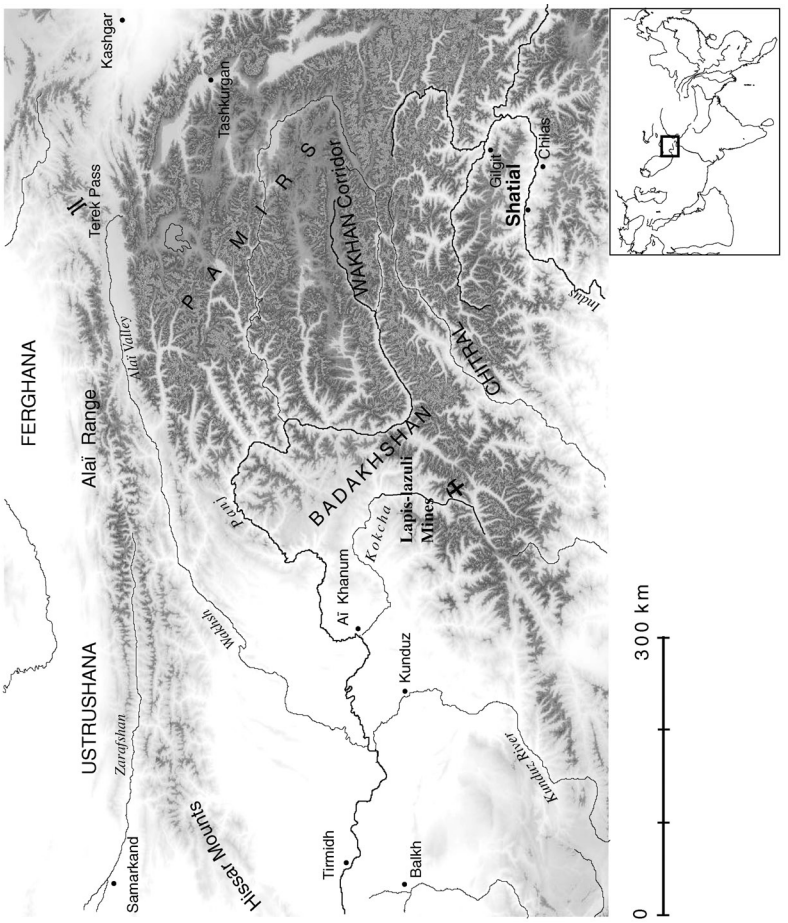
The second corpus is of recent discovery. After the great construction work on the Karakorum Highway between Pakistan and China, a series of engraved rocks were systematically found at several desolate sites in the upper valley of the Indus, mainly downriver from Gilgit [see plate I, ill. 2]. Certain of these rocks bear drawings, of stupas or ibex, for example, but also quite numerous graffiti written in several scripts, of which brāhmī and kharoṣṭhī come from India. Among these inscriptions, the Sogdian graffiti occupy a primary position—there are more than 650—and are represented at the sites of Shatial[36] (around 550), Dadam Das (55), Oshibat (26), Thor (19), Thalpan (8), Hunza-Haldeikish (6), Khanbari (1) and Campsite (1).[37] At Shatial the Sogdian inscriptions form the majority, compared with 410 brāhmī inscriptions, 12 to 15 kharoṣṭhī inscriptions, 9 Bactrian, 2 Parthian and 2 Middle Persian inscriptions.[38] For the Iranian sphere, only 12 Bactrian inscriptions are known from all the sites, aside from the Parthian and Middle Persian inscriptions at Shatial that I have just mentioned.[39] Other languages are represented, in particular Hebrew, at Campsite,[40] and Chinese at Shatial; inscriptions in Indian and local languages are also found.

The content of the Sogdian inscriptions is in general extremely standardized, and they only provide information of an onomastic sort: X son of Y or X son of Y son of Z.[41] The longest of the inscriptions states:

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[35] Zürcher, 1972, vol. 1, p. 23, citing the *Gao seng zhuan*, I, 324.2.27.
[36] For Shatial, see Fussman and König, 1997.
[37] Sims-Williams, 1989, 1992b and 1997 analyze the corpus.
[38] See the data collected in Fussman and König, 1997, pp. 58–9, 62.
[39] Sims-Williams, 1992b, pp. 27–28.
[40] Jettmar, 1987a.
[41] See Sims-Williams, 1992b, pp. 29–34 for a detailed examination of the variants of these formulae.

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Map 4. The Roads to India

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> (I), Nanai-vandak the (son) of Narisaf have come (here) on (the) ten(th day) and asked a boon from the spirit of the sacred place K'rt that . . . I may arrive at Tashkurgan more quickly and see (my) brother in good (health) with joy.[42]

One can also note several references to Sogdians in the Sanskrit inscriptions in brāhmī script.[43]

There is hardly any doubt as to the merchant origin of these inscriptions.[44] They attest to the importance of the Sogdian presence in India beginning in the 3rd century. Certain Sogdian inscriptions of the Upper Indus are paleographically earlier than the *Ancient Letters*. But it is also possible to prove that some of the Sogdian inscriptions date at least to the 5th century.

The most frequent given or family name in the onomastics of these inscriptions is, with the exception of Nanai-vandak, *xwn*, the Hun; sixteen inscriptions mention it, primarily at Shatial, but also at Oshibat and Dadam Das.[45] These *xwn* possess a thoroughly Sogdian paternal filiation, thus the *xwn* son of Varzakk,[46] or the *xwn* son of Nanai-vandak.[47] This onomastics of ethnic origin is historically inconceivable before a conquest of Sogdiana by the Huns, followed by a

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[42] Sims-Williams, 1989, p. 23, no. 254 (36:38), modified according to the identification proposed by Yoshida (1991, pp. 237–8) of *xrβntn* with the ancient name of Tashkurgan in Xinjiang. Sogdian text: "nnyßntk ZK nrsß "γt-kym kw 10 'ḤRZY MN k'rt βγncytk y'n pt'yst 't xrßntn twxtr pr'ys'n rty ZKw 'ḤY pr šyr wyn'n 'M wγš'."

[43] See in particular Fussman, 1997, p. 82: the Sogdian Pekako travelled together with two Indians, perhaps towards Chitral. At Shatial, some ten or fifteen Iranian names are written in brāhmī script (Fussman, 1997, p. 79). See also Hinüber, 1997, p. 60.

[44] Many hypotheses have been proposed as to why there is such a concentration of inscriptions in these isolated areas, and particularly such a concentration of Sogdian inscriptions at Shatial: thus some have seen it as the terminal point of Sogdian commercial expansion, at which some political power compelled them to exchange their goods with Indian merchants and prevented them from travelling further. Some have also seen it as the location of a sanctuary, which is suggested just as much by the Buddhist drawings as by the Sogdian inscription quoted above, a solution which I prefer. Or again, a simple stopping place connected with the crossing of the Indus. The discussions of this issue are presented in Fussman and König, 1997, pp. 62–106. All nevertheless agree in acknowledging the commercial nature of the Sogdian presence in the area. But other professions are also represented.

[45] See Sims-Williams, 1992b, p. 80.

[46] Sims-Williams, 1989, p. 29: inscription no. 380, at Shatial. Sims-Williams, 1992b, p. 14: inscription no. 451, at Shatial; *idem*, p. 18, inscription no. 528 and 535 at Shatial.

[47] Sims-Williams, 1989, p. 14: inscription no. 44, at Shatial.

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period of calm and of fusion between the Sogdian population and the nomadic invaders. I will show in the next chapter that this fusion cannot date back before the very end of the 4th century, and belongs much more probably to the 5th century. A second fact corroborates this dating: at Shatial, at least eight people possessed a name connected to the town of Maymurgh,[48] which is mentioned for the first time in the second third of the 5th century in the *Wei shu*. Its development from an older site was certainly linked to that of the canal of Dargom (or of its extension), excavated during this period. The longest Chinese inscription found on the Upper Indus mentions a Chinese embassy which arrived there during the Wei 魏.[49] There are thus twenty-four inscriptions which can be attributed to the 5th century at the earliest, as opposed to four from the 3rd or 4th century. Several criteria enable us to specify the *terminus post quem non*. The writing in the inscriptions cannot be later than the beginning of the 7th century.[50] The absence of Türk names also excludes a date later than the beginning of the 7th century.

One indication, which must be admitted to be very weak, could make it possible to be more specific: among the sixteen inscriptions mentioning *xwn*, not one cites the name as a patronymic. One finds only *xwn* son of X, and never X son of *xwn*. While it must be granted that this could simply be a matter of chance, it does lead one to think, on the one hand, that the end of Sogdian commerce on the Upper Indus took place while contacts between *xwn* and Sogdians were very important—yet for all that not going back further than a generation—and on the other hand, that this end occurred quite abruptly. It was possible for *xwn* to be used as a patronymic: thus *m'ymrγc* appears rather often in this position.[51] The latest inscriptions could therefore have been made at a time when Maymurgh had existed for at least a generation, while the fusion between Huns and Sogdians had taken place in the preceding generation. In a very

[48] See Sims-Williams, 1992b, p. 56.

[49] See Ma Yong, 1989, and the doubts of Jettmar, 1989, p. LIII on the identification of Mimi 迷密. See also Höllmann, 1993, for a more detailed analysis.

[50] Sims-Williams, 1997, p. 67, making a comparison with the Sogdian inscription of Bugut from the end of the 6th century.

[51] Sims-Williams, 1989, p. 16, inscriptions no. 86 and no. 92; *idem*, p. 17, inscription no. 115; *idem*, p. 20, inscription no. 184; Sims-Williams, 1992b, p. 13, inscription no. 416.

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hypothetical way, all of this then leads one to postulate an end to the Sogdian presence on the Upper Indus during the first half of the 5th century. It will be noted that the brāhmī inscriptions at the same sites cover a period from the 3rd to the 7th century.

The Sogdians in the Kushan Empire

The main highway for large-scale international trade passed to the south of Sogdiana, and connected China and India via the Pamirs or Bactriana. From the 1st century to the beginning of the 3rd century CE the southern outlet of this route was politically part of the Kushan Empire.

The history and especially the chronology of the empire are probably the most disputed subjects in the history of Central Asia. Because points of comparison with external chronologies are lacking, the era of Kaniṣka—named after the principal monarch, the years of whose reign were used to date certain inscriptions—has been assigned the most varied dates, between 78[52] and 232[53] of our era. After decades of controversy, numismatics, the discovery of a new inscription and the reinterpretation of a long-known text seem to make it possible to set the date at 127.[54] The Kushan Empire, originating from the Yuezhi principalities of Bactriana mentioned in chapter I, extended over Northern India in the second half of the 1st century, and at the beginning of the 2nd century even included the Tarim basin as far as Khotan.[55] In 232 the empire lost its territories north of the Hindu Kush to Sassanid attacks.

The Kushan Empire represented an area of stability and great prosperity in Northern India and Bactriana, immediately to the south of Sogdiana (which it probably never encompassed). Buddhism further developed there and reached as far as the Oxus. It was from the Kushan Empire that it spread to China. There is every reason to

[52] A hypothesis defended on numerous occasions by Gérard Fussman. See for example Fussman, 1974 and 1980.

[53] See Göbl, 1968 and particularly 1984.

[54] See principally Cribb, 1984, 1985, 1990 for the numismatics, and Sims-Williams and Cribb, 1995/6 for the inscription of Rabatak. Fussman has recently defended anew the date of 78 (Fussman, 1998). Falk, 2001 reinterprets an astrological text and sets 127 as the starting point of the era of Kaniṣka.

[55] Cribb, 1984, 1985.

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believe that this prosperity led the first Sogdian merchants to emigrate to the Kushan cities in Bactriana and Northern India. The situation in Sogdiana at that time was very mediocre in comparison with the brilliant urban civilization of the Kushan Empire.[56] The connections that I have mentioned, whether commercial or religious, date back to this period. In China, the great merchants of the time were Kushan merchants.

Thus, from the Kushan Empire, Gandhārī seems to have become the true *lingua franca* of the Tarim basin up to the 4th century: documents written in Gandhārī and using the kharoṣṭhī script have been recovered in all the great oases.[57] The borrowing of a part of the Sogdian commercial vocabulary from Gandhārī could have occurred at different points: the Sogdian merchants could have integrated themselves into the cosmopolitan milieux dominated by the merchants from Northwest India, at Khotan, for example, which might have been for a time part of the Kushan Empire at the beginning of the 2nd century. One can also imagine that the contacts took place along the routes leading from Samarkand to Balkh, then to Taxila and India.[58] The Bactrian intermediary which can be discerned in the transmission of the word for "caravaneer" can be interpreted in this light. Conversely, the extreme rarity of Kushan coins in Sogdiana, to the north of the Hissar Mountains,[59] does not argue in favor of a strong foreign presence in Sogdiana.

It seems that the Sogdian inscriptions of the Indus appeared a few decades after the disappearance of the Kushan Empire in Central Asia in the face of Sassanid attacks. The almost complete absence of Bactrian inscriptions is perhaps related to the Sassanid conquest, which prompted the Sogdians to take the easternmost mountain

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[56] Grenet, 1996b, pp. 367–370.

[57] Lin Meicun, 1996.

[58] In this regard, a seal from the Kushano-Sassanid period (3rd–4th centuries), inscribed in both the Sogdian and kharoṣṭhī scripts, has been found at the site of Džiga-tepe, in Bactriana. It depicts a young man or woman and bears a double kharoṣṭhī-Sogdian legend, "Prince Vadanaśa" *Vadanaśa rayasa, w'δ'*, at which point the Sogdian is interrupted by a break. See Kruglikova, 1984, p. 146.

[59] Zeimal', 1983, p. 249. The southern frontier of Sogdiana seems to have receded to the north during the Kushan period. While historians of Alexander place the frontier with Bactriana at the Amu Darya, it has been noted that Bactriana held sway over the right bank south of the Hissar Mountains beginning with the Kushan period.

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routes in order to escape Sassanid control, while the Bactrians reoriented their commerce toward Merv. However that may be, Sogdian commerce continued in this area for two centuries.

3. *A Secondary Branch?*

The Evidence of Cosmas Indicopleustes

A Byzantine text, the *Christian Topography* of Cosmas Indicopleustes, enables us to analyze the development of Indian commerce on a very large scale during the following period, the 6th century. An Alexandrian spice merchant who had retired to a monastery in the Sinai, Cosmas wrote his *Christian Topography* between 547 and 550. He was accurately informed about the commerce of the Indian Ocean, yet without ever having sailed there.[60] A Nestorian disciple of Mar Aba, he was close to the Persian Christian circles of the school of Nisibis.[61] His work—which had quite other objectives—presents something close to a synthetic picture of the flows of precious commodities across the Indian Ocean during the first half of the 6th century. Among these commercial flows Cosmas mentions silk, which could be the subject of an interesting test: while the products to which he refers are generally characteristic of maritime trade, silk is also mentioned on the land routes. It can therefore serve as a standard for evaluating the respective flows of long-distance commerce by both sea and land. Cosmas' text then becomes very illuminating. The commercial importance of silk is not diminished by the multiplicity of other costly products:

> if there be some who to procure silk for the miserable gains of commerce, hesitate not to travel to the uttermost ends of the earth, how should they hesitate to go where they would gain a sight of Paradise itself?[62]

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[60] Concerning Cosmas, see Pigulevskaja, 1951, pp. 129–156. See *Christian Topography*, III, 65 about the voyages of Cosmas on the Indian Ocean.

[61] *Topographie Chrétienne*, vol. I: introduction by W. Wolska-Conus, p. 39 ff.

[62] *Christian Topography*, II, 45, McCrindle's translation p. 137, Wolska-Conus', based on a better edition, vol. I, p. 352.

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Silk is mentioned in two other passages. In book II, in the context of a determination of distances in Asia, Cosmas states that:

> For the country in question deflects considerably to the left, so that the loads of silk passing by land through one nation after another, reach Persia in a comparatively short time; whilst the route by sea to Persia is vastly greater. For just as great a distance as the Persian Gulf runs up into Persia, so great a distance and even a greater has one to run, who, being bound for Tzinitza, sails eastward from Taprobanê; while besides, the distances from the mouth of the Persian Gulf to Taprobanê; and the parts beyond through the whole width of the Indian sea are very considerable. He then who comes by land from Tzinitza to Persia shortens very considerably the length of the journey. This is why there is always to be found a great quantity of silk in Persia.[63]

Later, in his description of Ceylon, Cosmas describes the commercial relations of the island, product by product, and he writes:

> And from the remotest countries, I mean Tzinista and other trading places, it receives silk, aloes, cloves, sandalwood and other products, and these again are passed on to marts on this side, such as Male, where pepper grows, and to Calliana which exports copper and sesame-logs, and cloth for making dresses, for it also is a great place of business. And to Sindu also where musk and castor is procured and androstachys, and to Persia and the Homerite country, and to Adulé.[64]

Cosmas very precisely distinguishes two routes by which silk was traded: the Central Asian caravan route and the maritime route via Ceylon. But above all, he posits a hierarchical relationship between them: for silk, the Central Asian caravan route was primary. The Persians procured silk in two very distinct locations: on the one hand, the peoples of Central Asia brought it to them, and on the other, they went to buy it in Ceylon. The merchants of Northwest India and Bactriana were no longer capable of adequately supplying their great ports with silk from distant sources: Sind obtained its silk from Ceylon, not from Bactra.[65]

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[63] *Christian Topography*, II, 46, McCrindle's translation p. 138, Wolska-Conus' vol. I, pp. 352–4.

[64] *Christian Topography*, XI, 15, McCrindle's translation p. 366, Wolska-Conus' vol. III, pp. 344–6.

[65] On the other hand, the trade in Indian merchandise continued. The hinterland of the ports on the west coast of India were vital for a great number of products, and that hinterland extended as far as the Himalaya. This is proven by the

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For Sogdian commerce, this information is of capital importance. The only road in antiquity—through Bactriana, Northern India, and then by sea—had become divided into two quite distinct routes, one of which, the most important for silk, was in the hands of the Sogdians. The principal route therefore no longer turned south through the Pamirs or Bactra, and the descendants of the Indian, Parthian or Bactrian merchants no longer went to China in sufficient numbers to make the main part of the traffic pass through their lands. Their absence in the Chinese sources, and their replacement after the crisis of the 4th century—both are thus completely supported by the text of Cosmas. For the period from at least the first half of the 6th century on, we may speak both of a Sogdian domination of the merchandise being transported from China by land route through Central Asia,[66] and of a relative decline of the older route between China and India over the passes of the Pamirs and the Indus.

A Decline?

The date proposed above for the last Sogdian inscriptions of the Upper Indus would correspond rather well to that traditionally proposed for the decline of Gandhāra, located at the natural outlet of the route from the Upper Indus to the south, in the second half of the 5th and the beginning of the 6th centuries. On the other hand, a new dating of this decline to the middle of the 6th century would no longer permit the establishment of this chronological parallel.[67] Furthermore, the Indian inscriptions of the Upper Indus continued until the middle of the 7th century. The expansion of the Hephtalite Empire to the south of Sogdiana, exactly over the routes joining that land to the Upper Indus, would account for the disappearance of the Sogdian inscriptions at Shatial extremely well.

However that may be, the disappearance of those Sogdian inscriptions does not mark the end of contacts between Sogdiana and India.

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musk exported from Sind, as well as the yak and musk-providing animal mentioned in XI, 5–6, pp. 322–4.

[66] This is indeed a matter of domination, and not of monopoly: for example, we know that glass was introduced into China by merchants from Tukharistan (see Enoki, 1969, pp. 1 and 3).

[67] Kuwayama, 1987, p. 718 ff., and Kuwayama, 1989, pp. 90–7.

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Quite to the contrary, Sogdian art of the 6th century was influenced by a last great wave of Indian iconography.[68] Simultaneously, the Buddhist community at Merv was itself also in contact with Kashmir.[69] The route of the Indus was not by any means the only possible way to travel from India to Sogdiana. Rather, it was an indirect path, particularly suited to a triangular trade between India, Sogdiana and China.

Further to the west, Bamiyan developed rapidly in the 6th century, principally as a stopover for those crossing the Hindu Kush. In the middle of the 7th century, the Chinese pilgrim Xuanzang 玄奘, after having travelled across the whole of Central Asia in order to reach India, described the two great Buddhas carved from the cliff.[70] He indicated the important roles played there by Buddhism and commerce. The merchants seem to have formed the preponderant part of the faithful:

> The merchants who go and come in pursuit of their business are in the habit of questioning the celestial divinities in search of favorable and unfavorable omens, and of praying in order to obtain favors and protection from them.[71]

At the beginning of the 7th century the contacts with India were probably maintained by these merchants, perhaps including many Sogdians, and also by merchants from Merv and Bactra. Were they as important as they had been during the preceding period? Apart from the inscriptions of the Upper Indus, the corpus of sources concerning mercantile contacts between Sogdiana and India in the early Middle Ages is rather limited.

After the 6th century, we can cite a Buddhist text, the Chinese biography of Amoghavajra, which indicates that his mother was from a Sogdian family (Kang 康) and that his father was from Northern India.[72] Amoghavajra was born in Ceylon in 705, and he was among

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[68] Maršak, 1981, and Maršak, in Azarpay, 1981, p. 140. But this influence could also have travelled by other routes further to the west: see Kuwayama, 1987, p. 724. See also Lapierre, 1990, p. 34 for the pictorial techniques used, in which the author thinks that the Sogdian artists were acquainted with the treatises of Indian masters, such as the *Viṣṇudharmottara* of the 7th century (p. 31).

[69] Callieri, 1996.

[70] Concerning this great pilgrim, see *Xuanzangs Leben und Werk*, 1992–6.

[71] *Da Tang Xiyu ji* 大唐西域記, pp. 13–4. The translation of this quotation as well as those following has been reviewed by Éric Trombert, for which I am most grateful.

[72] For this exposition, see Grenet, 1996a, p. 67 ff.

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those who introduced tantric Buddhism to China. His family was probably of merchant origin, for he travelled while still quite young with his paternal uncle on the southern seas. The other piece of evidence is much later and of a legendary nature. In the *Religious Annals of the Country of Li* (*Li-yul chos-kyi lo-rgyus*), a Tibetan text from the 8th or 9th century which was found at Dunhuang and is devoted to Khotan (*Li*), one episode presents five hundred Sogdian (*Sog-dag*) merchants who become lost in the mountains while on their way to India.[73] The account is not historical—it belongs to the pious genre of Buddhist *exempla*. For the Tibetans, the Sogdians still epitomized the merchants who travelled over the passes of the Upper Indus to reach India. It is nevertheless possible that the episode could have been borrowed from an older Buddhist source. Finally, when the Korean pilgrim Hui Chao 慧超 travelled through Gandhāra in 726, he mentions, in an unfortunately very mutilated passage, the presence there of prosperous *hu* from China (*han di xing hu* 漢地興胡), who were at that time Sogdians.[74]

Few material traces of this commerce remain. Perhaps only the Sogdian inscriptions branded on two pieces of sandalwood preserved in Nara, Japan, prove that there was continued Sogdian participation in maritime commerce.[75] The other evidence is more ambiguous: the discovery of objects which belonged to Sogdians on the Chinese coasts does not allow us to decide *a priori* that their owners had travelled there by sea.[76] Report has moreover been made of terracotta reliefs from the area of the Gulf of Siam, dating back to the 7th century and representing worshippers of the Buddha whose physical type and "Phrygian" hats are foreign to the region, but on the other hand close to Chinese representations of the Sogdians, and which

[73] The text has been translated in Thomas, 1935, I, pp. 319–20.

[74] See Yoshida, 1993b, review of N. Sims-Williams, *Sogdian and Other Iranian Inscriptions of the Upper Indus*, I. While for Hui Chao *hu* is the generic name for all Iranian-speaking peoples, *xing hu* is more specifically the name employed in the Tarim basin for the Iranian-speaking merchants, who at this time were very largely Sogdian. This corresponds perfectly to the reference to the fact that they came from China. See chapter V for the role of the Sogdians in the Tarim basin in the 8th century. Text in Fuchs, 1938, p. 445: *yu* 與 should be corrected to *xing* 興.

[75] Yoshida, 1993b.

[76] Notable instances include a silver vase bearing the name of a Sogdian from Čāč, which was found near Canton, as well as a Nestorian funerary inscription at Guilin, in South China, recalling a native of Bukhara: examples cited in Yoshida, 1993b.

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could be seen as depicting merchants from Sogdiana.[77] It is unlikely that they portray Sassanid merchants. While the Sogdians are good candidates, these could more generally be representations of travellers from eastern Iran. It is difficult to be very precise.

When Yijing 義 淨 wrote in 695 his *Report Composed during the Great Tang Dynasty Concerning the Eminent Men of Religion Who Went in Search of the Law in the Lands of the West*, he mentioned the presence of Sogdian Buddhist monks in India in the second half of the 7th century. But the evidence is ambivalent: these were old merchants of the Chinese route who were converted to Buddhism in the Middle Kingdom, and who went to India only after their conversion.[78]

The results of this investigation are seen to be rather modest: the Sogdians travelling over the high passes of India during the 4th and 5th centuries were more numerous than before. But over the longer term, after the 5th century, the scattered nature of the evidence hardly allows us to perceive developments, and the Sogdian merchants in India were probably only one group of merchants among many others. One will particularly note that Sogdian merchants never appear in the secular texts (dedications of guilds or of merchants, the *Chronicle of the Kings of Kaśmīr*,[79] etc.). In Sogdian iconography after the 6th century, Indian influence seems to recede in favor of local models.[80] Perhaps we should see in this relative lifelessness—at least if it is not entirely linked to the scarcity of sources—an expression of the economic decline of Northern India in the 6th and 7th centuries, of which Xuanzang gives evidence. But this decline is itself contested.[81] Another commercial power, that of the merchants of Sassanid Iran, asserted itself in India and the southern seas, so that with regard to the growth of Persian commerce in those areas, the Sogdian merchants could only stagnate.

In antiquity, Sogdian commerce appears to have been a relatively marginal component of the great commerce of the time, conducted

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[77] Grenet, 1996a, pp. 69–73. See also Chowdhury, 1996, p. 99, for a stucco from Thailand.

[78] Yijing, trans. Chavannes, 1894, pp. 37–38 and 73–76.

[79] It nevertheless mentions a few merchants: see the translation in Stein, notably in IV, 11 which mentions a merchant named Noṇa from the country of Rauhītaka. Inhabitants of Tukharistan are also cited in the text (IV, 246).

[80] Maršak, 1981.

[81] See in particular the articles by Chattopadhyaya, 1994; see also Deyell, 1990.

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by Indian and Bactrian merchants, both Kushan subjects in the 2nd century CE. The largely Buddhist, urban and mercantile Kushan culture formed the dominant pattern in Gandhāra and the towns of the southern Tarim basin, and the Sogdian merchants must have assimilated it, as is proven by their vocabulary and the source texts. They were the students or apprentices of the merchants from Gandhāra or Bactra, from Taxila to Loulan, and played at this time a great role in the spread of Buddhism in the Far East. After the heyday of the Kushan Empire, the Sogdians—enterprising at an early date—were, with the Indians, firmly established on the routes which led to the Chinese capitals from Khotan. During the 3rd century CE their communities were important throughout the Gansu corridor. The *Ancient Letters*, the Gilgit inscriptions and the biographies of Buddhist monks mutually support each other and attest to the vigor of this first network under Kushan domination. The invasions of the 4th century enabled the students to surpass their masters.

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PART TWO

The Commercial Empire (350–750)

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INTRODUCTION

The apogee of Sogdian commerce lasted for about two and a half centuries, from the beginning of the 6th century to around the middle of the 8th century CE. It was preceded by a period of a century and a half of troubles and nomadic invasions, which are very poorly known and which profoundly changed the political and economic landscape of Central Asia, to the particular benefit of the Sogdians and their merchants. From the inclusion of Sogdiana in the empire of the Hephtalites at the beginning of the 6th century, and above all with the conquest of the whole of Central Asia by the first Türk Empire in the middle of the 6th century and the advance of Chinese armies a hundred years later, we note a clear predominance of Sogdian merchants over the great commercial land routes. From Samarkand to Sichuan and Mongolia, the theaters of Sogdian operations were many, and the available information is much more extensive than that for other periods. We have business documents, such as a statement from the Customs of Turfan and sales contracts in Chinese and Sogdian. It is therefore necessary both to indicate the points at which the various data converge, showing how they echo each other, and to use local information to describe each of the regions travelled by the Sogdians—in short, to identify the structures of Sogdian commerce and their common features, without getting lost in an overly remote description which would deprive the history of its life and savor. I have therefore chosen first to treat in detail each of the great areas of Sogdian commerce in the East, before using the information thus assembled to present a chapter focused upon the structures of that commerce.

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CHAPTER FOUR

SOGDIANA, A MAJOR CENTER OF TRADE

International in scope, Sogdian commerce can first be approached in terms of its geographical extent. It is possible to distinguish the areas of its strength and weakness in Asia. The documents enabling us to do this must be sought not in Sogdiana, but rather among the neighboring peoples, principally in China, but also far to the west, in Byzantium. The Sogdian soil, a fertile but acidic loess which destroys paper or parchment, is largely responsible for this lacuna. To attempt to write a history of commerce in Sogdiana using texts alone would be impossible. Archaeology and political history can provide a general economic framework for a commercial history of Sogdiana that escapes us, but which we know—and this is important—to have continued in a striking manner beyond the rupture of the 4th century. What were the events that occurred in Sogdiana that explain the preponderant role of Sogdian merchants on the Asian routes from the 6th to the 8th century?

1. *The Great Invasions*

Chronological Problems (350–450)

The political history of Central Asia between the second half of the 4th century and the establishment of the first Türk Empire in the middle of the 6th century is extremely poorly known. Several independent but corroborating texts show the arrival of a wave of eastern invaders in Central Asia in the second half of the 4th century. A passage in the *Wei shu* mentions the arrival of nomadic groups in Central Asia, notably the ancestors of the Hephtalites, around the year 360:

> Country of Yeda. A people related to the Great Yuezhi; it is also said that they are another variety of Gaoju. Originally they came from a region to the north of the Sai. Having left the Altai toward the south,

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> they settled to the west of Khotan; their capital is more than 200 *li* to the south of the Oxus, at a distance of 1100 *li* from Chang'an.[1]

The *Tongdian* 通典, following the original text of the *Wei shu* (which it often preserves), adds that the departure from the Altai took place 80 to 90 years before the reign of Wencheng Di of the Later Wei (452–466).[2]

The Byzantine authors, who partially describe the military and diplomatic situation of their great enemy, the empire of the Sassanids in Iran, enable us to date the arrival of the Huns in Central Asia to the neighborhood of 350. In fact, it is at this time that Ammianus Marcellinus mentions, for the first time in his narrative, the eastern enemies of the Persians, the Chionites.[3] The addition of the letter "i" which transforms "Huns" to "Chions" is very probably tied to the assimilation of the Huns to the Chions found in the Iranian sacred book, the *Avesta*, in the same way that in the West the name of the Tatars of the Mongolian period was transformed into "Tartars" by assimilation to the river of the Underworld from which they seemed to have come. The identity of the Huns and the Chionites is confirmed by the parallel lists of invading peoples found in India and Iran: where the Indians wrote "White Huns" and "Red Huns," the Persians transcribed the words as "White Chions" and "Red Chions."[4]

In 356 Shāpūr II fought against the Chionites in the east,[5] then concluded an alliance with them:[6] the king of the Chionites, Grumbates, participated in the siege of Amida (Diyarbakir) at the side of Shāpūr II in 359,[7] and towards the year 361 the Huns were sent against the neighboring town of Edessa.[8] The Armenian sources next show that between 368 and the death of Shāpūr II (379), the Sassanids were routed in the east on several occasions by a "king of the

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[1] *Wei shu*, chap. 102, p. 2278.
[2] *Tongdian*, chap. 193, p. 1040.
[3] Ammianus Marcellinus, 1968, XVI, 3, 1, p. 67. He gives their name only in his description of the events of 356.
[4] Grenet, 1996b, p. 388, n. 57.
[5] Ammianus Marcellinus, 1970, XVI, 9, 3–4, pp. 163–4. See Marquart, 1901, p. 36, n. 5.
[6] *Ibid.*, XVII, 5, 1, p. 52.
[7] *Ibid.*, XIX, 1, 7 p. 122 ff.
[8] Altheim, 1959, II, p. 38. Maenchen-Helfen considers this episode to be an anachronism (Maenchen-Helfen, 1973, p. 52, n. 169), which is possible but by no means certain.

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Kushans" reigning at Balkh.[9] This chronology, marked by multiple reversals of alliance over the course of thirty years, gives us a glimpse of an extremely difficult military situation in eastern Iran. To the invasions in Sogdiana must thus be added the ravages of a very long war further to the south, between Merv, which served as the base of operations for Shāpūr, and nomadic Bactriana. Certain coins from Merv at this time bore the legend *mnyst'n šḫyky*, i.e., "Royal Residence" of Shāpūr, which entirely confirms the Greek information about the king's stay at the eastern front.[10]

No document has yet been found to clarify the situation in Central Asia for the following period. Further to the south, the textual sources are mute concerning possible wars between Sassanids and nomads during the half-century from approximately 375 to 425. The Chinese pilgrim Faxian 法 顯, who crossed the Pamirs in 402, does not mention any troubles, and in any case travelled further to the east.[11] But numismatics shows that the Sassanid presence at Merv was maintained: bronze coins of Shāpūr III (383–388), Vahrām IV (388–399) and Yazdgird I (399–420) have been found there.[12] The elevation of Merv to a Nestorian episcopal see in 424 perhaps crowned a period of calm.[13]

On the other hand, several sources attest to significant wars around Merv or launched from there during the second part of the reign of Vahrām V (the legendary Vahrām Ghor of classical Persian texts, who reigned from 420 to 438). Because of the uncertainties which exist concerning the exact historical content of the Muslim Arabic texts about Vahrām Ghor, which may have been contaminated by late Sassanid romances, the surest source in this sphere is again numismatic: many drachms of Vahrām V were struck at Merv during the second half of his reign,[14] which testifies to the primary role then

[9] See Faustus of Byzantium, V, vii and V, xxxvii, trans. Garsoïan, 1989, pp. 187–198 and 217–8. The first episode took place in 368 (*ibid.*, p. 352), and the second between 374 and 378 (see Marquart, 1901, p. 50).

[10] See Gignoux, 1990, pp. 197–8, and Loginov and Nikitin, 1993, p. 250.

[11] Trans. Beal, republished 1983, pp. XXVIII–XXX.

[12] Loginov and Nikitin, 1993, p. 271.

[13] See Dauvilliers, 1948, pp. 280–1 and Colless, 1986, p. 52. Crosses trimmed with ribbon appeared at that time in the center of the coins of Merv: see Loginov and Nikitin, 1993, p. 272, which establishes a parallel between these and the crosses on Sassanid Christian seals.

[14] Loginov and Nikitin, 1993, p. 272.

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played by the city in the Sassanid policy of defense. They could have been directly used to pay the troops. The Muslim Arabic texts attribute the presence and activity of the king at Merv to a great attack by the "Qagan of the Türks," an anachronistic figure in whom we must see a nomadic power from the east or north.[15] A new period of troubles was beginning.

Archaeological Data in Sogdiana

The invasions of the 4th century did not leave layers of burning at the Sogdian sites. It is true that archaeology has only rarely reached levels datable to this period, and when it has, extremely limited areas are involved. On the other hand, new features appear which can be legitimately connected to the disruption that the arrival of the Huns must have caused.

Thus, the ancient cohabitation of sedentary peoples and local nomads, established on the immediate frontier of the oases, seems to have been swept away: the nomad kurgans at the peripheries of the oases have disappeared, and with them an osmosis attested by the abundance of sedentary ceramics found in the tombs.[16] The development of ceramic forms is particulary instructive, for parallel to the local forms which continued to be produced, a molded ceramic appears in the archaeological layers of this period, notably in the oases of Bukhara and the Kashka Darya.[17] During the preceding period this new form of ceramic, molded and not turned, was characteristic of the region of the Syr Darya, whether of the delta (Džety-asar culture) or the middle course (Kaunči culture). It is as if populations arriving from the Syr Darya had to take refuge in Sogdiana due to Hun pressure, or came in order to return to cultivation lands that a stricken population had partially abandoned, bringing with them their ceramics.[18] Conversely, the sites of the Džety-asar culture were widely abandoned, and on the middle course of the Syr Darya, the town of Kanka diminished to a third of its initial surface area.

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[15] Ṭabarī I, 863, Engl. trans. vol. V, p. 94, or Masʿūdī, trans. Pellat, I, p. 229.
[16] Marshak and Raspopova, 1990a, p. 181.
[17] Thus at Nasaf/Erkurgan: Sulejmanov, 2000, p. 61.
[18] Burjakov, 1991, pp. 198–199. It is possible that infiltrations of people from the north could have extended over several centuries, but a massive influx which repopulated Sogdiana in the 5th century is attested.

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The people arriving from the north added to the local population, which did not disappear.[19] Sogdiana, separated from the steppe by a fragile agricultural zone along the Syr Darya, reaped the benefits of the withdrawal of these populations to the south and the experienced labor that they contributed, whatever may have been the ravages caused by the invasions in Sogdiana itself.[20]

In Bactriana

To the south, the situation seems to be more difficult. In the absence of large-scale excavations in southern Bactriana for the period which interests us—Balkh has been the object only of sondages—the information available is solely of a fragmentary nature. On the other hand, important surface explorations have prompted attempts to evaluate the variations in population in eastern Bactriana on the basis of ceramics.[21] Furthermore, northern Bactriana is relatively well known thanks to Soviet excavations. All of the available data support the idea of a sharp decline in the region from the second half of the 4th century to the 6th century. The prosperity attested by the sites belongs to the Kushano-Sassanid period preceding the Chionite invasions, thus to the first half of the 4th century.[22] The 5th century was on the contrary a period of general decline for the urban sites. In the valley of the Wakhsh, for example, the irrigation network was partially abandoned.[23] Layers of burning are visible at most of the

[19] Burjakov and Askarov, 1997. See Obel'čenko, 1992, pp. 90–8 concerning the kurgans from the 2nd to the 7th century CE.

[20] These two cultures were agro-pastoral (Grošev, 1985). Marshak and Raspopova, 1990, p. 181 also consider the hypothesis that mountain-dwelling populations could have arrived to fill in the empty spaces, while conceding that at least a part of the new ceramic forms did indeed come from the Syr Darya.

[21] Lyonnet, 1997; Gardin, 1998.

[22] Soviet sources which make of northern Bactriana in the 5th century a prosperous region where urban life was maintained (which is indisputable in certain areas, for example around Termez) should be corrected by almost a century. They are based on a chronology of the Sassanid conquest of the Kushan Empire which has now been abandoned: the conquest took place in 233 (see Sims-Williams, 1996a, p. 643), nearly one hundred and forty years before the date taken as the chronological basis by the Soviet excavators (see the debate and a justification for the late chronology in Sedov, 1987, pp. 96–106). This reasoning is confirmed by the recent discovery of coins minted by the Sassanid Vahrām I at Bactra between 273 and 276 (Nikitin, 1999, pp. 259–263).

[23] Litvinskij and Solov'ev, 1985, pp. 135–6.

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sites of the region of Kunduz.[24] At Chaqalaq-tepe, a fortified village 11 km south-southeast of Kunduz, three layers of burning can be seen in the middle level (end of the 4th century and first half of the 5th century), despite the simultaneous construction of a double rampart.[25] At Balkh, sondages at Tepe Zargaran show significant barren layers separating two series of Sassanid layers.[26] Further to the west, at Dil'beržin tepe and Emshi tepe, the sites were abandoned after the middle of the 5th century. At Termez and Dal'verzintepe, necropolises appeared in large number over the old urban area in the 4th and 5th centuries,[27] while the Buddhist monasteries around Termez (Karatepe) were pillaged by the troops of Shāpūr II,[28] then were abandoned and themselves invaded by sepultures.[29]

A comprehensive study of eastern Bactrian ceramics reveals the desertion of traditionally populated areas in the period which interests us here.[30] A surface exploration in the region of Balkh seems to entirely confirm the few sondages that have been made there,[31] and shows that several breaks occurred in the population of the area between the Kushano-Sassanid period and the Muslim conquest.[32] The plain of Bactra as well as the central Amu Darya seem to have undergone a decline which was much more significant than that suffered by the regions further east.[33] In the latter, areas that were highly populated during the Türk period were nearly deserted (the plain of Taluqan and plain of Kunduz).[34] Up to the time that the Türk period was fully under way, the low valleys of the tributaries north of the Amu Darya seem to have been sparsely populated.[35]

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[24] Lyonnet, 1997, p. 283.
[25] Higuchi and Kuwayama, 1970, p. 26.
[26] Gardin, 1957, p. 95.
[27] See Rtveladze, 1989, pp. 54 and 63, and Grenet, 1996b, p. 371.
[28] At least if one accepts the dating of the Sassanid graffiti found there to the reign of Shāpūr. On this point, see Lukonin, 1969.
[29] Rtveladze, 1989, p. 54. On the valley of the Surkhan Darya, see now the contributions and bibliography collected in Leriche *et alii*, 2001.
[30] Lyonnet, 1997, pp. 268–284. See equally Gardin, 1998: his chronological scale is much less detailed, which obscures the abandonments of the 5th century.
[31] See Gardin, 1957, p. 95 which describes layers untouched by any occupation between two Sassanian periods at Tepe Zargaran.
[32] Lyonnet, 1997, p. 279, n. 604 and p. 283.
[33] Lyonnet, 1997, p. 276.
[34] Lyonnet, 1997, p. 274.
[35] Lyonnet, 1997, p. 279.

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While the picture is on the whole indisputable, the results of archaeological excavations and explorations should be qualified. The Chinese pilgrim Xuanzang, who crossed the region from north to south around 630, describes both a strong Buddhist presence, particularly at Balkh, which had three thousand monks—implying an important local agricultural surplus to support them—and a half-deserted town:

> The city, though well fortified, is thinly populated. The products of the soil are extremely varied and the flowers, both on the land and water, would be difficult to enumerate. There are about 100 convents and 3000 monks.[36]

The contrast with Samarkand, described in the same text as "highly populated," is clear. An attentive examination of the description of Bactriana by Xuanzang multiplies the signs of decline. It was a land of epidemics, and the grandeur of its monasteries belonged to the past: the "New Monastery" of Balkh had been pillaged on several occasions, and the clergy in the area was of poor quality.[37] The context of this passage is that of a very gradual convalescence of the region: Balkh again became an important town in the region only much later, in the course of the Muslim period. The Muslims arrived there starting in 643, and they did not encounter any resistance.[38] Throughout the time with which we are dealing here, the region seems to have been very much at an ebb in comparison with its neighbor to the north, Sogdiana, which fought fiercely against the Arabs.

2. *The Sogdian Recovery of the 5th Century*

Sogdiana indisputably experienced a great agricultural expansion in the 5th and 6th centuries. The population markedly increased. To the south of Samarkand, more than three quarters of the sites date from this time, and a large number of them would afterwards be abandoned: of 131 population centers in the Zarafshan steppe and between the Zarafshan and the Dargom canal, 115 originated during

[36] Trans. Beal, 1884, p. 44. *Da Tang Xiyu ji*, p. 12, col. 4.
[37] Trans. Beal, 1884, pp. 45–6.
[38] Ṭabarī, I, 2683, Engl. trans. vol. XIV, p. 54.

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this period, of which only 52 remained at the end of the Middle Ages.[39] In the marshy valley of the Zarafshan, it was at this time that an area of more than one hundred square kilometers in the region of Ishtīkhan, to the west of Samarkand, was developed and populated.[40] The situation is identical in the Karshi oasis (Erkurgan, formerly Nasaf): of 460 sites from all periods, 350 were occupied between the 4th and the 6th century.[41] After the advance of the desert in the first centuries CE, the western periphery of the oasis of Bukhara was extended 22 km by irrigation in the 6th century[42] [see fold-out map 1 for this and the following locations, as well as for the canals and walls].

Agricultural Wealth

This record of growth, established for the region as a whole by cross-checking several series of indices from throughout Sogdiana, is problematic with regard to a certain number of specific points: in particular, it is more difficult to establish the date at which some of the great agricultural works were constructed, such as the great canals and the walls at the peripheries of the oases. These great collective works, whose effects were noted in the 9th and 10th centuries by the Muslim geographers, have generally been attributed to two well-defined periods of Sogdian history: the pre-Achaemenid period and the 5th and 6th centuries CE. Thus the Dargom, the principal canal of the region of Samarkand, must have existed from the foundation of the city, at least over some first part of its extent, since the topography of the area excludes all other means of water supply for the city.[43] But the other canals, for which this topographical criterion is lacking, are more difficult to date, at least in the absence of an indisputable ceramic chronology. It is possible that new lands had been irrigated

[39] A rapid survey can be found in Burjakov and Askarov, 1997. This chronology has been established on the basis of surface ceramics.
[40] Pugačenkova, 1983.
[41] Sulejmanov, 2000, pp. 83–6.
[42] The limit of the desert changed from 12 kilometers east of Varaxša, a village situated to the west of the oasis, to 10 kilometers west of it. See Muxamedžanov, 1978, pp. 94–7. He bases his work on the pioneering study by Šiškin, 1963, pp. 19–31.
[43] Šiškina, 1987, p. 165.

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and new canals excavated in order to deal with the undeniable growth of the population.[44]

The Sogdian countryside also benefitted from the construction of gigantic walls, intended to fight against nomadic raids as much as the advance of desert sands.[45] The Great Wall, a colossal work with a circumference of more than two hundred and fifty kilometers surrounding the oasis of Bukhara, could date to the end of the 5th century,[46] and it was not the only one to be built at that time: it is possible that the long walls which extended across the north of Sogdiana, from Bukhara to Ferghana, also date from this period.[47]

In the space of a century and a half Sogdiana thus became a full world, whose population had to embark on the conquest of farm lands, won from the steppe and marshes or recaptured from the desert. This agricultural apogee of Sogdiana was not reached at the expense of the towns, for no transfer of population to the countryside can be discerned. Quite to the contrary, at that time the towns of Sogdiana entered upon a remarkable growth.

Urban Expansion

The urban network was profoundly modified by the creation of new towns in the Zarafshan valley, which were often built on older sites. Bukhara, Paykent and Panjikent developed rapidly on plans of the Hippodamian type (rectangular walls, an orthogonal network of streets), examples of which are also found in eastern Sassanid Iran.[48] In the Karshi oasis, the period from the 4th to the 6th century marks the zenith of Nasaf (Erkurgan,[49] which, with 150 hectares, was without doubt the largest city of Sogdiana at the beginning of the 5th century—Samarkand having diminished to 70 hectares with a reduction to its northern part).[50] Its decline, starting in the 6th century,

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[44] Burjakov and Askarov, 1997, p. 73 date the Barsh, Barmish and also the Bashmin to the 5th century on the basis of the distribution of population.

[45] Frye, 1965, pp. 10 and 91.

[46] Adylov, 1995, who bases his conclusions on the methods of construction as well as the date of the ceramics found inside and outside the perimeter of the wall.

[47] Shishkina, 1994, p. 93. A plan of the section from Kata-kurgan to Džizak can be found in Muxamedov, 1972, p. 133.

[48] Semënov, 1989, and Grenet, 1996b.

[49] Sulejmanov, 2000.

[50] On Samarkand, see mainly the 4 volumes of the series *Afrasiab*, 1969–1975. We still await the publication of the results of the current Franco-Uzbek excavations.

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corresponds to a redistribution of population within the oasis, for which there was more than compensation in the growth of the other Sogdian cities.

This growth has primarily been studied at Samarkand and still more so at Panjikent.[51] The latter city, founded in the middle of the 5th century about fifty kilometers east of Samarkand, very rapidly overflowed its urban framework and city walls.[52] A new line of fortifications, liberated from the initial rectangular plan, was built at the end of the century to surround the suburbs, which increased the city's surface area from 8 to 13.5 hectares. The city continued to grow, although at a less steady rate, for at the end of the 7th century a small bazaar appeared outside the walls to the northeast, as did an artisans' suburb to the south. The city of Samarkand was provided with an elevated citadel and a line of internal ramparts, either in the second half of the 5th century or at its close, which testifies simultaneously to the urban decline of the preceding period (retreat to the northern third of the site) and to a strong government: a century later, the whole of the plateau was already reoccupied and new ramparts had been constructed on the site of the old Greek ones.[53] Five kilometers long, they encompassed 218 hectares. Furthermore, Samarkand at that time benefitted from a larger wall protecting a part of the oasis, 20 square kilometers in all.[54] Finally, at Paykent, located at the other end of the Zarafshan valley, a square outer wall measuring 330 meters per side enclosed a town of 11 hectares near the old citadel[55] [see plate VII, ill. 2].

The economic and demographic dynamism of Sogdiana after the great invasions is thus an established fact: cities and countryside experienced their maximum development. While many sites in Bactriana were permanently abandoned, Sogdiana, its heir, became the principal center of agricultural wealth and population in Central Asia.

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[51] The principal reference work concerning the cities of Central Asia remains Belenickij, Bentovič and Bolšakov, 1973. For Panjikent, see in particular Belenickij, Maršak and Raspopova, 1981; for Nasaf (Erkurgan): Sulejmanov, 2000; and for the development of urban life at Panjikent: Raspopova, 1993.

[52] Semënov, 1989, p. 129.

[53] Šiškina, 1987, p. 93. On p. 92 is a plan of the successive lines of ramparts. See Belenickij, Bentovič and Bolšakov, 1973, p. 220 ff.

[54] Plotted in Šiškina, 1987, p. 169. This is the *Devori Qalimat.*

[55] Semënov, 1989, p. 130.

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3. *The Political Roots of Prosperity from the Huns to the Hephtalites*

But what power was behind this Sogdian recovery—a recovery which was unquestionably organized in both its urban and agricultural aspects? Contrary to the commonly held opinion that the Hun invasions created a series of economic, demographic and political disasters, the Hunnic period, from 350 to the second half of the 5th century, was, after the invasions themselves, a time of rapid development in Sogdiana, thanks to significant contributions of population and to a certain political stability over the course of three generations.

Huns and Kidarites in Sogdiana

First there occurred a fusion between Sogdians and refugees from the Syr Darya, and it is possible that the irrigation network began to be repaired, owing to several decades of calm at the beginning of the 5th century. New principalities were born, notably Maymurgh, attested in the Chinese texts from perhaps the year 457.[56] A passage in the *Wei shu* mentions the capture of Sogdiana by the Xiongnu 匈奴, and in 457 the presence on the throne of Samarkand of a Xiongnu king Huni, the third of that line:

> The country of Sute 粟特 is situated to the west of the Pamirs. It is what was Yancai 奄蔡 in ancient times. It is also called Wennasha 溫那沙. It lies on an extensive swamp and to the northwest of Kangju 康居. It is 16,000 *li* distant from Dai 代. Formerly, the Xiongnu killed the king and took the country. King Huni 忽倪 was the third ruler of the line.[57]

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[56] If one accepts the identification of the town of Mimi 迷密 (*Wei shu*, chap. 102, p. 2269) with the town of Mi 米 in the *Tang shu* (chap. 221, p. 6247). On 457, see the following note. Chavannes, 1903, p. 144, and Ma Yong, 1989, pp. 146–7. Archaeological data in Staviskij, 1959, and Staviskij and Urmanova, 1958.

[57] *Wei shu*, chap. 102, p. 2270, trans. Enoki, 1955, p. 44. The chronology proposed here differs from that developed in the first edition of this work, which was based on Enoki, 1955. The piece of intelligence stating that the Xiongnu reigned over Samarkand for three generations, preserved in the *Wei shu*, chap. 102, p. 2270, does not date from 437 but from the embassy of 457, as is made clear in the *Tongdian*, chap. 193, p. 1039: "The *Wei shu* states that the Xiongnu had killed the king [of Sogdiana] and taken the country. During the reign of Wencheng they sent an emissary to the court with tribute for the first time. The king Huni was the third of the line."

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But these Xiongnu can only be the Kidarites. It is often desired to place the Kidarites earlier in the history of Central Asia, at the end of the 4th century, but all the sources agree in situating them around 420–440: only an incorrect reading of coin legends disrupts the establishment of a coherent chronology.[58] The Kidarite expansion began at the end of the 420s in Bactriana before being checked by Vahrām V near Merv. Blocked to the west, Kidara marched to the south and took Gandhāra, where he left one of his sons,[59] before returning to the north to seize Sogdiana, probably after 440. In fact, the name "Kyδr" (Kidara) occurs on several "archer coins" from Samarkand (third group). The absolute chronology of these coin issues is not established, but the fourth group might correspond to the second half of the 5th century and to the 6th century.[60] The Sogdian cities sent embassies to China until 441, after which a break occurred until 457. The arrival of the Kidarites in Sogdiana therefore took place afterward, between 440 and the development of the Hephtalite power, which took the Kidarites from behind starting in 456. It is at this time that the Byzantine author Priscus speaks of Kidarite Huns in the steppe to the west of Sogdiana.[61] It was probably during this period that the Sogdian onomastic system extensively assimilated the given or family name *xwn*, which is found in the inscriptions of the Upper Indus.

The Sassanid military operations of the 440s and the Hephtalite expansion into Tukharistan starting in the year 456 split the Kidarite Empire into two parts, one to the south, the other in Sogdiana. This could also explain the abrupt disappearance of Sogdian caravans from Gilgit: the last generation of Sogdian caravaneers on this route was that of the *xwn*, but the sons of the latter no longer travelled there. The Kidarites brought techniques and populations from Bactriana. They achieved the integration of the territory thanks

[58] Grenet, 2002, criticizing the readings of coins from Tepe Maranjan by Ghirshman (1948, pp. 73–5), continued by Göbl (1967, pp. 17–18) and Cribb (1990, pp. 179–181). Curiel showed in 1953 that these readings were incorrect (Curiel and Schlumberger, 1953, pp. 119–123).

[59] Enoki, 1969, pp. 8–14, has shown that the unification of the lands to the north and south of the Hindu Kush had not been accomplished before 412, according to the evidence of Buddhist monks. On the silver coins of Kidara from Gandhāra, his crown imitates that of Yazdgird II (438–456).

[60] Zeimal, 1983, p. 251.

[61] Blockley, 1983, pp. 337, 347, 349, 355 and 361.

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to small, planned urban communities like Panjikent, Paykent and Bukhara,[62] which resulted from the demographic expansion and made it possible to put the country in a position to defend against both the neighboring Sassanids and the Hephtalites, who had chased them from their Bactrian bases beginning in 456. The enormous task of raising the citadel of Samarkand is another example of the achievements of this great power during the second half of the 5th century.[63] In the years from 440 to 470, cities were founded and walls were built in Sogdiana, and this development must be linked to the appearance of a new and strong political power, which alone was capable of mobilizing the population to achieve these great works. The Kidarite power also arranged embassies in order to free merchant prisoners in China.[64] Thanks to the contributions of the Kidarites and to this enduring stability, Sogdiana, isolated from the wars between Kidarites, Hephtalites and Sassanids that ravaged Bactriana,[65] at last gained demographic and economic ascendancy over its Bactrian rival, which in antiquity was certainly the principal center of international commerce in Central Asia.

This ascendancy was also cultural and societal. To be sure, as the passage from Xuanzang shows, Bactriana preserved a significant number of Buddhist monasteries, a sign of a cultural life that was still strong. The role played by the Barmakids—ancient masters of the "New Monastery" at Balkh—during the Muslim period shows that the Bactrian elites and the Buddhist clergy were integrated. Moreover, Xuanzang paints a favorable picture of the written culture of the region, which he considers superior to that of Sogdiana,[66] but many signs point to a real transfer between Bactriana and Sogdiana: while all the evidence argues for a very poor Sogdian artistic culture during

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[62] Semënov, 1989, and Grenet, 1996b.

[63] Under the colossal platform of heavy blocks of pisé (four meters thick), on which the new citadel of the 5th century was built, the ceramics are from the second half of the 5th century. On the other hand, the ceramics discovered on top of the layer of pisé date from the end of the 5th century. This information has been very kindly provided to me by the archaeologist in charge of the site, Olga Inevatkina.

[64] See above, page 69.

[65] Note that Ferghana, another region in contact with the nomad world, experienced the same development (Anarbaev and Matbabaev, 1993/4, p. 223).

[66] Trans. Beal, 1884, p. 38: "Their literary records have increased and surpassed those of the people of Suli [Sogdiana]."

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the preceding period, the period of urban expansion in Sogdiana was also one of artistic flowering, several features of which are related to features of Bactrian art in the 4th and the first half of the 5th centuries.[67] The first mural paintings at Panjikent strongly resemble the latest paintings at Dil'beržin, in Bactriana.[68] Architecture and town planning also received a great boost and imitated Bactrian models.[69] Lastly, Bactrian toponyms, and notably the town of Kushaniyya between Bukhara and Samarkand, appeared in Sogdiana. This influence can be linked to the possible presence of Bactrian refugees, or to the transfer of artisans under the Kidarite power, which at one point unified the two regions before being driven from the south. The urban elites then forming in Sogdiana inherited the refined tastes and ways of life which had long developed in India and the Kushan Empire, and had been maintained during the Kushano-Sassanid period.

For the history of Sogdian commerce, this economic and cultural phenomenon is of capital importance: the merchants of the Zarafshan valley, which the Chinese sources began to call the "river of the caravaneers," henceforth had permanently at their disposal, and under their control, the principal center of consumption in Central Asia, in the increasing number of towns and the many elites they included. Sogdian commerce then ceased to be the largely extroverted large-scale trade glimpsed in the sources of the preceding period: now it could rely on solid local economic foundations.

Hephtalite Silver

In 509 the Hephtalites conquered the country, in which the Kidarite dynasty had probably been waning since the 470s, weakened by defeats at the hands of the Sassanids and the Hephtalites.[70] While the written sources do not make mention of this conquest, it is strongly suggested by the replacement of Sogdian by Hephtalite embassies at the Chinese courts, beginning in 509, for this was in

[67] See Grenet, 1996b, pp. 367–8 and 388–9.
[68] Maršak, in Azarpay, 1981, p. 50.
[69] Grenet, 1996b. See also Semënov, 1996, for a systematic study of the walls of Panjikent and Paykent.
[70] In particular, they were defeated by Pērōz in 468 (Priscus, trans. Blockley, 1983, p. 361).

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reality a matter of substitution of one group for the other: no Hephtalite embassy was conducted between the years 456 and 509, while the Sogdian embassies were numerous at that time; the situation was then abruptly reversed, with the complete disappearance of Sogdian embassies and the sudden appearance of numerous Hephtalite embassies. This conquest was not without clashes, but these remained limited: at Panjikent, the only site for which the question has been studied, the city walls and temple II were partially destroyed, then immediately restored, and a barracks of three stories intended for a permanent garrison was added to the outer wall.[71] The Türk conquest which occurred fifty years later was itself also rapid and hardly seems to have caused any damage. In sum, during the century which preceded the Türk conquest, the years of war were few in number in Sogdiana, according to the sources we have available—which, it is true, are very incomplete.

The Hephtalites were fabulously rich when they established themselves in Sogdiana. On several occasions they had defeated the Sassanid sovereigns, and in 484 they killed Pērōz in battle. His successor, Kawād I (484, 488–497, 499–531) was their protégé, and they had to return him to the throne of Iran several times. For decades, at least until the beginning of the reign of Khusrō Anōshervān (531–579), the Sassanids paid a colossal tribute to the Hephtalites. On one single occasion, Pērōz was obliged to send as many silver coins as could be carried by thirty mules, and these silver coins are still in our own day found by the thousands in the Afghan markets. It was indeed a great part of the Sassanid monetary supply that departed at that time for Central Asia and eastern Iran. The Sogdians benefitted from this wealth. The Sassanid apocalyptic texts mention Sogdian troops among the pillagers of Iran.[72] The strict replacement of Sogdian embassies by Hephtalite embassies shows that the Sogdians continued their activities in China, having simply changed masters. Established at the heart of Hephtalite power, they disseminated these coins throughout the Hephtalite Empire which, at its apogee in 520, at least nominally controlled all of Central Asia from Merv to Turfan

[71] Marshak and Raspopova, 1990a, p. 182.

[72] Grenet, 1996b, p. 388, n. 57, citing the *Zand ī Wahman Yasn* (4.58), where the enemies of Iran are enumerated: "Huns (*Hyōn*), Türks, Hephtalites (? corrupt form), inhabitants of the deserts and mountains, Chinese, Kabulis, Sogdians, Byzantines, Red Huns, White Huns."

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and Gandhāra. It was at that time that Sassanid silver coins became the customary means of payment in all of Central Asia, up to and including the Gansu corridor,[73] for close to two centuries. Over and above the new internal market available to them, in the Hephtalite silver the Sogdian merchants were able to find an accumulation of capital which enabled them to increase the volume of their enterprises.

4. *The Colonial Expansion*

One consequence of the dynamism of the Sogdian economy was an extension of the Sogdian area to the north. In the 5th and 6th centuries, Sogdian colonization occurred in areas for which information is until that time completely or nearly absent—aside from the data from Ptolemy already alluded to, or Chinese texts pointing out the tributary relations which existed between Xiongnu and Kangju.

In Čāč

The Sogdian flowering of the 5th century resulted in the diffusion of Sogdian culture in the area of Čāč-Ilaq during the following century. Made up of the Čirčik and Ahangaran (Angren) valleys, this region forms an oasis on the right bank of the middle course of the Syr Darya, on the western piedmont of the Tianshan (Tashkent oasis and Angren valley).[74] A densely populated zone of contact between nomadic and sedentary peoples, cities had long existed there: the great site of Kanka (150 hectares) was the principal city until the 8th century.[75] In the 6th and 7th centuries, Čāč entered culturally into the Sogdian sphere of influence. This is proven by several types of data.

The monetary exchanges between these regions were significant. Thus, coins from Čāč are found in rather large number at Panjikent,[76]

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[73] *Sui shu*, chap. XXIV, p. 691. See Thierry, 1993 and Skaff, 1998.

[74] See Filanovič, 1983 and Burjakov, 1982, and the contributions in Bernard and Grenet, 1991. Study of the coinage is found in Rtveladze, 1982, pp. 31–9, and Rtveladze, 1997–8. Burjakov, 1990, pp. 82–100, takes up the connections between urban development and trade.

[75] Burjakov (dir.), 1990, pp. 6–77, map p. 6.

[76] Smirnova, 1981, pp. 371–393.

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just as Sogdian coins are found in Čāč.[77] In the Tashkent oasis, coins were issued by numerous small local lords who assumed the Sogdian title of *xwβ*, "lord."[78] Their legends are entirely in Sogdian, with the exception of a single, very rare, type of coin, bearing the Türk title of *tudun* (*tδwn*).[79] The iconography presents a mixture of Sogdian and Türk features.[80] Fragmented politically, Čāč was dominated by a numerous and sogdianized aristocracy. The aristocratic residences were constructed and decorated according to Sogdian models,[81] while the peasant villages and the sites situated away from the main roads preserved a more archaic culture.[82] Lastly, the merchants from Čāč were regarded by the Chinese of the 7th century as Sogdian merchants just like the others.[83]

In the oasis of Otrar to the northwest, the origin of new methods of irrigation implemented in the 6th century should most likely be sought in the old agricultural civilizations of the south, in Sogdiana or Khorezm. These improvements were linked to the presence of the Türk Empire, which unified these areas and made such a diffusion possible by establishing at Otrar the *tudun* in charge of Čāč.[84] The empire simultaneously increased the need for greater food production, and thus set in motion a cycle in which irrigated areas were extended and population and urbanization increased, thanks to techniques brought from the south.[85] The carved boards from Keder (near Otrar) show that the culture of the elites was profoundly sogdianized.

A continuous zone with predominantly Sogdian cultural characteristics—although the certain role of local heritage should not be

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[77] Burjakov, 1990, p. 97.

[78] Archaeology confirms this fragmentation: the sites are numerous, but none of them played a role like Samarkand in this oasis, or of Kanka further to the south. The most notable of them, Mingurjuk, covered only 35 hectares (Filanovič, 1982, p. 31).

[79] Rtveladze, 1982, p. 39.

[80] Rtveladze, 1982.

[81] See Filanovič, 1991, p. 208 for a study of Sogdian and local influences on the seigniorial castle of Čāč from the 5th to the 7th century, and Burjakov, 1982, p. 137.

[82] Filanovič, 1991, p. 208.

[83] Xuanzang, trans. Beal, p. 26. See p. 116.

[84] Kljaštornyj, 1964, pp. 158 and 219.

[85] Passage from an irrigation founded on the use of water captured from flooding, naturally retained in limans or in basins dug for that purpose, to an irrigation based on canals of considerable size (20 km for the Sangyl-aryk). Grošev, 1985, p. 45 ff., and pp. 118–124.

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neglected—therefore took shape from the 6th century onward outside the traditional areas of Sogdian population, and extended far to the north.

In Semireč'e

To the northeast of Čāč, in the land of the seven rivers, Semireč'e, the Sogdian impression was greater still. The Talas plain and all the piedmont north of the Kirgizskij Alatau as far as the lake Issyk Kul owed their first urbanization to the Sogdians, during the 5th and 6th centuries.[86] The process was quite different from that observed further to the south in Čāč or Otrar: here it was really a matter of colonization and an extension of sedentary and urban cultures to the north.

A few texts make it possible for us to sketch the pattern of these developments. Narshakhī, citing al-Nishapurī, gives the political reasons for the foundation of the town of Jamūkath, near Taraz,[87] which concerned the political exile of a part of the population of Bukhara in support of its nobles (*dihqāns*) against the tyranny of Abrūī:

> After the lapse of some time, as Abrūī grew powerful, he exercised tyranny such that the inhabitants of the district could not stand it. The dihqāns and the rich (merchants) fled from this district and went to Turkistān and Ṭarāz where they built a city. They called the city Ḥamūkat because the great dihqān, who was chief of the band which had fled, was called Ḥamūk.[88]

The Sogdian colonization of Semireč'e was most probably by noble initiative. From the excavations of Suyab/Ak-Bešim and Navaket/Krasnaja Rečka, archaeology shows the establishment of towns around castles built on the Sogdian model.[89]

Sogdian colonization was arranged along an east-west line on the piedmont between 500 and 1,000 meters, and profited from gray earth soils which, thanks to abundant water, allowed the cultivation of wheat, grapevines and orchards. In the plain and on the plateaux,

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[86] See Maršak and Raspopova, 1983; Ageeva and Pacevič, 1958, and above all Bajpakov, 1986.

[87] Site of Majtobe, dating from the 6th century: see Bajpakov, 1986, pp. 28–9.

[88] Narshakhī, trans. Frye, p. 7. "Ḥamūk" should be corrected to "Jamūk."

[89] For Ak-Bešim, see Semënov and Tašbaeva, 1997, and for Krasnaja Rečka, *Krasnaja Rečka i Burana*, 1989, pp. 71–2. The Chinese sources concerning Suyab are collected in Zuev, 1960.

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the steppe conditions reduced the cultivable area and animal husbandry predominated.[90] The history of the development of these towns is still rather poorly known. At Navaket, the town is distinguished by the extent of its long walls, which delimit a territory of twenty square kilometers (as at Samarkand), within which can be discerned the traces of the irrigation system and the ruins of the town itself: these cover a surface area of one hundred hectares.[91] From the beginning the population seems to have been commercial, agricultural and military.

The general orientation of the Sogdian colonies of Semireč'e has often led to a view of them first as commercial settlements, staggered like so many steps on the "Silk Road." Nevertheless, this hypothesis does not withstand analysis: the large Sogdian sites are often situated at less than twelve kilometers from each other,[92] concentrated in a small area between modern Biškek and the Issyk Kul. Nothing in the commercial techniques of the time justifies a succession of stages at such close intervals. The choice of sites shows that these were agricultural settlements first and foremost, established by nobles who were creating estates on virgin lands. While the texts, and that of Narshakhī in particular, testify to the presence of wealthy individuals, whom we assume to be merchants, since the beginning of these towns, such rich persons were not the founders of the settlements. The Sogdian colonies formed an urban network that was extremely suitable to the development of trade oriented toward the steppe or the Tianshan, but this commerce was originally secondary to the development of agriculture.

This in no way detracts from the major importance of these towns for the history of Sogdian commerce. Xuanzang travelled the whole region from the Issyk Kul to Samarkand around 630. Upon his return to China, he wrote:

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[90] Bajpakov, 1986, pp. 7–12.

[91] It seems that the central quadrant (Sharistan 2) could have been the oldest fortified nucleus of the town, constructed at the same time as the separate castles on its periphery. The excavations of Sharistan 2 have revealed the existence of three levels of occupation: 11th–12th centuries, 8th–10th centuries and 5th–8th centuries, this last level corresponding to the time at which the Sogdians arrived. The growth of the town in the 7th and the 8th centuries is observed in proportion to the increase of the space occupied between Sharistan 2 and the citadel, and to the extension of its defensive system. For all these matters see *Krasnaja Rečka i Burana*, 1989, p. 69 ff.

[92] Bajpakov, 1986, pp. 32–4.

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> From the town of the Suye 素葉 river [Suyab] as far as the Jieshuangna 羯霜那 country [Kesh] the land is called Suli 窣利 [Sogdiana], and the people are called by the same name. The literature and the spoken language are likewise so called.[93]

Čāč and Semireč'e were thus in his eyes part of Sogdiana. He also considered this area to be peopled largely by merchants. Concerning Suyab and Talas, he reports:

> Suyab. There the western merchants of all lands live together.
> Talas. This town measures 8 to 9 *li* in circumference. The western merchants of all lands live there together.[94]

And with regard to the Sogdians of the whole country from Suyab on:

> They are as a rule crafty and deceitful in their conduct and extremely covetous. Both parent and child plan how to get wealth; and the more they get the more they esteem each other; but the well-to-do and the poor are not distinguished; even when immensely rich, they feed and clothe themselves meanly. Those who cultivate the earth and those who seek profit are divided nearly in half.[95]

The Sogdian commercial area was thus doubled by this extension toward the steppe. At the end of their push to the north of the area of Sogdian culture, the Sogdians created a pioneering urban front which put them in direct contact with the world of the steppe. A refined urban culture, constantly enriched by Iranian and Indian contributions, existed in close proximity to the nomad world, and would merge with it.

This enrichment of the Sogdians, and the demographic and economic shift of western Central Asia in favor of Sogdiana, constitute the major facts which explain the domination of Sogdian merchants during the early Middle Ages. The land which the hazards of geography placed at the western end of the immense Himalayan barrier and at the frontier of the steppe consequently became the principal market of Central Asia, following the great invasions and the fierce,

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[93] Trans. Beal, p. 26, corrected, like the following citations, with the aid of Éric Trombert, to whom I give my sincere thanks. *Da Tang Xiyu ji*, p. 8, col. 6.
[94] *Da Tang Xiyu ji*, p. 8, col. 4 and col. 12.
[95] Trans. Beal, p. 27, corrected, *Da Tang Xiyu ji*, p. 8, col. 8.

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and ruinous, resistance of the Sassanids against the nomads further to the south. It was on this basis that the Sogdian merchants were able to extend their influence, and they did this with redoubled energy on the old routes travelled by their ancestors—first and foremost, that is to say, in the direction of China.

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CHAPTER FIVE

IN CHINA

The doubling of the inner commercial area of the Sogdians and the disappearance, owing to the invasions, of all competition from the southeast left the Sogdians in a dominant position toward the east, as far as China. The ancient network did not weaken but was profoundly restructured and spread out on a scale without comparison to the preceding period. For an account of this extension, the sources are essentially Chinese, including business documents, narratives and official texts. In fact, beginning in 640, China embarked upon the conquest of Central Asia and consolidated its control over these regions from 692 onward. Although the Chinese armies never advanced as far as Sogdiana and Chinese suzerainty there was purely nominal, the Chinese texts abound in references to the Sogdians. It is probable that the textual and archaeological data concerning the Sogdian merchants in China between the 5th and 8th centuries CE themselves alone represent as much information as all the other sources about the Sogdians combined. But it is necessary, before making use of them, to respond to a question which appears to be quite simple.

1. *The Sogdian Merchants in Chinese Sources*

How does one know that a person is a Sogdian in a Chinese source? For the period before the 6th century, the response is relatively easy, as we have seen: the Sogdians bore the name of Kang, abbreviated from Kangju, the state which included the largest part of Sogdiana in antiquity. The rarity of this name, which did not belong to ancient Chinese onomastics, as well as the fact that it was often associated with the term *hu*, a word which had the general sense of barbarian, but more and more specifically a barbarian from the Iranian-speaking West, assures the identification. After the 6th century the situation was different. The Chinese rarely used the expression *sute ren* 粟特人, which would be the translation of Sogdian. The hypothesis commonly presented would have it that the Sogdians in China from the

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Wei to the Tang bore distinctive names: besides Kang 康, we find An 安, He 何, Cao 曹, Shi 石, Mi 米 and Shi 史. These names would definitely enable us to identify Sogdians from Samarkand in the strict sense (Kang), from the region of Bukhara (An), from the middle valley of the Zarafshan (the region of Kushaniyya, He), from north of the Zarafshan (from Ishtīkhan and Kabudhan as far as Ustrushana, Cao), from Čāč (Shi 石), from southeast of the Zarafshan (Maymurgh, Mi, and during certain periods Panjikent),[1] and from the valley of the Kashka Darya (Kesh, Shi 史).

Few authors depart from this postulate, which certainly has the advantage of greatly simplifying research. But the reality is more complex, for two reasons. In the first place, with the exception of Kang, and perhaps Mi,[2] these names are attested, although rarely, for others than Sogdians: no one considers Cao Cao, who put an end to the Han dynasty, to have been a Sogdian, and rightly so. The second reason is sociological: the normal processes of integration into the accomodating society over generations render problematic an overly precise use of family names for identifying Sogdians, who could perhaps have been completely sinicized as a result of marriages.

Thus, numerous itinerant musicians named Cao, who travelled the Chinese routes, are habitually considered to have been natives of northern Sogdiana.[3] But they were much more likely to have been Kucheans, and bore the family name of Cao only because this was the name of the first great family of Kuchean musicians to introduce the Indian repertoire into China, where it became immensely popular from the Wei to the Tang.[4] While Sogdian music was in fact present in China, and while it was played at the court during official banquets, it nevertheless occupied a lesser position than that

[1] The question of the absence of Panjikent in the Chinese sources has given rise to a debate which has not come to a conclusion. It might be that under the name of Mi 米 the Chinese understood the whole region to the southeast of Samarkand, including Panjikent. See Yoshida, 1993b, p. 254. The capital of the country of Mi, Boxide 鉢息德, pronounced Patsiktek at the time, is to my thinking indeed Panjikent (*Xin Tang shu*, chap. 221, p. 6247). On this subject see also Grenet and de la Vaissière, 2002, pp. 165–6.

[2] Kuwabara, 1926. My thanks to Yutaka Yoshida for having drawn my attention to this reference.

[3] Schafer, 1963, p. 54.

[4] Lévi, 1913, pp. 349–352. This family played a considerable role in the adaptation of the Indian repertoire to Chinese taste over several generations.

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of the music of Kucha. The itinerant Cao musicians of the Chinese routes, singing in a bastardized Sanskrit, did not come from Sogdiana but from Kucha. The name criterion is in this instance deceptive.

The case of the An families equally illustrates the complexity of the matter. Before its use to designate the natives of Bukhara, this name, rare in ancient China, indicated during the Han period the subjects of the various Parthian dynasties. But numerous foreign families in China claimed descent from this first wave of settlement, which we may certainly suppose had left descendants in China.[5] Must we then systematically exclude the many people named An from the number of Sogdians in China?[6] If the majority of these An were not Sogdians, but Parthians or Sassanid subjects, we would then quite poorly understand the role played by the Sogdian language from the 6th century onward, as much among the Türks as in the documents found at Dunhuang and Turfan, while the influence of Pahlavi and Parthian, as living languages and not as liturgical languages, seems to have been about nil. Furthermore, the few An families truly descended from Indo-Parthian ancestors lived for generations within communities fed by emigration from Sogdiana. The ones who were not sinicized were sogdianized as quickly as the Sogdian element increased.

The available historiography remains based upon a partially erroneous hypothesis. The name criterion can give clues but cannot alone assure the ethnicity of persons, all the more so when a text explicitly specifies that they belong to another ethnic group.[7] In practice, prudence makes a re-examination of the enormous Chinese corpus necessary. Other much more reliable criteria quite often make it possible to verify that the bearers of these names were indeed Sogdians,

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[5] See the case mentioned above, p. 62, of the family of Li Baoyu.

[6] Forte, 1996. Antonino Forte here steadfastly refuses to consider people bearing the name An in Tang texts to have a Bukharan origin and wishes to see them as Parthians. This is certainly sometimes true, but Forte does not see the existence of two very different migratory strata bearing the same family name, a reflection of the development of the name of the country An, passing from the Arsacid states of Iran to Bukhara. Sogdian texts attest moreover to the use of the Chinese name An by the Sogdians themselves (thus a colophon of a Sogdian Buddhist text recopied at Luoyang in 728).

[7] Thus Shi Xiancheng 史憲誠, military governor of Hebei, although bearing a Sogdian name, was from the Xi 奚 ethnic group, as his biography in the *Dynastic Histories* specifies. This information has priority over the fact that Shi often designates Sogdians (*contra* Rong, 2000, p. 145).

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at least in terms of their origins. The use of given names is one such: a Sogdian given name, that is, the transcription into Chinese of a given name which can be interpreted in Sogdian, shows that at least in the preceding generation, the family still considered itself to be Sogdian. Another criterion is that of marriage: when a Kang married a Shi or an An, both were probably members of a Sogdian community. A third criterion is geographical: if the family of a person bearing these names is said to have come from the West during the 5th century or later, or if he is given the additional name of *hu*, or if again objects or representations linked to the Iranian-speaking West are found in his tomb, there is a good chance that we are dealing with a Sogdian. The absence of any influence from Iran proper on the culture of the Iranian-speaking émigrés in the Tarim basin and China—aside from liturgical languages and the small circle of refugees from the upper Sassanid nobility at Chang'an—is here important, for it enables us to restrict to Sogdiana alone the origin of these persons. Lastly, a certain number of terms seem in fact to have been reserved for the Sogdians in Tang literature, notably that of "*hu* with nine names" *jiu xing hu* 九姓胡, attested from the 8th century.[8]

Bearing in mind these requirements, the corpus remains very important. Without claiming to be exhaustive—not even a book would be sufficient for that purpose—we can attempt a geographical approach, distinguishing several areas in which Sogdian commercial expansion occurred before embarking on the analysis of some historical characteristics of that expansion.

2. *The Tarim and Gansu*

The Southern Route

The map of Sogdian settlements that I have established for the ancient network clearly shows that the Taklamakan desert was bypassed to the south. Certainly the kingdom of Loulan was, with Dunhuang and Khotan, the most important point on this route. At a date which is disputed, between the second third of the 4th century and the

[8] Pulleyblank, 1952, pp. 320–2.

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beginning of the 5th century, the site of the kingdom of Loulan was abandoned, probably due to an advancement of the desert around the Lobnor lake.[9] The kingdom withdrew to the mountainous piedmont to the south, and the Chinese gave it the name of the kingdom of Shanshan. The desert progressed and blocked part of the southern route, between Khotan and Dunhuang. The sites inhabited during the preceding period, such as Niya[10] or Karadong,[11] were deserted. Faxian, who travelled in the year 400, described a formidable desert between Dunhuang and Shanshan, and next an impoverished country.[12] This was unquestionably a major rupture in the geography of the Central Asian routes. In the 5th century the southern route was succeeded by a northern route which, from the passes of the upper Indus, led around the Taklamakan via Kashgar, Aqsu and Kucha. It was nevertheless to the south of the desert area, on the site of Shanshan, that one of the best known processes of Sogdian colonization occurred:

> In the *zhenguan* period (627–649), a great leader of the kingdom of Kang (Samarkand), Kang Yandian 康豔典, went to the east and lived in that town. Other *hu* followed him, and they formed a settlement, which is also called Dianhe cheng 典合城. On every side of this town is sand desert. In the second year of *shangyuan* (675), [the name Shanshan] was changed to Shi cheng zhen 石城鎮, and [this fortified town] was joined to Shazhou [. . .]
>
> New Town (Xin cheng 新城): [from this town] to the east, there are 240 *li* to the stronghold Town of Stone (Shi cheng zhen). When Kang Yandian established himself in Shanshan, he first built this town; this is why it is called New Town; the Han call it the town of Nuzhi (Nuzhi cheng 弩之城) [. . .]
>
> Town of the Grape (Putao cheng 蒲桃城): [from this town] to the south, there are 4 *li* to the stronghold Town of Stone, [and] it is Kang Yandian who built it. He planted grapevines within the town; this is why it is called Town of the Grape.
>
> Lastly, Town of Sapi (Sapi cheng 薩毗城): [from this town] to the north there are 480 *li* to the stronghold Town of Stone, [and] it is Kang Yandian who built it. This town is close to the lake of Sapi (Sapi ze 薩毗澤). The mountains are dangerous and close together.

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[9] For the first date see Brough, 1965, p. 604, and in favor of the second, Litvinskij (dir.), 1988, pp. 271–2, using Chinese works.

[10] Vorob'eva-Desjatovskaja, 1988, p. 92.

[11] Debaine-Francfort, Idriss and Wang, 1994, and Debaine-Francfort and Idriss, 2001.

[12] Trans. Beal, p. xxiv.

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> Constantly there are Tufan 吐 蕃 (Tibetans) and Tuyuhun 土 谷 渾 who go and come without interruption.[13]

This passage confirms what the *Xin Tang shu* indicates more briefly. It may be supposed that at the height of desertification, the Sogdians had like the others abandoned the area. There can therefore be no continuity here with the old colony of Loulan from the *Ancient Letters*, further to the north. Here as in Semireč'e, colonization was of noble origin. The geographical situation is comparable, with a northern piedmont and seasonal torrents. The Chinese text seems rather to lead to a military interpretation of this settlement, but for the Chinese it was doubtlessly a matter of gaining military advantage from a presence connected to other goals which remain unknown, perhaps agricultural reconquest, or surveillance of a commercial route which had revived a little in the 7th century. The location of the town of Sapi points also to trade with the nomads in the mountains. However that may be, the Sogdian presence endured, for at the end of the 7th century, the governor of Town of Stone still bore a Sogdian name.[14] Shi cheng later became Čarklik.[15]

The next great stage on the southern route was of course Khotan. Evidence concerning the Sogdian presence in this town or its environs is numerous and varied.[16] The Sogdians are known there by fragmentary Sogdian documents[17] and a stamp with the name of *Farn*, Fortune, as well as by Chinese documents mentioning Sogdian names. This body of evidence would be doubled if the Khotanese word for

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[13] Translated with commentary in Pelliot, 1916, taken from a Chinese treaty from Dunhuang dating from 885, brought away by A. Stein (Stein Chinese 917).

[14] Pelliot, 1916 mentions the names of the governor, Kang Fudanyan 康 拂 耽 延, and his younger brother, Dishebo 地 舍 撥 . The name of the first can be interpreted as Sogdian in the form *'prtmy'n* (Henning *apud* Pulleyblank, 1952, p. 333 n. 1). Perhaps these four towns are mentioned in Tibetan sources, which indicate—in the *Tibetan Chronicle of Dunhuang*—the capture, in 694, of a Tibetan official, Mgar Sta gu, by the Sog (Li Fang-Kuei, 1958). But the interpretation of Sog in Tibetan is not certain.

[15] Hamilton, 1977, p. 357.

[16] Yutaka Yoshida has recently gathered them in a convenient manner (1997, pp. 568–9).

[17] From the site of Mazar Tagh, they are from the 8th century at the earliest. See Sims-Williams, 1976, nos. 12, 15, 16, 23, 27, 30, 33. Only the first is commercial. Perhaps document D in Sims-Williams and Hamilton, 1990, pp. 39–40 (not commercial) and especially a fragment from the Trinkler collection, which speaks of multicolored silk (Sims-Williams, 1979, p. 337, n. 6), should be added to this list.

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merchant, *sūlye*, were in fact formed from "Sogdian."[18] A Sogdian influence on Khotanese iconography has also been suggested.[19]

The Sogdians were thus present on the southern route. Nothing is known of their trading activities, but hardly any other foreign merchants—Bactrians in particular—are seen in the sources. Even so, the Sogdian presence there was indeed smaller than it was to the north. This first route of the Sogdian network had become secondary, and it is impossible, given the current state of documentation, to know whether or not there had been a continuous Sogdian presence there since the 4th century.

Documentation for the Northern Route

A constant circulation of Sogdian populations was established between Semireč'e and Gansu from the 6th to the 8th century. The Sogdian population at Dunhuang and Turfan is known to us as it is nowhere else, Sogdiana included. In fact, these areas were extensively traversed by the archaeological expeditions at the beginning of the 20th century (Stein, Pelliot, von Le Coq, Hedin, Otani . . .) and for a half-century have benefitted from numerous fruitful Chinese excavations. Before detailing Sogdian participation in the commerce of these regions, it is necessary to linger a little over the documentation.

At the heart of this area, the cemeteries of Astana and Qarakhoja, near Turfan, have furnished many business documents, thanks to the local Chinese custom of preparing garments of paper for the deceased. These have been preserved due to the sand and dry conditions. Between 1959 and 1975, 456 tombs were excavated, of which 118 supplied fragments (27,000) enabling the reconstruction of 1,600 texts in Chinese, half administrative and half private. Five percent date from before 502, 30% from the period 502–640 (kingdom of Gaochang), and 65% from 640–778, during the Tang.[20]

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[18] This seems to have been accepted by the philologists: see Sims-Williams, 1996c, p. 46, and the references given by Yoshida, 1997, p. 568. Rong Xinjiang, 1993 interprets some dozen Khotanese texts in this sense.

[19] See Mode, 1991–2.

[20] The documents have been almost completely published in the series *Tulufan chuntu wenshu* in ten volumes (1982–1990). There is a new edition, with facsimiles and some fragments: *Tulufan chuntu wenshu*, in 4 volumes, 1992–6. See Lubo-Lesničenko, 1988, pp. 284–297 for a display of the site. Regarding these documents, we note, among a total of 281 contracts, 42 commercial contracts (of which

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The documents from Dunhuang, walled up at the beginning of the 11th century in Mogao cave no. 17, are later than those from the cemeteries of Turfan. In the main, the economic documents are from the 9th and above all from the 10th centuries. Only one contract is earlier, dating from the middle of the 8th century,[21] and it presents a Sogdian and a female *hu* slave (*hu nü*, 胡 奴). The Dunhuang documents are composed of numerous scribal exercises and scattered fragments. They are linguistically very diverse, with Sogdian and Uighur documents in particular, certain of which deal with commerce.[22]

We have very little information about the other great urban sites: thus Bešbalik, the Beiting 北 庭 of Chinese documents and the Panjikath of the Sogdian-Arabic texts,[23] is known only through indirect references in business documents from other sites, although Sogdian evidence in the forms of a travel permit and a Zoroastrian ossuary come from there.[24] No document has been recovered within the town of Kucha, despite the investigations of Chinese scholars. On the other hand, we do have some documents from its outskirts, such as Chinese contracts,[25] caravan authorizations for travelling written in Kuchean,[26] which come from a watchtower to the north of the town charged with inspecting caravans travelling over a pass, and Buddhist documents from the monastery and military post of Duldur aqur.[27] Commercial letters were found by Pelliot, but they have still not

25 are between the years 640 and 768) and 59 loans, the remainder being essentially contracts for labor (30) or farming (110). See Hansen, 1995, pp. 19–24, Scheil, 1995, as well as Yamamoto and Ikeda, 1987, p. 10 for the contracts.

[21] No. 256 in Yamamoto and Ikeda, 1987.

[22] Sims-Williams and Hamilton, 1990 for the Sogdian or Turco-Sogdian texts, and Hamilton, 1986 for the Uighur texts. The Chinese economic and social documents unearthed at Turfan and those from the grottoes of Dunhuang have been collected conveniently in three volumes. The first (Yamamoto, Ikeda and Okano, 1978) assembles legal texts; the second, population registers (Yamamoto and Dohi, 1985); and the third, the most interesting, gathers 513 contracts (Yamamoto and Ikeda, 1987). For Dunhuang, 33 Chinese commercial contracts are known (Yamamoto and Ikeda, p. 14), and a corpus of loans (studied in Trombert, 1995).

[23] See below, chapter X p. 318, for an analysis of the double toponymy of the *Ḥudūd al-ʿĀlam*.

[24] Kageyama, 1997.

[25] See Yamamoto and Ikeda, 1987, p. 12.

[26] Pinault, 1987.

[27] See Trombert, 2000a. The documents from Subači are also included in this edition.

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been edited and seem primarily to concern the agricultural and pastoral economy of the Buddhist monasteries.[28] It nonetheless remains that Sogdian presence at the oasis of Kucha is certain.[29] There also exist very numerous isolated texts or documents, whether Sogdian, like the contract for the sale of a slave of Turfan, which comes from the cemetery of Astana,[30] or composed in other languages, yet rich in information about the the Sogdians. Thus, their presence at the oasis of Tumshuq is assured due to their appearance in a certain number of local documents.[31]

On the other hand, as a complement to these abundant texts, archaeology is not of great help. No Sogdian temple has been uncovered at Dunhuang, and the site where it stood has doubtlessly been swept away by water,[32] whereas Manichaean sanctuaries are known.[33] In the realm of numismatics, we have available only a few of those Sassanid silver coins which are nonetheless attested by historical texts.[34]

Even so, this documentary collection is the most complete which exists concerning Sogdian commerce and the process of Sogdian colonization east of the Tianshan. It testifies to the comings and goings of Sogdian merchants between Semireč'e, Kucha, Turfan and Gansu, and to general settlement in the region.

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[28] See Pinault, 1998.

[29] Two fragments (nos. 77 and 220) in Trombert, 2000a are Sogdian and should be grouped with the four fragments published in Sims-Williams and Hamilton, 1990, pl. 40–41. I owe this information to Yutaka Yoshida, to whom I give my sincere thanks. E. Kageyama is preparing an article concerning the Sogdian presence at Kucha.

[30] Yoshida and Moriyasu, 1988. This text (69 TAM 135) was translated in the course of a seminar given by Frantz Grenet at the École Pratique des Hautes Études, in which Xavier Tremblay, Yuri Karev and I participated.

[31] I also owe this information to Yutaka Yoshida: see in particular Henning, 1936, p. 13. See also a presentation of the Sogdian influences at Tumshuq in Tremblay, 2001, pp. 91–2.

[32] Grenet and Zhang Guangda, 1996, p. 175.

[33] See Chao Huashan, 1996.

[34] See Thierry, 1993 which lists them: 27 Sassanian coins in the cemetery of Astana and 31 at Qarakhoja. In all there are only 65 for the whole of Xinjiang, if we exclude the hoard of Ulugh Art found to the west of Kashgar, and which alone comprises more than two thirds of all the Sassanid and Arab-Sassanid coins found in China (947 out of 1430).

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The Sogdian Settlements

Sogdian communities were established in all the great oases. There are many documents which support this conclusion. To take one example, we have religious documentation[35] mentioning *xian* 祆 temples, which were devoted to the specifically Sogdian variant of Mazdaism or to ceremonies in honor of the Sogdian divinities at Turfan, Hami and Dunhuang.

At Turfan—although the sky cult of the town should not be assimilated to Mazdaism[36]—several documents from the 6th century attest to offerings of wine, cattle and grain in connection with these deities.[37] The site of Toyuk, later occupied by a Sogdian Christian monastery, was probably in the 7th century a Sogdian Mazdean temple.[38] At Dunhuang, the texts indicate the existence of a temple at the edge of the town:

> The *xian* is one *li* east of the *zhou* (Dunhuang). A building has been erected and there is a painting of the 'Spirit-placing'. There are twenty niches. The courtyard is one hundred paces in circumference.[39]

Dating from the middle of the 8th century, this passage is corroborated by other manuscripts[40] as well as by texts from the 9th and 10th centuries which continue to describe the offerings at this temple

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[35] See the study by Waley, 1959, which was the most accurate work concerning the Iranian divinities at Dunhuang and within China until Grenet and Zhang Guangda, 1996. Contrary to many other works, he does not confuse the Sogdian religion—a polytheistic variant of Mazdaism—with the reformed Zoroastrianism of Iran. This confusion has had serious consequences for the identification of western religions in China, and it is particularly regrettable that Leslie, 1981–3 and Forte, 1996 have made this error.

[36] An intense controversy has arisen among the Chinese authors on this subject: should the sky cult mentioned as the principal cult at Turfan be considered Zoroastrian? With Lin Wushu, 1992, I do not think so.

[37] Grenet and Zhang Guangda, 1996, p. 183, and Zhang Guangda, 2000, pp. 194–5. It is nonetheless doubtful that all the documents mentioned are connected with Mazdaism; certain of them, like the cult of Fengbo 風伯, pertain to popular Chinese religion.

[38] Zhang Guangda, 2000, p. 193: the character *xian* 祆 in document Dx18937 is actually present in this text (yet is missing from the article by Zhang Guangda as printed). But note that it is not certain that the columns of the texts are complete, and the context is therefore difficult to clarify (I owe this remark to Éric Trombert).

[39] Manuscript Pelliot Chinois 2005 (*Topography of Shazhou*), trans. Grenet and Zhang Guangda, 1996, p. 175, and Waley, 1956, pp. 124–5 modified.

[40] See Grenet and Zhang Guangda, 1996, p. 175: Pelliot 2680, 2748, 2983, 3870, 3929, 7043 and 3571.

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perhaps up to the year 964.[41] At Qarashahr, discoveries of Sogdian ossuaries have been reported, in addition to a silver dish bearing a Sogdian inscription, two blocks of wood inscribed in Sogdian (package labels?), and references to Sogdians living there in texts from Turfan.[42] Lastly, there are texts mentioning the existence of a *xian* temple at Hami in the 7th century:

> In the *xian* fire temple, there are countless images both moulded and painted. There was a leader of the *xian* cult called Zhai Pantuo 翟盤陀. Before the conquest of Gaochang, he had had occasion to visit the Chinese court.[43]

The presence of Sogdian temples is the best sign of the establishment of numerous and structured Sogdian communities. A priest was mentioned already in *Ancient Letter I*. But chance has brought to light other documents which indicate their existence. It is thus possible that Hami had been controlled by the Sogdians before the Tang conquest, for, aside from the *xian* temple, a historical text speaks of the establishment of *hu* merchants there, and several local dignitaries bore Sogdian given or family names: Zhai Pantuo bore a Sogdian given name, Vandak, "servant," and with his Türk family name must have been a Turco-Sogdian.[44] At Dunhuang, one of the rare documents preserved from the middle of the 8th century mentions the presence of a Sogdian temple in the village of An cheng 安 城 in the township of Conghua 從化.[45] But the most abundant documentation concerns Turfan. Those documents allow us to grasp the Sogdian emigration in all its diversity.

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[41] Grenet and Zhang Guangda, 1996, pp. 181–3: Pelliot 4640, and the drawing (Pelliot 4518, 24) of good and bad religion (Dēn), which precisely corresponds to this text. Also mentioned are Pelliot 2629 and a fragment of the same text preserved at Dunhuang, perhaps from 964.

[42] Lin Meicun, 1997 for the dish, Huang Wenbi, 1983, pl. XXVII for the blocks. I thank Yutaka Yoshida for having drawn my attention to this information and to the existence of the ossuaries.

[43] Waley, 1956, p. 125, slightly modified (manuscript Stein Chinese 367). See also Yoshida, 1994, p. 392: the name of the deity would be 阿 鬘 Alan, or Sogdian *rām* or *rāman*, two well-attested forms. Zhai is also pronounced Di.

[44] One can also mention the case of Shi Wannian 石萬年 who organized the surrender of the town to the Tang: see Pulleyblank, 1952, pp. 350–4, citing the *Tongdian*, 191.3.b and the manuscript Stein Chinese 936.

[45] See Ikeda, 1981, pp. 77–78. The text is edited in Yamamoto and Dohi, 1985, II (A), pp. 120–123.

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Farmers, Artisans

Persons bearing Sogdian family names are found in all occupations at Turfan:[46] they are farmers, workers in leather, innkeepers, decorators of banners, viticulturists, bronze-smiths, killers of pigs, artists, tanners, functionaries, "nailers of camels' feet," and so on.[47] No domain seems to have escaped them, and the Sogdian community had sections of the town which bore its name, as well as familial temples.[48] This was not therefore simply a matter of a merchant community, but of a general migratory process involving all the levels of society. The Sogdians of Dunhuang or Turfan were not only impoverished descendants of merchants who had quit the profession: the text mentioned above regarding the four Sogdian towns of Lobnor and the colonization of Semireč'e show that the emigration was socially diverse from the outset.

Indeed, as soon as we can get a grasp on the Sogdians in the region, we see them as farmers or artisans:[49] in one of the oldest tax registers from Dunhuang, from the middle of the 6th century, we find the names of two Sogdians among some fifteen names of very ordinary farmers.[50] Later, a long register of people subject to corvée at Dunhuang, dating from 751, reveals that in the township of Conghua the majority of the inhabitants were Sogdians and farmers.[51] At Turfan, a document from about 668 describes the redistribution

[46] Jiang Boqin, 1994, chap. 5, pp. 150–263 has studied the Sogdians mentioned in the documents from Turfan. The main part of the following data has been drawn from that work. My heartfelt thanks to Éric Trombert for having translated this essential chapter for me.

[47] Jiang Boqin, 1994: farmers, pp. 156–7: IV, p. 37 (i.e., *Tulufan chutu wenshu*, edition without facsimiles, Vol. IV, p. 37); leather workers, p. 166: IV, p. 289; innkeepers, pp. 158–9: IV, pp. 132–135; decorators of banners, pp. 157–8: III, pp. 138–142; viticulturists, pp. 163–4; bronze-smiths, p. 165: VIII, p. 45; killers of pigs, artists and tanners, p. 166; functionaries, p. 173: VII, p. 468; "nailers of camels' feet," p. 166: IV, p. 289. The latter concerns specialists charged with stitching or fastening the very tough skin of the camels' feet that had split after long marches.

[48] Jiang Boqin, 1994, pp. 159–161: VI, pp. 243–269.

[49] I owe all of the following paragraph to the research of Éric Trombert, for which I thank him greatly. See details in de la Vaissière and Trombert, 2004.

[50] Manuscript S. 613.

[51] This township "joined with China" (Conghua 從化) was prominent among the 13 townships of the district as much for the number of its inhabitants (estimated at 300 households, or around 1,400 individuals) as for its geographical situation (bordering the district constituted by the town of Dunhuang itself). See principally Ikeda On, 1965 (in Japanese). See also Ikeda On, 1981.

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of lands previously allocated to families who had just been declared to be "émigrés."[52] The greater part of these émigrés had Sogdian family and given names. Here we see Sogdians in possession of farms of quite a large size.[53]

Certain Sogdian settlers were half-craftmen half-traders, such as the brewer An Hudaofen 安胡到芬 (Khudayfarn—"the glory of the master"), who settled at Dunhuang in the 8th century. He supplied the local administration, and produced but also bought rather large quantities of beer and draff on the market.[54] The examples could be multiplied.

Merchants

Commerce was unquestionably the livelihood of many Sogdians. The documents from Dunhuang and Turfan are again extremely rich on this subject.

It is necessary to distinguish the Sogdians who were residents and listed in the population registers of the Chinese Empire from the *xing hu* 興 胡, "authorized *hu*,"[55] and from the *shang hu* 商 胡, "merchant *hu*." The first could be merchants, in which case they owed the state the "merchant corvée," as did two Kang mentioned in a document from Turfan.[56] Many Chinese contracts concerned with small sums depict them, selling here a camel,[57] buying there a slave or a horse:

> The twenty-first year of *kaiyuan*, the first month, fifth day, the ordinary citizen Shi Randian 石染典 of the prefecture of Xi has paid by means of eighteen large rolls of silk.
>
> Now in the market of the prefecture of Xi, he has bought from Kang Sili 康思禮 the above horse. This horse and the silk have been exchanged the same day. If anyone has a complaint, this should be for the seller of the horse and for the guarantors to deal with and not

[52] TAM 42: 54 sq.

[53] Kang Wupomentuo 康烏破門陁, for example, possessed some of the finest lands of the register: 8 plots with a total area of 11 *mu* (more than 6,000 square meters) of which 6 yielded two harvests per year.

[54] Manuscript P. 4979 V° 1.

[55] M. Arakawa informs me that it is necessary to distinguish these from the *ke hu* 客 胡, "invited/travelling *hu*," a term found in the dynastic histories which designates the *hu* who accompanied embassies.

[56] Jiang Boqin, 1994, p. 158: III, p. 90.

[57] Yamamoto and Ikeda, 1987, text 29, p. 13.

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> the buyer. And lest the people should not be of good faith, a private contract has been concluded; the two parties being in accord, the fingers have been drawn in witness thereof.
>
> the proprietor of the silk
> the proprietor of the horse, assistant to the head of militia Kang Sili, 34 years old
> the guarantor authorized *hu* Luoyena 羅也那, 40 years old
> the guarantor authorized *hu* An Dahan 安達漢, 45 years old
> the guarantor ordinary citizen of Turfan Shi Zaohan 石早寒, 50 years old[58]

All of the persons mentioned in this contract have Sogdian names, but some are more integrated than others: two Sogdians are considered to belong to the "one hundred families" (百姓 *baixing*, rendered here by "ordinary citizen") of Turfan, two are authorized, and the status of the seller, head of the militia, leads one to think that he too is authorized. For these nationals of the Middle Kingdom, the contract was composed in Chinese. These differences in status are met with again in the only Sogdian commercial contract known at present, dated to 639. It specifies that:

> And this slave contract will be presentable with effect to whomsoever of the people, itinerant or resident,[59] to the king and to his officers, and this, by whomsoever shall take or have this girl's contract.

The travelling *hu* were foreigners in the eyes of the Chinese. They had to request an authorization in order to circulate and paid commercial taxes on transactions, without owing corvées. Sogdian residents were often employed to guarantee or witness their contracts in Chinese. Numerous documents attest to their commercial activities. Thus, among the texts found in the tombs of Astana, fragments of a lawsuit were extracted from the paper sandals that contained them.[60] The litigation was brought by Cao Lushan 曹祿山 and Cao Bisuo 曹畢娑, two Sogdian merchants, against Li Shaojin 李紹謹, a Chinese merchant from the capital, and concerned 275 rolls (疋 *pi*)

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[58] Text edited in Yamamoto and Ikeda, 1987, text 32, p. 14.

[59] The parallel with the Chinese formula is exact (興胡/百姓), and it is not certain that the similar (but not identical) formula found in the document from Mount Mugh Nov. 3, verso, lines 9–10 (Livšic, 1962, pp. 23 and 25–6)—which now possesses a Bactrian parallel (Sims-Williams, 2000, p. 216)—covers exactly the same content. I thank Ilya Yakubovich for his observations on this subject.

[60] O. Ikeda (1981, p. 79) and E. Lubo-Lesničenko (1994, p. 259) give the contents. The document is published in *Tulufan chutu wenshu*, VI, pp. 470–478.

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of silk. It took place at Kucha between 665 and 673. The Sogdian merchants, whose ethnicity is assured by the Iranian given name of Lushan—Rox-shan, "the Luminous"—had made the journey between Almalig, to the north of the Tianshan, and the Tarim basin with their caravan of camels, donkeys and oxen. Another example from 732–3 shows a small Sogdian caravan composed of ten mules and a horse led by a merchant, two workers and a slave, all Sogdians, who made the round-trip between the border of Gansu (Guazhou, Jiuquan) and Kucha while based at Turfan.[61] These merchants travelled the whole region and give evidence of Sogdian presence in those areas where texts have not been preserved (Kucha, Bešbalik). An extraordinary document shows the extent of their control over the trade in deluxe commodities at Turfan.

The Register of the Customs

This document from Astana (73 TAM 514:2, in 11 fragments) is a list, begun every two weeks over the course of about a year. It dates in all likelihood from the years 610–620.[62] Here is the fragment covering the first fifteen days of the first month:[63]

> Starting from the first day of the first month. Cao Jiabo 曹迦缽 sold two pounds of silver to He Bishiqu 何卑尸屈. Collected from the two persons: 2 coins. The same day, Cao Yi[po] 曹易[婆] (. . .) sold 2 pounds and 5 ounces of silver to Kang Yanpi 康炎毗. Collected from the two persons: 2 coins. The second day, Zhai Toutou 翟陁頭 sold 9 and a half ounces of gold to (. . .) Xianyou 顯祐. Collected from the two persons: (. . . . .). The third day, He Alingzhe 何阿陵遮 sold 5 pounds and 2 ounces of silver to An Po 安婆 (. . .)(. . . . .) 5 coins. The same day, Zhai Sapan 翟薩畔 sold 572 pounds of perfume and thirty- (. . .) of brass (. . . . .) coins. The fifth day, Kang Yeqian 康夜虔 (. . .) sold 144 pounds of medicinal plants to Ning Youxi 寧祐喜. [Collected] from the two persons: (. . .)(. . . . .) sold 50 pounds of silk thread and 10 ounces of gold to Kang Mopiduo 康莫毗多. Collected from the two persons: 7.5 coins (. . . . .)

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[61] See Ikeda, 1981, p. 78.

[62] One of the persons mentioned, Ju Bulüduo 車不呂多, is mentioned in a document from 619: *Tulufan chutu wenshu*, III, p. 111.

[63] This text is reported in Lubo-Lesničenko, 1994, p. 259. It is edited in the series *Tulufan chutu wenshu*, III, pp. 318–325. Éric Trombert has had the extreme kindness to translate and comment upon this text. See also Skaff, 1998, p. 89 f.

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5 pounds to (. . . . .). Collected [from the two persons]: 70 coins. The eighth [day] (. . . . .). Collected from the two persons: 42 coins. Collected in total: 147 coins.

This document gives evidence of a Sogdian near-monopoly over commerce: a total of 35 commercial operations are cited in the text. 29 of them concern at least one Sogdian, and in 13 cases the seller as well as the buyer are Sogdians. Moreover, we find names from Kucha (Bai 白), from Turfan (Ju 車), of Chinese (Ning 寧) and Tölö Türks (Zhai 翟). The Sogdian family names are Kang 康, He 何, Cao 曹, An 安 and Shi 石. The products exchanged are, apart from silk, typically occidental: gold, silver, perfume, saffron, brass, medicinal plants, ammonia, stone honey (cane sugar). All are of great price and the quantities are sometimes considerable: the taxes imposed here are in Sassanid silver coins, not in Chinese copper coins of too small a value.

The importance of this document cannot be too strongly insisted upon: it incontestably demonstrates that the absolute Sogdian domination of the commercial land routes is not an error, a mirage of historiography. Turfan is situated more than 1,500 kilometers from Sogdiana, and yet it is the Sogdians who dominated the trade in deluxe goods. Only two inhabitants of Kucha, the great town of the northern Tarim basin, are mentioned, while Kucha, located between Turfan and Sogdiana, is only 400 kilometers from Turfan. But this document is equally important for a second reason: it shows in a very concrete instance that the connection postulated in historiography between the Sogdians and the family names Kang, An, Mi, Cao, Shi and He in the Chinese sources is indeed real, in the Tarim basin at least. The majority of Sogdians cited bear Sogdian given names, although some are distorted by inattentive Chinese scribes.[64] Some of them are particularly clear—for example, Kang Pohepantuo 康婆何畔陁, in Sogdian Vaghivandak, "servant of the gods," or again Mozhi 莫至, in Sogdian Makhč, a hypocoristic form of Makh, "the moon."

The Sogdian emigration along the northern route was thus socially complex and geographically widespread. All levels of society were

[64] By combining the identifications proposed by Yutaka Yoshida in several articles which he has kindly sent me (Yoshida, 1989, 1991, 1994, 1997) and my own identifications, between 15 and 20 of the names cited are attested or interpretable in Sogdian—the vast majority of names that we have in complete form.

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represented and the whole region was involved. The merchants formed only a part of these groups, doubtlessly the most mobile. They travelled frequently from Semireč'e to Gansu, and had relays in place among the Sogdian merchants who had permanently settled and been registered by the Chinese administration. They completely dominated great commerce.

The Communities of Gansu

The essentials of the information at our disposal concerning Gansu comes from funerary epigraphy. For this region we have no business documents. Nevertheless, these meager data are sufficient to establish that the Sogdian merchants played a role of the first order in the caravan towns scattered all along this narrow corridor.

In fact, after the crisis of the 4th century, from which it had escaped somewhat, the Gansu of the 5th and following centuries harbored important and organized Sogdian communities. As the favored path of entry into China, Gansu had often been a stage in the progression of Sogdian families toward central China. Countless people bearing Sogdian names indicated that their families were settled in the various towns of Gansu, while their ancestors had come from Iranian-speaking countries. Some were doubtlessly descendants of Indo-Parthian families long established in Gansu,[65] others had actually descended from Sogdians, but all were culturally Sogdian after immigration had submerged the Iranian-speaking families of other origins.

To give only one example, An Tugen 安吐根, who passed in the middle of the 6th century from the position of foreign merchant to that of Grand Minister of the Northern Qi (550–577), according to the *Bei shi*,[66] had a great-grandfather who arrived in Gansu in the middle of the 5th century from western Sogdiana (*Anxi hu ren* 安息胡人) and settled at Jiuquan.

[65] Forte, 1996.

[66] *Bei shi*, chap. 92, p. 3047. See Forte, 1996, p. 649. Forte's reasoning, which holds that the terms "An guo" and "Anxi guo" are carefully distinguished in the Tang texts, is considerably weakened by the explicit convergence of An and Anxi at least from the *Bei shi* on (*Bei shi*, chap. 97, p. 3224, translated in Chavannes, 1903, p. 136, n. 7): the distinction is no longer made, and Kuwabara, whom Forte criticizes, seems indeed to have been correct, at least for the Tang texts.

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Sogdian presence at Gansu was continuous since the time of the ancient network. After the crisis of the 4th century, the communities were revived by new arrivals of Sogdian migrants. A town such as Liangzhou, in the center of Gansu, was profoundly cosmopolitan, and Chinese, Sogdians and Indians coexisted there. At Tianshui, a Sogdian funerary couch has been found.[67] Then, from Gansu, the communities established themselves in the capital, thereby following the example of another family from Gansu which played a great role in later centuries: the Tang emperors claimed to be descendants of the reigning family of the Western Liang, who dominated Gansu from Dunhuang between 400 and 421. This family enjoyed a brilliant ascent in the shadow of the Wei and then the Sui, and took power in 618.[68]

The absence of business documents does not preclude making the same observation with regard to Gansu that was made for regions farther to the west: the role of Sogdian merchants in commerce—perhaps shared there with Chinese merchants, about whom it must be admitted that we know practically nothing—could hardly have been less important than at Dunhuang or Turfan. Sogdian settlement in Gansu was extremely old, and it was from there that the Sogdians conquered the new commercial space of the Türk steppe, to which I will later return. And, in the 6th century at least, the Gansu corridor was the only region of China in which western silver coins—those paid in tribute by Pērōz to the Hephtalites—were legal tender.[69]

3. *The Spread of Sogdian Commerce in Inner China*

The last stage of Sogdian migratory expansion to the east was China. In the 7th and 8th centuries, literary texts, stories and historical narratives rather frequently mention the *hu* merchants in the course of

[67] Marshak, 2002.

[68] While this ancestry is explicitly claimed for the Tang in the dynastic histories, let us however note that such a claim could have been feigned, and that another genealogy has been proposed for the Li 李, linking them to the Xianbei 鮮卑 families of northeastern China before they moved to the northwest and made strong matrimonial connections with the non-Chinese aristocracies there: see Twitchett (ed.), 1979, pp. 150–1.

[69] See Thierry, 1993, p. 98 and 133, citing the *Sui shu*, chap. 24, p. 691.

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chance genealogies or anecdotes, and this even in the easternmost Chinese provinces. Small peddlers, grooms, soldiers or administrators, acrobats or great merchants, the Sogdians were classic figures in the texts and iconography of the great Tang era [see plate IV, ills. 1, 2, 3].

We can distinguish the settlements in the capitals, the settlements of the northwest bordering on the Türk world and Gansu, those of the northeast in the rich valley of the Yellow River, the heart of Chinese economic power, and finally the more peripheral settlements of Sichuan. Certain great cities of the South, like Yangzhou—the richest city of the South, at the end of the Grand Canal[70]—harbored them as well, and we find isolated references to merchants who could have been Sogdians, such as the merchant An trading by boat on the Yangzi.[71] But in general it was in northern China that communities of Sogdian merchants were to be found. The South—the great ports in particular—was left to others. From the 8th century onward, the Persians and Arabs coming from the south by sea increased their presence and established communities in all the coastal areas of southern China. The tales of the Tang echo this dual pattern of settlement: numerous stories present either rich *hu* merchants or rich Persian merchants, always seeking magic gems or pearls, or again princes on their quests, disguised as sellers of ravioli at the marketplace.[72]

The Capitals

In the capitals, Chang'an and Luoyang, the court was the focus. It continuously received gifts offered in tribute by the Sogdian cities, under nominal Chinese suzerainty after 658. The Chinese chroniclers mention in their annals the embassies from the Sogdian cities to the Tang court and the curiosities which they brought with them, and these embassies have often been interpreted as a disguised form

[70] Leslie, 1981–3, p. 289, Schafer, 1963, pp. 17–9, and above all Schafer, 1984.
[71] Gernet, 1956, p. XI.
[72] Schafer, 1951, gives translations or synopses of several of these tales. Most of them are from the 9th century, a time at which the golden age of Xuanzong already appeared tinged with colors of the marvellous. This late composition explains the preponderant part taken by Persian merchants and maritime commerce in these texts.

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of commerce with the court. Considering only the diplomatic presents offered to the Tang by Sogdian cities in the strict sense, not including Ferghana, Khorezm or Tukharistan, one may mention dwarfs, musicians and dancers, horses, dogs, lions, leopards, saffron, stone honey, the golden peaches of Samarkand, various medicinal herbs, carpets, silk fabrics, indigo, black salt, jewels, quartz, carnelian, gold, brass, ostrich-egg cups, objects embellished with jewels, coats of mail.[73] These surprising gifts gave rise to a distinctive iconography. They were illustrated in poems and pictures, and some of these pictures have come down to us. This list of products raises the question of their links with commerce strictly speaking. Such diplomatic presents are often described as an important form of commerce. It is probable, however, that the quantities of these were minimal, and that the only goal of these exchanges was to facilitate commerce by maintaining contact between the courts involved.[74] The context remains diplomatic. Nevertheless, the fact that these unusual gifts were highlighted in the Chinese sources is a reflection of a much wider phenomenon. The taste for exotics was certainly fed by more channels than periodic gifts from foreign lands alone.

The true economic state of affairs, of which these references are only the symptom, is to be found in the creation within the upper levels of the Chinese aristocracy of a very substantial market for the products and skilled workers of Central Asia, in the footsteps of a reigning family that was very open to the contributions of the northwest, from whence it was said to have come. In the 7th and 8th centuries, the women of high society wore western clothes, while their companions dressed in Türk costume for the hunt[75] or played polo, a sport which had come from Central Asia.[76] The fashion was

[73] Schafer, 1963: dwarfs p. 48, musicians and dancers pp. 50–7, horses pp. 60–70 and 222, dogs p. 77, lions p. 85, leopards p. 87, saffron p. 125, stone honey p. 153, various medicinal herbs pp. 183–4, carpets p. 198, silk fabrics p. 202, indigo p. 212, black salt p. 217 (the exact meaning is unknown), jewels p. 222, quartz p. 227, carnelian p. 228 (and in the present work, see chapter I, pp. 18–19), gold p. 254, brass pp. 256–7, ostrich-egg cups p. 258, objects embellished with jewels p. 259, coats of mail p. 261.

[74] But see the study of a concrete case in Dohi, 1988, pointed out to me by Yutaka Yoshida.

[75] Schafer, 1963, pp. 28–9.

[76] The emperor did not consider it beneath him to play it: see the episode mentioned in the *Histoire de Ngan Lou-chan* (*History of An Lushan*), trans. des Rotours, p. 87.

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for deerskin boots and caftans tightened at the waist with flared sleeves. Funerary art attests to this as well, so often including small statuettes representing dancers, singers or musicians from the lands of the West, from Kucha, Samarkand or Čāč, among the furnishings of aristocratic tombs. The emperor Xuanzong and his concubine Yang Guifei got their favorite general An Lushan to dance a whirling Sogdian dance.[77] Yang Guifei learned it,[78] and the emperor knew how to play the Kuchean wether drum.[79] The music of Samarkand and Kucha was played together with Chinese music during official ceremonies. And for each such occasion, it was necessary to have recourse to merchants specializing in exotic merchandise, to artisans, and to skilled workers or performers from the western regions. The style of life maintained by the court implies the presence of many occidental craftsmen in the background [see plate III, ill. 1].

We are poorly informed about the details of this Sogdian presence in the capitals, in the entourages of rich noble families. It was extremely old, as *Ancient Letter II* mentions the Sogdian community of Luoyang. In the 6th century, newly wealthy Sogdians had themselves buried in splendid tombs, with funerary couches that were sculpted, painted and gilded: we know of two from Chang'an dating from that time on.[80] This presence prepared the way for the flowering of the Tang period. We know that at that time the main location to which fashionable aristocrats could resort for rare commodities from the West was the western market of the city. Occupying an area of 100 hectares, it was enclosed by walls and organized along a grid pattern which grouped the merchants by specialties. The Sogdian usurers played a very important role:[81] during the second half of the 8th century and the beginning of the 9th, they became the dominant moneylenders of the area, and the government had to take measures to limit the debts owed to them by Chinese.[82] Three of the five Sogdian temples (*xian ci* 祆祠) of Chang'an were in

[77] *Histoire de Ngan Lou-chan* (*History of An Lushan*), trans. des Rotours, p. 49. For Sogdian dances, see Ishida, 1932, and Schafer, 1963, pp. 50–7.
[78] Schafer, 1963, p. 56.
[79] Schafer, 1963, p. 52.
[80] Marshak, 2002 for one of these, and for the most recent discovery, Yang Junkai, 2004.
[81] The text calls them "Uighurs," which would be quite amazing at such an early date: we should surely understand "Sogdians subjects of the Uighurs."
[82] Schafer, 1963, p. 20.

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immediate proximity to the western market, while a fourth adjoined the eastern market of the town.[83] In total, nearly two-thirds of the Sogdians of Chang'an whose residences are known lived near either the western market or the eastern market.[84] The latter, situated near chic neighborhoods, was surrounded by taverns and other pleasurable haunts, in which patrons were served by graceful young *hu* who were celebrated by more than one poet or inebriated young noble. Thus the great Li Bo (701–761, a native of Suyab) writes:

> The zither plays "The Green Paulownias at Dragon Gate,"
> The lovely wine, in its pot of jade, is as clear as the sky.
> As I press against the strings, and brush across the studs, I'll drink with you, milord;
> "Vermilion will seem to be prase-green" when our faces begin to redden.
> That Western houri with features like a flower—
> She stands by the wine-warmer, and laughs with the breath of spring
> Laughs with the breath of spring,
> Dances in a dress of gauze!
> "Will you be going somewhere, milord, *now*, before you are drunk?"[85]

Several studies have been devoted to the presence of westerners in all areas of the life of pleasure at the capital. Even that of cuisine was included, and we know of recipes from the West since the 6th century, such as mutton "à la hu" that is, roasted and with pepper.[86] The western sellers of ravioli are famous in Tang stories.[87] From fashions initiated by the court, a considerable wave of occidental influence entered Chinese culture. The lamps displayed for the New Year festival under the Tang owed much to the Novrūz of Central Asia,[88] and the Chinese astral calendar has shown the influence of Sogdian astrology even till our own day.[89]

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[83] Twitchett, 1967, pp. 209–211 and 215. See also the map in Rong, 2000, p. 141.

[84] Rong, 2000, pp. 140–1.

[85] Li Bo (Li Bai), trans. Schafer, 1963, p. 21. For other examples of texts celebrating the Sogdian barmaids (*hu ji* 胡姬), see Ishida, 1932 and 1961. See also Lin Meicun, 1992 for an attempted reconstruction of the social circumstances of these young women. It is doubtful that the contract for sale of the slave from Turfan could be of use in this context.

[86] Yung-ho Ts'ao, 1982, p. 223.

[87] Schafer, 1963, p. 29.

[88] Schafer, 1963, p. 259. See Scaglia, 1958 for a depiction of a Sogdian celebration.

[89] The Sogdian names of the days of the astral week have been preserved into

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But the Sogdians who were more or less directly linked with commerce were far from being the only ones at Chang'an: monks, priests, soldiers and above all Sogdian diplomatic personnel resided there as well. We do not know their precise number, but on the other hand we do know the total number of western diplomatic personnel living at the capital in 785–7: thirty years after the rupture of the routes to Central Asia in the middle of the 8th century, there were still four thousand of these to be maintained at public expense. This fact is mentioned in the context of the measures taken by Li Mi 李密 to limit the deficit of the state: the administration ceased to support these refugees, which represented a savings of 500,000 strings of coins per year.[90] Several hundred Sogdians would certainly have been among them.

The situation does not seem to have been fundamentally different at Luoyang, although on a smaller scale. The Sogdian settlements there were also concentrated near the markets. The Sogdian presence seems to have been particularly extensive when the city was the principal capital, and oriented toward Buddhism and Central Asia under the empress Wu (684–704). A very interesting dedicatory inscription has been found in the Buddhist caves of Longmen not far from the city. In 689, the association of perfumers of Luoyang (*Xianghang she* 香行社) dedicated cave 1410: its president, its secretary and three of its members bore "Sogdian" names,[91] which cannot have been a coincidence, and which reflects quite well the part played by perfume products in Sogdian commerce, from the musk of the *Ancient Letters* to the perfumes mentioned in the *Register of the Customs* of Turfan.

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modern times in Chinese almanacs: see Chavannes and Pelliot, 1913, p. 158, and Schafer, 1963, p. 276 who cites an almanac from Taiwan (1960) mentioning the day of Mihr (Sunday, in Sogdian). See also Grenet and Pinault, 1997 for Turfan as an intermediary.

[90] See Rong, 2000, pp. 138–9, who cites the *Zizhi tongjian*, p. 7493 (seventh month of the third year *zhenyuan*, under Dezong, in 787).

[91] See Rong, 2000, pp. 142–4 and Wen, 1983, p. 67. The association had a total of nineteen members of whom at least five were Sogdians (one name is illegible). Inscription edited in Liu Jinglong, Li Yukun, 1998, II, p. 424 no. 1800.

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In the Chinese Provinces

In the provinces, the Sogdians were present in all the large cities of northern China, and were particularly well established in the economic heart of the Tang Empire, the rich plain of the Yellow River downstream from Luoyang, as well as further to the north on the routes which led to the world of the nomads.[92] In these regions, the presence of individuals with Sogdian names is attested in numerous large and small towns. Considering only those in which a community is mentioned, and not simply a single person with a Sogdian name who might perhaps have been sinicized, the Sogdians were established at Kaifeng 開封 and Anyang 安陽 (Xiangzhou 相州, the Ye of the *Ancient Letters*), where the Sogdian funerary couch in the Musée Guimet was found.

Furthermore, on the route to Mongolia, they were present at Taiyuan 太原[93] (Bingzhou 并州), the largest city of the North, and the original base of the Tang.[94] For Taiyuan we have a Sogdian tomb,[95] a summary text about syncretism between Buddhism and Zoroastrianism in local funerary rituals,[96] and numerous references

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[92] The article by Rong Xinjiang (Rong, 2000) has considerably extended the documentation for this region, thanks mainly to data from funerary inscriptions. Rong Xinjiang has collected his studies devoted to the Sogdians in Rong, 2001.

[93] Waley, 1956, pp. 126–7.

[94] People with Sogdian names are further mentioned at Weizhou 衛州, Weizhou 魏州, Xingzhou 邢州, Dingzhou 定州 (Dingxian 定縣), Hengzhou 恆州, Yingzhou 瀛州, all towns of medium size in the Yellow River valley. We find them also at Youzhou 幽州 (Peking), and to the north of Taiyuan, at Daizhou 代州 (Daixian 代縣) and Weizhou 蔚州. These references to isolated individuals are mainly connected with funerary epigraphy.

[95] Archaeological Institute of Shanxi, 2001.

[96] "There existed an old custom at Taiyuan. Monks and their disiciples practiced *dhyâna* (zen) as their principal activity. After their deaths, they were not buried, but their cadavers were left [at a certain location] in the near outskirts in order that they might be devoured by carnivorous birds and savage beasts. The practice lasted for several years, and the people of the country called this place the 'yellow ditch.' In this location, more than a thousand hungry dogs devoured the flesh of the cadavers." Trans. Zhang Guangda, 1994. The text is taken from the biography of Li Gao 李暠, a functionary of the 8th century, in the *Jiu Tang shu*, chapter 112, pp. 33–35. Yutaka Yoshida has kindly indicated that the connection with Sogdian customs is disputed (Cai Hongsheng, 1992, p. 14; 2002); even so, it is quite doubtful that chance alone explains the presence of the custom in this one location in the interior of China, particularly when it included the use of dogs. The abandonment of the cadaver to the elements is indeed a frequent custom—so it was in India, according to the testimony of Xuanzang—but the recourse to dogs in a precise location is specifically Zoroastrian, and is attested particularly in Sogdiana (Grenet, 1984, pp. 227–8).

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to Sogdians, to such a degree that this region seems to have been a favored area of Sogdian settlement. This was probably due both to the fact that its population had long been ethnically mixed and to the existence there of a direct route leading beyond the Ordos to Central Asia.

While the presence of Sogdians in the largest of these cities is explained by their function as capitals in the complex history of China from the 3rd to the 7th century, the settlements in numerous smaller towns, though indeed connected to Sogdian commerce, might have been oriented around different goals. The alluvial plain of the Yellow River was then the principal silk-producing region under the Tang: surely the merchants wished to get closer to the centers of production and bypass the Chinese intermediaries of the capital, with whom they could have conflicting relations, as attested by the lawsuit of Cao Lushan and Cao Bisuo, two Sogdian merchants, against Li Shaojin, a Chinese merchant of the capital.

The situation was different further to the north. In fact, it seems that the Tang had implemented a systematic policy of settling communities of foreign merchants in the frontier military zones. This was notably the case at Chaoyang 朝陽/Yingzhou 營州, the principal Chinese stronghold in the frontier province of Pinglu to the northeast: the *Tang History* explicitly specifies that the government settled Iranian-speaking merchants (*shang hu* 商胡) there when the town was reestablished in 717.[97] More generally, it is possible that the government had the Sogdians inscribed on the population registers, in the same way as they had the Chinese, in order to make it easier to keep track of them and their movements within Chinese territory.[98] The government also authorized these foreign merchants to pay in silver coins at market.[99] The spread of Sogdian commerce in the Chinese provinces and Sogdian control of certain aspects of commerce in the capital were the fruits of a deliberate Tang policy to advance the role of foreign merchants in commerce. While it is usually considered that the very negative attitudes of well-read Chinese toward the commercial professions came to an end only from the

[97] Pulleyblank, 1955, p. 80 and p. 159, n. 26: see the *Jiu Tang shu*, chap. 185, p. 4814.

[98] Arakawa, 1997. My sincere thanks to Ms. Etsuko Kageyama for having provided me with access to this Japanese article.

[99] Twitchett, 1967, p. 213.

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second half of the 8th century—a development which led to the merchant civilization of the Song in the 11th century—in practice the Tang had in fact had recourse to the efficient services of these foreign merchants since their assumption of power, while the attitude of their Sui predecessors (581–618) was distinctly more reserved. An active commercial presence could have made it possible to reduce the exorbitant costs of the Tang military presence in those distant regions.

The Sogdians in Sichuan and Tibet

At Izhou/Chengdu, in Sichuan, one of the most well-known examples of the integration of a Sogdian merchant family into the Chinese elites occurred, as a result of which He Tuo 何妥 and his nephew He Chou 何稠 were featured in the dynastic histories.[100] The father of the first was a merchant who probably arrived at Sichuan in the second quarter of the 6th century. He was accepted into the entourage of a member of the Liang royal family at Jiankang (Nanking). His skill as an expert in weaving silk with gold thread, a technique said to have come from the Roman East, made it possible for him to amass a sizeable fortune, which earned him the appellation of "the great merchant of the western regions." The eldest of his sons, perhaps promised the succession, became an "expert in the cutting of precious stones." The younger, He Tuo, was sent to study at a prestigious institution in the capital, the School for Sons of the State. This son of a foreign merchant led a brillliant career in Confucian letters, and rallied to the northern dynasties.

His nephew, He Chou, who was trained in the family, was still an adolescent when he was sent by his uncle to Chang'an. He first obtained a junior post in the department responsible for the imperial jewels, then was put in charge of the atelier whose delicate craft furnished the court with objects and works of art. At the advent of the Sui, he was promoted to head of the imperial wardrobe. Thanks to his practical knowledge, He Chou was in a position to satisfy the

[100] The biography of He Tuo appears in the *Beishi* (chap. 82, pp. 2753–2759) and in the *Suishu* (chap. 75, pp. 1709–1715), and that of He Chou in the *Suishu*, chap. 68, pp. 1596–1598. Complementary information is given in the *Zizhi tongjian* (chaps. 178–181, particularly pp. 5406, 5552, 5558 and 5623) and in the *Tongzhi* (chap. 174, p. 54; Taibei edition: book 380, p. 329).

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emperor's desire that "these brocade garments with gold thread and these fabrics adorned with medallions surrounded by pearls which constitute the usual tribute of the Persian Empire" be produced in the emperor's own workshops. At the beginning of the 590s, He Chou also distinguished himself by rediscovering the chemical processes for the production of glass, and this at a time when China had long since ceased making it, the artisans having given up interest in this technology of western origin.[101] During the reign of the second Sui emperor, Yangdi (604–617), which was distinguished by the carrying out of great works (construction of new capitals, excavation of the Great Canal, etc.), He Chou was named Minister of Public Works, then demoted after the accession of the Tang.

Various other sources testify to the existence of a Sogdian community at Chengdu. A Sogdian temple is attested there.[102] Furthermore, the Sogdian name for the region of Chengdu may be known: two Persian texts, the *Ḥudūd al-ʿĀlam*, composed at the end of the 10th century, and the *Ẕainu 'l-Akhbār* of Gardīzī from the middle of the 11th century—which both repeat geographical data from the beginning of the 10th century transmitted by the Bukharan grand vizir Jayhānī—describe a route made up of multiple fortified stations which, if one accepts the interpretation given by the editor of the *Ḥudūd*, extended from Chang'an to the south, as far as the Yangzi and the important commercial city of Baghshūr. Baghshūr means "pond of salt water" and this toponym is attested near Merv. But not far from Chengdu are found the large salt water wells of the Yangzi basin.[103] The identification of Baghshūr with Izhou/Chengdu is not implausible,[104] and the information could be Sogdian, as it often is in the data provided by Jayhānī.

The Sogdian merchants in Sichuan probably entered China by a different path than the usual route through Gansu. One of the routes bypassing the Gansu corridor to the south passed through Tibetan territory, leading from Khotan to the Qaidam basin, then to the

[101] In ancient China glass was known as a specialty of the Roman East. It was the Tukharians who reintroduced the technique in China (*Bei shi*, chap. 97, p. 2275).

[102] Leslie, 1981–3, p. 289.

[103] The region of Chengdu is one of the very rare places in the interior of China that supplies salt.

[104] This identification has been defended by Minorsky, in his commentary to the *Ḥudūd*, 1970, p. 230. But, very differently, see Hamilton, 1958, pp. 130–132.

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Kokonor/Qinghai lake, then to Lanzhou, and subsequently heading either to the capitals or directly to Sichuan.[105] We know of at least one example of a sizeable caravan, perhaps Sogdian, which took this route: 200 *hu* merchants and 600 camels and mules were captured in a Chinese raid in the region of Qinghai in the 6th century.[106] Note also that *Ancient Letter V* already mentions an expedition led from Dunhuang into the Altun shan, which separates the city from the Qaidam.[107] At Dulan, in the Tibetan tombs situated on one of the commercial routes crossing the Qaidam in the direction of Shanshan, a fragment of Sassanid royal silk—*tirāz*—has been found, which, with its Pehlevī inscription, came straight from the royal workshops.[108] It has been surmised that the word for "doctor" in Tibetan was of Sogdian origin[109] (*bitsi* < Sogdian *βyč*, a word itself of Indian origin).[110] It is possible that certain individuals among those who introduced the study of medicine to Tibet were Sogdians.

There were two other points of contact possible between the Sogdians and the Tibetans. Via Khotan, a certain number of religious and iconographic influences could have spread into Tibetan territory. Thus the great Tibetan hero Pehar possessed all the characteristic traits of the Sogdian god Farn, and his name was transmitted by a Khotanese intermediary (Phārra).[111] The other point of contact is associated with the extension of the Tibetan Empire to the far west. Beyond the upper Indus, over which they fought with the Chinese throughout the first half of the 8th century, the Tibetans operated in the Pamirs and Tukharistan, at the southern frontier of Sogdiana, until the beginning of the 9th century.[112] The Tibetan

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[105] See Lubo-Lesničenko, 1994, pp. 217–229 which assembles a large amount of data about this route. The father of Hu Tuo first settled at Pixian, which was the first stage on this route from Chengdu.

[106] *Zhou shu* 50.2340 c, cited by Schafer, 1950, pp. 180–1.

[107] Line 15: "for Ghāwtus went by (?) the mountains."

[108] See the reproduction in Lin Meicun, 1995, pl. 21. The embroidery has been read by Mackenzie. The name of the king has unfortunately not been preserved.

[109] Beckwith, 1979, p. 300 f. The most important doctor in the history of the first Tibetan Empire had a Sanskrit name, a western origin ("Rome") and a knowledge of Chinese, and "is named in their language *biji*," which argues for a mixed origin at the least. Another person named Halaśanti translated a work called *Sog-po śa stag-can-gyi rgyud*. Depending on whether one reads Sogpo as a transcription of Saka or of Sogdian, this would have been either a Khotanese or Sogdian text. On this point see Hoffman, 1971, p. 454.

[110] Sims-Williams, 1983.

[111] Grenet, 1995–6, p. 288.

[112] Beckwith, 1987 treats the matter in detail.

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Buddhist *exemplum* from the 8th or 9th century which was mentioned in chapter III has its setting in this region: a caravan of 500 *sog-dag* merchants, lost in the mountains, there vows to sacrifice a human being upon its arrival in India.[113]

A Sogdian commercial area organized around a central route extended from Samarkand to northern China. On the basis of the ancient network of the preceding period, and thanks to the dynamism of the Sogdians in both their home country and the new colonies of Semireč'e or the Tarim, an unparalleled development of their commercial lines took place. The Tang employed their commercial talents as far as the Korean frontier, and the Sogdians gradually became quite a noteworthy part of the urban economy of northern China. But a description of the geographical expansion of this commerce and the extent of its control over the areas concerned does not exhaust our analysis. Community structures directed this expansion.

4. *Community Structures*

A certain number of documents already cited attest that the Sogdian communities had their own organization very early on. In 227, in the first clear reference to Sogdians who had settled in China, their lords in the Liangzhou region, in the heart of Gansu, are also mentioned ("the *hu* lords of the Yuezhi and Kangju").[114] This only makes sense if these *hu* were organized in hierarchical communities, rather than forming a simple aggregate of isolated merchants. The merchants of the Kushan Empire, Yuezhi, were also so organized.

The documents from these communites confirm this situation: *Ancient Letters I* and *III* mention authorities (*'yps'r*) and a tax collector (*β'zkr'm*)[115] in the Sogdian community of Dunhuang. The text of the contract for the sale of a slave from Turfan, already cited, indicates

[113] The text has been translated in Thomas, 1935, I, pp. 319–20.

[114] *Sanguo zhi*, chap. 4, p. 895.

[115] *'yps'r* letter III, ll. 8 and 12, *β'zkr'm* letter I, l. 4. See the new translations in Sims-Williams, 2004. *'yps'r* is moreover attested as a proper name among the Sogdian graffiti of the Upper Indus (Sims-Williams, 1992, p. 45). For *β'zkr'm*, the parallel found in the document from Mount Mugh A13, l. 1, an order to pay sent on behalf of the *β'zkr'm* of Panjikent, seems to confirm the meaning: see Grenet and de la Vaissière, 2002, p. 187, n. 33. Differently Sims-Williams, 2005.

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that "this slave contract will be presentable with effect to whomsoever of the people, itinerant or resident, to the king and to his officers" and "this slave contract was written by Ōxwān son of Patāwr, at the request of Patāwr chief of the scribes." While the king and his officers were Chinese, the people (*n'β*) certainly meant the Sogdian community of Turfan: *n'β* (nāf) signifies "community," from the level of the family group to that of all the citizens of a city.[116] The community of Turfan also possessed a chief of scribes who assured the validity of the contract.

No other Sogdian text clarifies the organization of daily life within the communities. At the most, it can be pointed out that the iconography of the Sogdian tombs in China strongly emphasizes collective rituals, funerary banquets and celebrations, which brought together numerous members of the community. The richness of the tombs shows that the deceased were important people, thus confirming the epitaphs.[117]

The remainder of the documentation concerning community structures is Chinese and primarily concerns the presence within the mandarin hierarchy of a functionary, the *sabao* 薩寶, in charge of the foreign communities.

The sabao

The exact meaning of this title is disputed, essentially due to the fact that the sources have only preserved attestations of the religious role played by the *sabao* in the Tang administration.[118] Du You, in his *General History of Institutions* (the *Tongdian* 通典, completed in 800), gives a description of the bureau of the *sabao* in which it appears that the directors of this bureau were the *sabao* himself and the head of the *xian* cult (*xian zheng* 祆 正). The bureau apparently had extended

[116] It was in the name of the *n'β* of Panjikent that the order to pay cited above was sent, and it was also in the name of the *n'β* that certain coins were struck at Čāč.

[117] At present, 9 tombs or funerary couches from the 6th century, either Sogdian or under Sogdian influence, are known to have been found in China. For five of these, see Marshak, 2002, pp. 227–264, for two others Martha Carter, 2002, and for the most recent discovery see Yang Junkai, 2004. Another discovery is described in *Lit de pierre, sommeil barbare*, 2004, and Riboud, forthcoming. Concerning these discoveries as a group, on a precise iconographic theme, see Riboud, 2003.

[118] Pelliot, 1903a. I owe a part of the following information to Éric Trombert. For a more detailed presentation, see de la Vaissière and Trombert, 2004.

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duties, for without counting the junior employees who are never mentioned in organizational structures, it was endowed with three other functionaries having the rank of mandarin: an invoker of the [*xian*] cult (*fu shu* 祓祝, surely for *xian zhu* 祆祝)—probably the assistant to the head of the cult, the actual officiant during ritual ceremonies—a duty officer (*shuai* 率) and a scribe-archivist (*shi* 史).[119] In spite of the largely religious character of these titles, which could wrongly lead one to conclude that the *sabao* was essentially charged with control of the foreign cults, the duties allocated to these functionaries were from the outset much broader in scope.

In the Chinese legislative texts, the function of *safu* 薩甫 (another transcription of the same word) arose within an institution which, under the Northern Qi (550–577), carried out the functions of both a ministry of foreign affairs and of foreign trade. Two *safu* were on duty at the capital, and one in every region of the empire.[120] Under the Sui (581–618), aside from the the *sabao* residing at the capital, there were 30 grades at the bottom of the scale, the "*sabao* of all the administrative regions of the empire (who are at the head) of all (the communities of the) *Hu* including more than 200 households."[121] The Tang (618–907) maintained this organization in part.

We know of only two references to the *sabao* in the business documents from Turfan, the first in a series of official directives dating from 549–550, issued by the royal government of Gaochang for the performance of religious ceremonies on the occasion of the lunar new year.[122] In this document, the *sabao* (written *sabo* 薩薄) figures as one cult official among other functionaries, all secular and Chinese: the title of *sabao* does not imply any specific religious function, but simply one bureaucratic position among others. The second occurrence of the word is in a series of decisions concerning the allocation of grain dating from 619.[123] There we find a *sabao* charged with

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[119] *Tongdian*, chap. 40, pp. 573 and 575; see also the less complete *Jiu Tang shu*, chap. 42, p. 1803.

[120] *Suishu*, chap. 27, p. 756. In some rare cases, specific examples are known of *safu* holding office at the head of local Sogdian communities: thus at Ding zhou 定州, in the northeast, an inscription from the end of the 6th century, preserved in a temple, mentions a merchant bearing a Sogdian family name, He Yongkang 何永康, secretary of the *safu*: see Rong, 2000, p. 149.

[121] *Suishu*, chap. 28, pp. 790–791.

[122] TAM 524, 32/1–1 and 2, 32/2–1 and 2, edited in TCW, II, pp. 40–47, studied by Zhang Guangda, 2000, p. 195.

[123] TAM 331, 12/1 through 8, ed. in TCW, III, pp. 110–115.

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securing the delivery of a quantity of millet released by the administration for the benefit of Ju Bulüduo 車不呂多, a merchant. The *sabao* maintained close relations with the merchant community in the course of his duties. The existence of the post of *sabao* in the kingdom of Gaochang, whose institutions copied those of the Wei, lead one to suppose that the office existed already during that dynasty, confirming the suggestion of certain epitaphs.[124]

The Chinese administration thus appointed a mandarin to head the Sogdian communities present on its soil. The case is not without parallels. The Arab-Persian communities of southern China were subjected to the same system in the 9th century, according the testimony of a Persian merchant:

> The merchant Sulaymân reports that which followed: at Ḫânfû (Canton), which is the meeting-place of the merchants, the Chinese sovereign conferred on a Muslim the administration of justice among those of his co-religionists who had come to the country.[125]

In the case of the *hu* communities of northern China, all indications lead one to believe that the *sabao* there were also recruited from the members of the community. Many Sogdian families in China listed *sabao* of Gansu during the 5th, 6th or 7th centuries among their ancestors. I have already had occasion to mention the case of the family of Li Baoyu, whose ancestors were *sabao* for three generations in the course of the 6th century at Wuwei, in the center of Gansu.[126] At Xi'an, a new Sogdian tomb has been discovered: there the deceased announced his title of *sabao* of Wuwei in two languages, Sogdian and Chinese.[127] It is furthermore possible that certain families of Sogdian *sartapao* played upon the ambiguity of *sabao*, a transcription that had become a title, to retrospectively transform their modest caravaneer ancestors into functionaries . . .[128]

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[124] The funerary stele of An Wantong indicates that he had an ancestor who had been *mohe sabao* at the time of Taizu (f. 386–408): reported in Forte, 1995, p. 11.
[125] Ferrand (trans.), 1922, p. 38.
[126] Numerous examples are found in Rong, 2000, pp. 130–6.
[127] Yoshida, 2005, forthcoming.
[128] See Rong, 2000, p. 132 for the analysis of a good example.

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Origin of the Word

The title of *sabao* is the transcription of a Sogdian word.[129] The term actually entered China by two distinct avenues. In India, the *sārthavāha* was the head of the caravan, the one who guided it and led it to its destination. By extension, it also designated the head of the guild of merchants.[130] It entered into the languages of Central Asia, in particular into Sogdian by a Bactrian intermediary.[131] It is a *sartapao* to whom *Ancient Letter V* is addressed: *'D βγ[w] xwt'w s'rtp'w 'sp'nδ[']tw*, "To the noble lord, the chief merchant Aspandhāt." The Indian word also entered China in the form *sabo* 薩薄, and is found in the manuscripts from Turfan already cited and above all in the Buddhist literature:[132] *sabo* there came to designate the Bodhisattvas, those masters who showed the way (*daoshi* 導師).[133] But once the office of *sabo* was integrated into the mandarin system, the title was modified to *sabao* according to the pronunciation of the Sogdians, who made up the majority in the foreign communities. Furthermore, in Chinese historical geography the river of the *sabao* was the Zarafshan.

The Chinese administration thus integrated the chiefs of the *hu* communities into its hierarchy, and within the community structures these bore the title of *Sartapao*, Master of the Caravan, in which they were heirs of the merchant tradition. Each *nāf* was under the jurisdiction of a *sartapao*, who also presided over the cult, or at least supervised it, and had at his command a hierarchy within the community. It is highly probable that the grades mentioned in the Chinese administrative list correspond to the scarce information available in the Sogdian texts: the "heads of the *xian* cult" and the "invoker of the cult" in the Chinese texts were certainly among those Sogdian priests already mentioned in *Ancient Letter I* (line 10),[134] and one will note that Zoroastrian ritual in fact required the presence of two priests, the *zōt* (principal priest) and the *raspīg* (secondary priest).[135]

[129] See equally Arakawa, 1998 and Luo Feng, 2000.
[130] Renou, 1981, pp. 143 and 153.
[131] Yoshida, 1988, pp. 168–171 (in Japanese) is the first to have noticed this title in the *Ancient Letters*. See also Sims-Williams, 1996c, p. 51, n. 37.
[132] See Liu Xinru, 1988, p. 114; see also Dien, 1962, p. 336 n. 5, p. 337, p. 343, n. 66.
[133] From Buddhism it passed to Manichaeism, where it is applied to Mani, with the same sense.
[134] Sims-Williams, 1996c, pp. 48–9.
[135] Duchesne-Guillemin, 1962, pp. 71–6. I owe this reference to Frantz Grenet.

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The scribes mentioned at the end of the contract from Turfan could have been these very ones, referred to by the Chinese as scribe-archivists. The mandarin hierarchy reflected the organization of the *hu* community just as it was.

It was as leader of the community, in the political and administrative sense, that the *sabao* was included in the list of functionaries. But it is quite exceptional that every *hu* community of at least 200 households—the equivalent of a large village—should have been provided with a representative of mandarin rank. The smallest Chinese area having at its head a representative of the central power was normally the district (*xian*). The leaders of the township, and *a fortiori* those of the village and quarter, were chosen among the local notables and did not have mandarin rank. The *sabao*, therefore, should not have had such a position. Only the fact that they were in charge of foreign communities explains this special treatment, which attests to the economic importance of the communities, incommensurable with the number of their members.

5. *Evolution of the Sogdian Communities of China*

From sabao *to Subject Townships*

This particular form of integration of the Sogdian communities into the Chinese political structure, which left intact the internal organization of the communities and charged the foreign notables with administration, seems to disappear in the second half of the 7th century. We cease to encounter *sabao* in the corpus of epitaphs, although their number was formerly far from negligible: to my knowledge, the last one of whom we are aware was Long Run, who exercised his duties before 646. At Turfan and Dunhuang, in the 8th century, we see no trace of Sogdian community organization of the *sabao* type integrated into the Chinese administration. A different system prevailed. The two townships of Conghua 從化 and Chonghua 崇化 gathered many Sogdians together, but we may suppose that their creation was the result of an agreement between the inhabitants and the local Chinese administration, since *conghua* as well as *chonghua* signify "rallied" (to China, its empire and its civilization), for which the equivalent in modern language is the idea of naturalization. The inhabitants of these townships were full subjects of the empire, submitting to the

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same obligations and endowed with the same rights as the Chinese inhabitants of the region.[136] We have passed from an administration by individuals of the community to direct administration by the state.[137] This organization was not limited to Chinese Central Asia, since in the district of the capital there existed a hamlet also called Chonghua, where Sogdians resided, such as Mi Sabao 米薩寶 in 742.[138]

The rallied townships thus in all likelihood replaced the system of autonomous communities under the direction of a mandarin *sartapao* at the local level. Furthermore, the *sabao* responsible for 200 *hu* households disappeared from the Tang codes of law. Only the central bureau was maintained in the first half of the 8th century, but it is possible that its functions had changed: at that time the Iranian religions were closely managed, and the principal memory of the duties of the *sabao* in later literature was that of his religious role. Perhaps this was simply the actual state of affairs in the 8th century, and the office was disconnected from the administrative management of the communities.[139]

The Process of Sinicization: Given Names, Marriages

From the township of Conghua at Dunhuang we have data which enable us to measure the process of sinicization.[140] The inhabitants' given names were registered together with their ages, thus making it possible to evaluate the proportion of Sogdian and Chinese given names among the Sogdian population of the township. More than half of the Sogdians of Conghua had Sogdian given names (100 against 90, for the names which it is possible to identify). Examination of the given names by age group shows a steady and quite rapid process of sinicization. Among those older than 60 years, Sogdian given names clearly predominate (10 persons among 13). The proportion decreases steadily for each decennial group until the situation completely reverses among the youngest: none of those aged 17–20 had received a Sogdian given name positively identifiable as

[136] For Chonghua in Turfan, see especially Skaff, 2003.
[137] See Arakawa, 1998, pp. 177–180.
[138] Rong Xinjiang, 2000, p. 141. Sabao is his given name, not his title.
[139] Arakawa Masaharu, 1998.
[140] Thanks to the register of 751 already mentioned, of which Ikeda On has made a meticulous study: Ikeda On, 1965.

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such. Another observation explains this phenomenon: the majority of fathers bearing a Sogdian given name gave a Chinese given name to their sons (11 against 3), and those already having a Chinese given name systematically gave such names to their children. It is therefore possible that the passage from Sogdian names to Chinese names was often made in one generation. But it was no more rare for the process to be accomplished in two generations, as we find the two types of given names coexisting among certain siblings.

By chance, we are able to follow a parallel process in the scarce Sogdian documentation available, a process in which Sogdians adopted the "9 Sogdian names" given them by the Chinese.[141] Sogdian onomastics as found in the *Ancient Letters* or the graffiti of the Indus reveals few names indicating the geographical provenance of the bearers. What is striking about the Sogdian contract of sale from Turfan mentioned above is that all the witnesses specify their place of origin: "present were Tīšrāt son of Čūnākk, of Maymurgh, Nāmdār son of Xūtāwč, of Samarkand, Pīsāk son of Karz, of Nūčkand, Nīzāt son of Nanaykūč, of Kūšaniyya." A century later, at Luoyang, a further step was made: a Sogdian named Čatfārātsarān had a sutra recopied in his native language, and indicated in the colophon, also in Sogdian, that he was from the *"n* family, a transcription of the Chinese An, a name given to natives of Bukhara. Likewise, the colophon of the manuscript Pelliot Sogdien 8, copied at Dunhuang, gives the name of the donor in the form *x'n kwtr'y cwr'kk*, or Čurrak of the Kang family.

To a still greater degree than onomastics, marriage generally reveals the strength of community connections. In this domain we do not have such precise information as that available for given names, but a study of 21 marriages of Sogdians whose spouses are known, between the years 580 and 650 in the interior of China, shows that in 19 cases the marriages had taken place within the *hu* communities. The two exceptions concerned a particularly integrated Sogdian, whose father was already a functionary under the Zhou (577–581), and a Sogdian widower whose first spouse was Sogdian and whose second was Chinese.[142] It is difficult to generalize on the basis of

[141] Sims-Williams, 1996c.

[142] Rong Xinjiang, 2001, pp. 132–135. Moreover, it should be pointed out that no marriage was made between persons bearing the same family name, which seems to suggest a respect for the rule of exogamy governing Chinese marriages, with a possible counterexample in Mi Jifen (714–805), who married a Mi.

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such limited data. While in certain cases it is possible to combine the available information concerning given names and marriages, this is unfortunately impossible for the township of Conghua.

The Process of Sinicization: From sabao *to Functionaries*

We possess several examples of relatively linear family trajectories in which family members set out from the West, then assumed the office of *sabao* in Gansu and subsequently became civil servants in the Chinese interior. The milieu of the Central Asian *sabao* was a recruiting area for the administration and above all for the Tang army. One can postulate an economic reason for this phenomenon: beginning in the 640s, the Chinese armies advanced into Central Asia, and the Chinese state established a circuit for the distribution of provisions, equipment and salaries. But the latter were paid in fabrics, particularly in silk. The state sent enormous quantities of rolls toward the West,[143] thus depriving the Sogdian caravaneers who were scattered between Central Asia and the interior of China of their livelihoods, even if the caravaneers so deprived seem to have been used once again by the army in the 8th century to provide transport.[144] An administrative career could have served as a refuge for Sogdian caravaneer families, and all the more so since the Tang state must have been happy to welcome into its ranks these specialists in relations with the now conquered West.[145] One can equally imagine social reasons: the Tang dismantlement of the structured communities could have favored a process of integration.

The examples are many, such as that of the stele of Kang Po 康婆 (573–647), found at Luoyang.[146] It dates from 647. Kang Po could have been a descendant of the king of Kang guo. He was said to have come from Ding zhou (in Hebei). His great-great-grandfather, Luo, settled at Luoyang with the Wei in 495. Nothing is said of his great-grandfather. His grandfather, Tuo, was an employee at the house of a prince under the Qi. His father, He, during the Sui, was first the *sabao* of Ding zhou, then promoted to the rank of a department

[143] Manuscript Pelliot 3348 V 2 B. Trombert, 2000, pp. 107–120.
[144] Arakawa Masaharu, 2001, p. 13.
[145] We thus have several examples of *hu* serving as envoys to the West or among the nomads during the Tang period, as they did during the preceding dynasties.
[146] Rong Xinjiang, 2001, p. 104.

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head in the imperial household. Kang Po, from the time that he inherited the titles of his father, accumulated a large fortune, and at the accession of the Tang became the director of agricultural works in the fief of a prince.

Another example is found in the stele of Kang Yuanjing 康元敬. It also comes from Luoyang and dates to 673.[147] He was a descendant of Sogdians from Paykent (country of Bi 畢). He himself was said to have come from Anyang (Ye). His grandfather was a general under the Wei, whom he accompanied in their move to the south. His father was "Grand *Sabao* of All China," then "General with the Noble Bearing of a Dragon." Yuanjing followed the Tang in their rise to power and was made a duke. In both cases, we see the social ascent of foreigners favored by dynastic changes.

None of this is quantifiable. We know only the cases of individuals, or families at best. On the whole, while it is certain that numerous Iranians seem to have left their communities in the 7th century and to have become integrated by means of administrative careers, it is not known whether this phenomenon was more pronounced under the Tang than during the preceding dynasties. An effect of scale could be at play here, as information in every sphere is more abundant for the Tang period. Moreover, the part of the Sogdian population which was not integrated at all, or was not integrated by means of an administrative career, escapes us completely in the interior of China.

The social data provided by these epitaphs pose formidable problems with regard to their reliability. Most of the time a single funerary stele provides this information, which does not allow for any separate confirmation. The titles given to ancestors could have been invented. We have very precise examples of this: An Jia 安伽 (518–579), whose tomb was found at Chang'an, was a man from Wuwei, in Gansu. He was culturally a Sogdian: the iconography of the reliefs decorating his funerary couch show this clearly.[148] He tells us that his father was a general of the Guan army and *cishi* of Meizhou, a prefecture far to the south, in Sichuan, a region which the Wei did not control. The title is therefore probably fictitious, at best purely honorific, as his wife and son were both said to have come from

[147] Rong Xinjiang, 2000, p. 148.
[148] Marshak, 2002; Riboud, 2003; Institute of Archaeology of Shaanxi, 2001.

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Wuwei. Jia was *sabao* of Tongzhou, one of the areas forming Chang'an, under the Zhou, and was then promoted to governor general.

Beyond these examples, the change in the system of community management combined with the numerous references to Sogdians in the administrative and military hierarchies could imply that it is necessary to analyze the Sogdian presence in northern China during the Tang more in terms of milieu than of community—that is, as a relatively fluid social structure, making possible the maintenance of connections between, on the one hand, familial groups that were not very integrated, which continued to marry among each other and to pursue their traditional Sogdian activities, whether as artisans or merchants, and on the other hand, individuals or families in the process of integration, if not already integrated for several generations. Solidarities may have been maintained or not, but they knew themselves to be *hu* and described themselves as such, even if they retrospectively provided Chinese titles to their ancestors. This new "structure" did not signify a decline in Sogdian influence—quite the contrary, for it helped them to leave the community ghetto.

Multiform and of long duration, the Sogdian presence in northern China underwent a major development in the course of the 7th century. Integrated into the Tang imperial design, certainly to a lesser degree than the Türks, but nonetheless in a very noteworthy manner, members of the numerous Sogdian communities, which had arisen in the course of two centuries of significant and continuous immigration, participated in commercial and administrative activities. The Sogdian merchant networks in China relied upon Sogdian milieux that were socially much more diverse. Present in quite large numbers in the new territories of the West as well as at Dunhuang and Gansu, but also significantly in the large cities of northern China, these Sogdians were to be found in quite a few areas of activity—commerce and handicrafts, but also the army and diplomacy, the mainsprings of the golden age of the Tang. It would belong to one of them, Roxšan, to put an end to all that.

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CHAPTER SIX

STRUCTURES

This chapter, placed in the center of the work but anticipating data to be presented in the following chapters, has an important goal: as I have pointed out, in order for a purely external study of Sogdian great commerce to be fully and legitimately historical, it should be supported as much as possible by an analysis of the social and economic structures which formed the heart of this commercial expansion. I have therefore assembled information scattered throughout the Sogdian and external sources which makes it possible to sketch the internal structure of Sogdian trade, including social structures in Sogdiana and the expatriate communities, as well as within the merchant society itself (for example, the social contrast between great and small merchants, and the question of family organization within the commercial enterprises). I will discuss economic structures, in terms of the balance of exchanges, money, commercial law and the interface between small- and large-scale trade, and also geographic structures, in connection with transport and the considerable distances with which the Sogdians were confronted.

1. *Social Structures*

Among the societies of the Middle East in the early Middle Ages, Sogdian society is one of the best known. Important archaeological excavations have made it possible to excavate castles and rural villages as well as whole quarters of cities, so that the state of research in Sogdiana differs clearly from that prevailing in Iran, for example, where there has been very little excavation of the towns, particularly for the Sassanid period. To these archaeological data we can add written sources, fragmentary to be sure, but of very diverse origins, including Chinese, pre-Islamic Sogdian, and Muslim Arabic sources written after the conquest. The synthesis of this information can supply us with a sort of ideal type, showing how Sogdian society functioned at its height just before the Arab conquest.

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The Importance of the Merchant Class

The first task is to characterize a merchant class in Sogdiana and the expatriate Sogdian communities. For this purpose, the testimonies in external sources are as clear as they are concordant.

The oldest are the Chinese texts. The pilgrim Xuanzang, who travelled through the Sogdian colonies north of the Tianshan in 630, writes:

> Both parents and child plan how to get wealth, and the more they get the more they esteem each other [. . .] The strong bodied cultivate the land, the rest [half] engage in money-getting [business].

And later, with regard to Samarkand:

> The precious merchandise of many foreign countries is stored up here.[1]

In essentials the Tang annals repeat the testimony of Xuanzang, but when speaking of the towns to the north of the Tianshan, they specify that those towns are populated by *hu* merchants, and on the subject of Sogdians in general they indicate:

> They excel at commerce and love profit; as soon as a man reaches the age of twenty, he leaves for the neighboring kingdoms; to every place that one can earn, they have gone.[2]

These testimonies are corroborated by other external observations of the Sogdians. Thus, the Armenian geographer Ananias of Širak writes in his *Geography*:[3]

> The Sogdians are wealthy and industrious merchants who live between the lands of Turkestan and Ariana.[4]

The parallel with contemporary Chinese sources is striking. A century and a half later, the caliph al-Mahdī (775–785) had the following discussion in his palace at Baghdad with the poet Bashshar, from Tukharistan:[5]

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[1] Trans. Beal, pp. 27 and 32, *Da Tang Xiyu ji*, p. 8, col. 8 and p. 9, cols. 9 and 10.

[2] Chavannes, 1903, pp. 120–1 and 134–5. *Xin Tang shu*, chap. 221, pp. 6233 and 6244.

[3] Ananias of Širak, *Geography*, trans. Hewsen, 1992, pp. 32–5. This is a rewriting of the *Geography* of Ptolemy, from the 7th century.

[4] Ananias of Širak, *Geography*, p. 74A.

[5] Born around 714 at Baṣra, he was in fact the grandson of a captive from Tukharistan.

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Al-Mahdī asked me:
From what people did you originate?
I answered:
Horsemen mostly, hard to their enemies, the people of Tukharistan.
He said:
The Sogdians are said to be braver.
I answered:
No, the Sogdians are merchants.
Al-Mahdī did not contradict me.[6]

The perfect parallelism of these three independent sources in itself constitutes a historical fact, namely the existence of a class of great merchants sufficiently important and structured to make a significant impression on distant observers. At the time of the Arab conquest, the conquerors treated the merchants with particular favor: in 722, the Muslim armies captured the Sogdian rebels at Khujand; the nobles and the merchants were separated into two distinct groups, and only those in the first were put to death.[7] The existence of a powerful merchant class in Sogdiana is therefore indisputable.

The convergence of these independent testimonies is one of the major justifications for this study of large-scale Sogdian commerce. Just as *Ancient Letter II* proves the existence of a network and makes the historical analysis of it possible, this echo among sources from different ends of Asia demonstrates the existence of a social class of merchants, which justifies a sociological analysis.

However, while the foreigners—including an inhabitant of neighboring Tukharistan—noted that the merchants had a great role in Sogdian society, what of the Sogdians themselves? The principal collection of Sogdian documents available to us from 8th century Sogdiana—the documents from Mount Mugh—were found in 1933 in Tadjikistan. This collection is made up of the archives of one of the great Sogdian nobles who resisted the Arabs, Dēwāštīč, the lord of Panjikent and self-proclaimed king of Sogdiana. It is made up primarily of letters dealing with the struggle against the Arabs and the administration of his agricultural domains, but also contains a few contracts (for marriage, the purchase of a burial plot, et cetera). In this corpus the term "merchant" (*γw'kr—xwākar*) appears only one time, in connection with the Sogdians besieged in the city of Khujand

[6] Al-Isfahanī, *Kītāb al-Aghānī*, III, p. 132, cited by Spuler, 1952, p. 400.
[7] Ṭabarī, II, 1444–1445, Eng. trans. vol. XXIV, pp. 175–6.

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(at the border between Sogdian Ustrushana and Ferghana):[8] document A 9 is a report addressed to Dēwāštīč which describes the political situation to the east and the surrender of the city. The text specifies:

> This is the news: Khujand is at an end, and the whole people has gone out on trust of the amir, and whatever (there were) of noblemen, of merchants, and of workmen, 14 000 (altogether), they have evacuated.[9]

This text shows that the existence of a structured social class of merchants is not the simple effect of an external perspective.[10]

The Social Status of the Merchants

Iconography constitutes another source of information. Specifically, it allows us to outline the self-image that Sogdian society sought to present. Numerous mural paintings, rich in information, have been uncovered, notably at Panjikent. But these paintings bring to the fore a wide gap between Sogdian social reality as described in external accounts and the image of itself which the society wished to display. In fact, it is an aristocratic and not a merchant culture that clearly prevails in the iconography: scenes of legendary combats, armored heroes on horseback, persons carrying long swords even during banquets. Together with religious iconography and political iconography—including a representation of the capture of Samarkand by the Arabs at the citadel of Panjikent, and the theme of the kings of the world—noble iconography reigned supreme, integrating a refined culture with its depictions of Indian tales, the epic of Rostam, and more. We thus find nothing which relates to commerce, if not in the details: in one of the paintings at Panjikent (sector XVI, room 10), the customary sword of noble banquet-goers is replaced by a black purse attached at the waist.[11] The archaeologists point out the exceptional richness of the dress of the attendees [see plate V, ill. 1, and the plan in plate VI], and interpret this as a banquet of merchants.

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[8] Livšic, 1962, pp. 94, 95, 100. Livšic has incorrectly interpreted this text as referring to the city of Kucha.

[9] Trans. Frantz Grenet and Étienne de la Vaissière, 2002, p. 172.

[10] Belenitski and Marshak, 1971, p. 18.

[11] Belenitski and Marshak, 1971, p. 18. Grenet, "The self-image of the Sogdians," in 2005.

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Religious motifs also furnish information. One of the deities most often represented in Sogdiana, in paintings as well as on coins, is the "god with the camel," seated on a throne with camel foreparts.[12] The consensus is that this was a god of wealth for the caravaneers.[13]

One text gives an interesting piece of information, even if it is late:

> In Bukhara there was a clan which was called the Kashkathān. They were an honored group possessing power and dignity, and they enjoyed great respect among the people of Bukhara. They were not (originally) dihqāns, but of foreign origin. They were, however, a good family, traders, and rich.[14]

The information is from the 10th century, but concerns the beginning of the 8th century. It seems to rather precisely define the social status of the merchants, who occupied a high place in society, and yet were not assimilated with the nobles.

At times the distinction between merchant and aristocratic families seems very slight. At Panjikent—by force of circumstances, the only city where such a study has been made—the aristocracy built houses which from the beginning integrated independent shops into their exterior walls, which were rented to artisans or to shopkeepers.[15] The Sogdian aristocracy was not a purely landowning aristocracy, living by means of income from the land alone. It participated brilliantly in urban life, where riches and exchanges were concentrated, and from which the countryside seems to have been cut off.[16] But the sole residence which may be identified as the house of a merchant at Panjikent, the one containing the painting of the merchant banquet, presents the same characteristics as the aristocratic houses: one

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[12] Smirnova, 1987. Note, however, that the Bactrian camel was a dynastic emblem at Bukhara as well, and that it was commonly a symbol of military and virile strength in Central Asia. Thus the Qarakhanids in the 11th century were divided into two clans, the "lions" and the "(male) camels." Starting in the 8th century, a sovereign of Ustrushana bore the name of "black (male) camel" (Qarabughra).

[13] His name, on the other hand, is a matter of debate: Frantz Grenet sees him as Farn, the god of fortune (Grenet, 1995–6, p. 279), while Boris Maršak and Valentina Raspopova identify him with Wašaghn, god of victory but also of travellers (Maršak and Raspopova, 1990, pp. 141–2).

[14] Narshakhī, trans. Frye, p. 30.

[15] Raspopova, 1993, p. 26. Her typology is based on the distribution in statistical series of the city's dwellings by location and the magnificence of their ceremonial halls.

[16] On the economy of the plains and the mountains, see mainly Jakubov, 1988 and 1979. On urban population see Belenickij, Maršak and Raspopova, 1979.

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of the bazaars of the city was built against it, and this was included in the plan of the villa from the beginning [see plate VI, ill. 1].[17] Note, however, that Panjikent, located deep in the Zarafshan valley, was not the most mercantile city of the country, and that these social data thus originate from a region less concerned than others with great commerce.

At Semireč'e as well as near the Lobnor, we know that aristocrats were the founders of the Sogdian colonies. These colonies were not exclusively or even primarily commercial, and were initially established for the purpose of agricultural colonization. In the specifically mercantile sphere, we have no facts available that would enable us to determine whether the Sogdian aristocracy participated in the commercial development of the country. The agricultural wealth brought to the cities by aristocrats certainly created an important market for the merchants' luxury goods,[18] but one could imagine that land revenues also served to finance their long-distance commercial enterprises. It is also unknown whether the nobles themselves embarked upon large-scale trade. The only texts which supply a partial answer are ambiguous: in Ancient Letter II, mention is made of "a hundred freemen from Samarkand" (*100 "ztpyδrk sm'rknδc*), at lines 19–20. The term here translated as "freeman" etymologically signifies "noble son." It seems probable, but not certain, that it had already lost its original meaning. The same text is addressed to "the noble lord Varzakk son of Nanai-thvār [of the family] Kānakk." But Kānakk seems to be attested as a title[19] as often as a proper name.[20] In this case, it is hard to tell whether the name functions as a title or as a clan name. Given the documents that are currently available, we know neither the exact role that the Sogdian aristocracy could have played in the merchant emigration, nor the exact status of the merchants in the social hierarchy of Sogdiana.

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[17] Raspopova, 1971, p. 72.

[18] See Raspopova, 1980, pp. 53–4, 107, 130–1 for the role of this noble market in stimulating the local craft industry.

[19] See Yoshida, 1991, p. 242. Recto: "To my lord Kānak Tarqan eskātač." Verso: "To my lord eskātač Kānak Tarqan." The title seems to be "Kānak Tarqan" and the personal name "eskātač," for if this were not so, it would be difficult to understand the inversion between the two phrases.

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Range of Activity and Social Hierarchy among the Merchants

The majority of Sogdian merchants were probably small merchants, completing a circuit between three or four towns over some hundreds of kilometers. In 648, Mi Xunzhi 米巡眥, of Beshbalik, requested a trading permit: 31 years old, he wished to go to the market at Turfan with two slaves (a boy of 15 years and a girl of 12), an 8-year-old Türk camel and 15 sheep.[21] In 732–3, the Sogdian Shi Randian 石染典, a resident of Turfan, asked the Chinese administration for a passport in order to be able to travel from town to town: he travelled between Turfan, Hami and Dunhuang.[22] Already at the time of the *Ancient Letters* certain merchants specialized in travelling the Gansu-Loulan route.

But others planned journeys of much greater distance. Without mentioning the case of Maniakh, who mounted an expedition from the Altai to Byzantium, and to whom I will return at greater length below,[23] it is enough to recall the case of Nanai-vandak, who wrote to Samarkand from Guzang/Wuwei, and to compare it with the lawsuit of the Cao family against the Chinese merchant Li of Chang'an: the range of activity in this instance was from Almalig, in the Ili valley north of the Tianshan, to Chang'an, which is not exactly local! Moreover, the transaction concerned 275 rolls of silk, or about the equivalent of 15 kg of pure silver, a significant sum.[24] The documents from Turfan occasionally show the involvement in transactions of Sogdians who had come directly from Sogdiana:

> The fourth year *Xianheng*, the twelfth month, the twelfth day, in the prefecture of Xi 西 the commander Du 杜 of the government of Qianting 前庭府, [. . .] has bought, in paying 14 rolls of finished silk to Kang Wupoyan 康烏破延 *xing sheng hu* 興生胡 of the country of Kang 康, a good yellow camel 10 years of age . . .[25]

Certain merchants, moreover, signed Chinese documents in Sogdian.[26] Lastly, the Arabic texts which mention Sogdian merchants show them

[20] Sims-Williams, 1992b, p. 53, and Grenet, 2000.
[21] Jiang Boqin, 1994, p. 187.
[22] Ikeda, 1981, p. 78.
[23] See chapter VIII, pp. 227 ff.
[24] See below, p. 271, for the calculation of the price of a roll of silk in silver.
[25] Yamamoto and Ikeda, 1987, text 29, p. 13.
[26] See Gernet, 1957, pp. 357–60, and Yamamoto and Ikeda, 1987, no. 33, p. 207, and pl. 27.

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returning from expeditions in China,[27] by which at a minimum one must understand Turfan—which the Sogdians called the "City of the Chinese" (*Čīnānčkath*)—if not inner China.

The whole problem lies in the interaction of the different social strata which can be discerned in Sogdian commerce of the 7th and 8th centuries. While it is more than probable that great merchants organized and controlled Sogdian commercial companies after the period of the *Ancient Letters*, on the other hand we lack data that would allow us to evaluate their precise role in connection with the tradesmen seen in business documents.[28] One text alone makes it possible to demonstrate the existence in Sogdiana of very great merchants, very remote from the small Sogdian merchants depicted in the majority of these documents. At the time of the conquest of Paykent by the Arab armies in 706 (88 AH), a captive proposed to ransom himself for 5,000 pieces of raw Chinese silk.[29] This prisoner had organized the resistance of the merchant city, and had made contact with the Türks in order that they might come to his aid. He was certainly one of the principal merchants of this mercantile republic, specializing in trade with China.

This text aside, the greatest Sogdian merchants, so clearly designated as such in the external sources, remain unknown to us. We observe itinerant tradesmen whose range of activity was very wide, sometimes handling important sums, but mostly we see small merchants shuttling between the cities. An important part of the social hierarchy of the Sogdian merchants escapes us, without a doubt.[30]

Such companies very probably had a familial basis. We have several pieces of evidence concerning the role of the family group in the conduct of Sogdian commerce. Besides the family connections attested in the *Ancient Letters*, the inscriptions of the Upper Indus allude to Sogdians travelling in family groups: five persons distributed over three generations, then a father and his son, two brothers, and

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[27] For example Narshakhī, trans. Frye, pp. 44–5, or Ṭabarī, II, 1444–1445, Eng. trans. vol. XXIV, pp. 175–6.

[28] Contrary to the claim of Maljavkin, 1988. For the Muslim world, however, see Udovitch, 1970, and Goitein, 1967, pp. 149–167.

[29] See Ṭabarī, II, 1188–1189, Eng. trans. vol. XXIII, pp. 136–7.

[30] It has been suggested that *γ'tk* (with a feminine *γ'tδ*), attested in the inscriptions of the Upper Indus, be seen as a word signifying "Great Merchant" (Sims-Williams, 1992b, p. 52), but the parallels mentioned lead rather to the notion of "master of the house," "free man," like *"ztpyδrk*.

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lastly a father and his two sons.[31] The son of Maniakh, the creator of western Sogdian commerce, succeeded his father. Much later, one of the last texts to mention a Sogdian merchant shows a small Sogdo-Uighur family network in action.[32]

Our inquiry into the social structures of Sogdian commerce thus comes to a relatively sudden end, due to the lack of a document which would help us to understand the structure of the possible Sogdian commercial companies of the Golden Age, in particular the relations between great and small merchants, as well as those between the various expatriate communities.

2. *Legal and Political Structures*

The Sogdian Oligarchy

In Asia, the Sogdian political structure was rather exceptional. In many respects it calls to mind the Italian mercantile republics of the late Middle Ages. Sogdiana was not unified, and several Sogdian city-states shared the Zarafshan and adjacent valleys. Samarkand was certainly the principal political power: it occasionally managed to secure control of certain small cities,[33] and its king claimed the title of "King of Sogdiana, Sovereign of Samarkand" (*sγwδy'nk MLK' sm'rknδc MR'Y*). Each city had its particular aristocracy, and the castles of the nobles made the Sogdian countryside bristle with many fortified towns around which the population was organized. The nobles drew vast revenues from the land and possessed properties in both town and country.

Within each state, the king enjoyed only the status of "first among equals." The dynastic principle was not at all dominant in Sogdiana, at least at the end of the 7th century and the beginning of the 8th, the time for which data is available: among the three known sovereigns at Panjikent there was no father-son succession, and at Samarkand we note two father-son successions, one deposition by

[31] Fussman, 1997, p. 76, n. 16.
[32] See chapter X, p. 325.
[33] Such as Maymurgh and Kabudhan in 731: see Chavannes, 1903, *Notes additionnelles*, p. 53. We also have in the Persian *Qandiyya* the last memory of a tribute paid by the Bukharans to Samarkand: see the translation of Vjatkin, 1906, p. 247.

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the people and two elections.[34] There is at least one example of a Sogdian king intervening directly in the commercial sphere: between 650 and 655 the king of He proposed to the Chinese to supply grain to the Chinese armies that had been sent to the west.[35]

The urban community, *n'β—nāf*, had rights of its own in Sogdiana. This is specified in the legal texts. It was in the name of the community that the town could rent out certain properties, such as the bridge at Panjikent, the toll of which was entrusted to two persons, on condition that they pay 150 silver drachms in advance for the annual receipts.

> From the Panjikent tax office and from the community, to Tarkhān and Vaghifarn. When you come across this notice, you should pay (lit. "give") 150 drachmas, counting beforehand, each year, on the [takings of] the Chak bridge. Keep this notice as a proof. Year 14 of Dēwāshtīch the khūv of Panch, in the Khuryaznīch month. Sealed with the clay seal.[36]

From a legal point of view, the city appears as a moral personality acting with full right, without reference to the king. In the contracts which the king concluded, he appears as a simple individual, subject to the same rules as other persons.[37] It even seems that in certain regions, it was in the name of the community that coins were minted.[38]

No text makes it possible for us to make a direct connection between the presence of a strong merchant class and the Sogdian political structure. While it cannot be proven, the hypothesis of this connection is nonetheless very tempting. Indeed, the summit of Sogdian society was occupied by an oligarchy whose exact social nature we must struggle to discern. One can suppose that it was formed by the union of the families of noble *dihqāns*, with their possessions in the countryside, and the merchant families. At Bukhara,

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[34] Maršak, 1990, p. 287.

[35] Chavannes, 1903, p. 145. *Xin Tang shu*, chap. 221, p. 6247.

[36] Document from Mount Mugh A 13, trans. Livšic, 1962, p. 69 and Henning, 1965, p. 249. See now Grenet and de la Vaissière, 2002, p. 187, n. 33. This text was translated again by Frantz Grenet and myself during a seminar at the École Pratique des Hautes Études. Yutaka Yoshida has kindly discussed it with us at length.

[37] See the texts from Mount Mugh, for example Livšic, 1962, pp. 53 ff.

[38] My sincere thanks to Yutaka Yoshida for having shared with me his readings of coins from Čāč: some of the coins published in Rtveladze, 1997–8 (p. 327) were unquestionably struck in the name of the *nāf*.

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in any case, when the Arabs had seized the city, the merchant family of Kashkathān was at the head of the resistance to Islamization.[39] Likewise, at Paykent, the "city of merchants" par excellence in the Arabic sources, no sovereign is ever named and the merchants seem to have acted collectively. The community (*nāf*) of Turfan is cited together with the Chinese king of Gaochang/Turfan.

Sogdian Law

All in all we possess four Sogdian contracts. They give an idea of the legal aspects of Sogdian society. The first three texts were discovered in the archives of the king of Panjikent at Mount Mugh—a marriage contract, dating from 25 March 710, a contract for the purchase of a burial plot (very end of the 7th century or the beginning of the 8th century), and the location of a mill (in the neighborhood of 710);[40] the fourth, a contract for the purchase of a slave from Turfan, dates from 639.[41] The text of this contract reads as follows:

> [l. 1] As to the year, it was the year 16 of divine and great Ilteberking [by the name] of Yanchyu, [the ruler] of Gaochang, in the fifth [l. 2] month [of the] Chinese [calendar], [while] it is called the Khshumsafich month in Sogdian, in the year of the pig, on the twenty-seventh [day]. [l. 3] Thus, before the people in the bazaar of Gaochang, a monk [by the name of] Yansyan, [l. 4] the son of Uta, who is from the family of Chan, bought a female slave by the name of Upach, who is from the family of Chuyakk and was born in Turkestan, from Wakhushuvirt, son of Tudhakk originating from Samarqand, [l. 6] for [the price of] 120 drachms [coins which are] very pure [and were] minted in [Sassanian] Persia.
>
> Monk Yansyan is to buy [l. 7] the female slave Upach thus as an unredeemable [slave who is] without debt and without possessions (?), [and who is] an unpersecutable and [l. 8] unreproachable permanent possession [of] his sons, grandsons, family, and descendants [as well]. Accordingly, [l. 9] the monk Yansyan himself and his sons, grandsons,

[39] Narshakhī, trans. Frye, p. 30.

[40] They have been edited and translated into Russian with a commentary by V.A. Livšic: Livšic, 1962, pp. 17–45, 45–53 and 53–63. For the funerary plot see the improved translation of Gershevitch, 1975.

[41] Yoshida and Moriyasu, 1988. English translation by Yoshida in Hansen, 2003, modified on one point: "itinerant and resident", now translated by Yoshida as "is persuasive (?) and effective and authorized" because of the Bactrian parallel quoted above in chap. 5, p. 132 n. 59.

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family, and [l. 10] descendants may at will hit her, abuse her, bind her, sell her off, pledge her, [l. 11] give and offer her as a gift, and do whatsoever they may wish to [do to her]. [They are entitled to treat her] just as a female slave [l. 12] inherited from their father or grandfather, or a female slave [who was] born in their house, born on their side (?), or born at home, [l. 13] or as permanent property purchased with money.

[Accordingly,] as regards this female slave [named] [l. 14] Upach, Wakhushuvirt no longer has any concern with her, renounces all the old [claims to her], [l. 15] and has no power to coerce her. This female-slave contract takes effect for all the people, itinerant or resident, [l. 16] both for a king and a minister. Whoever may bring and hold this female-slave contract, [l. 17] may receive and take this female slave [named] Upach, and may hold her as his female slave on this [l. 18] condition, [i.e.] such condition as is written in this female-slave contract.

[These people] were present there [as witnesses]: [l. 19] Tishrat, the son of Chuzakk originating from Maymurgh, Namdhar, the son of Khwatawch, [l. 20] originating from Samarqand, Pesak, the son of Karzh originating from Nuchkanth, Nizat, the son of Nanaikuch, [l. 21] originating from Kushaniya.

This female-slave contract was written by Ukhwan, the son of Pator [l. 22] by the authority of Pator, the chief scribe, by the order of Wakhushuvirt, and with [l. 23] the consent of Upach.

[l. 24] Signature (?) of Pator, the chief scribe of Gaochang.

Verso
F[emale-slave] contract for monk Yansyan.

The characteristic features of this text place it midway between the Iranian tradition—going back to Babylonian law, inherited by the Achaemenid chancellery—and Chinese law. The general organization of the contract and the stereotyped formulae belong to the former heritage.[42] But the text also incorporates some provisions which are specifically Chinese, in particular the mention of the consent of Upach. The sale of slaves was in fact very closely monitored in China, and had to occur in a quite precise and regulated framework, which here modified the form of the Sogdian contract so that it could actually be valid both for the Sogdian community as well as for the king of Turfan. The contract for the lease of the bridge

[42] For comparison with the form of Sassanid contracts, see Choksy, 1988, and for a translation of Bactrian contracts, Sims-Williams, 2000.

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at Panjikent shows that relatively complex legal and commercial formulae were in contemporary use in Sogdiana.

Lastly, the contrast within the populace between "itinerants" and "residents" is met again in the marriage contract from Mount Mugh.[43] Sogdian law thus might have recorded an indication of Sogdian mobility.

On the other hand, we do not possess the texts of any Sogdian laws. We know of their existence from a reference in an inscription on the great painting of Samarkand, but nothing of them has reached us.[44] Further to the south, Syriac texts have preserved scraps of the commercial regulations of the Sassanid Empire, and testify to a developed organization of commerce. A detailed jurisprudence made allowances for the risks of long-distance trade (shipwreck, fire, confiscations or plundering) in the rules of compensation in case of bankruptcy, organized the collective ownership of merchandise and the distribution of the shares in case of a separation of the partners, and fixed the rates of interest for merchants providing themselves with credit and counting on the profits from sales for their reimbursement.[45] We can only suppose the existence of such rules among the Sogdians, but the proofs are lacking.

3. *The Economics of Sogdian Commerce*

Money

While the monetary series from the Greek period were maintained up to the 5th century,[46] the coins struck thereafter in Sogdiana were of an entirely different type. In the oasis of Bukhara, the series called "Bukhar Khuda" began its long career based on a Sassanid prototype, the coins of Vahrām V (420–438) struck at the mint of Merv,

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[43] Livšic, 1962, pp. 23 and 25–6: document Nov. 4, verso, lines 9–10. See above, pp. 131–132, for the discussion of these terms.

[44] Al'baum, 1975, p. 52, fig. 15 and pp. 54–6. See Maršak, 1994, *contra* Mode, 1993.

[45] See Peegulevskaya (Pigulevskaja), 1956, who uses the jurisprudence compiled by Ishoboht in the 8th century, in particular book V, largely devoted to commerce.

[46] Such as the archer type, for example, which I have already mentioned in chapter II, p. 55, and which survived until the end of the 5th century. See Zeimal', 1994, p. 249.

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which were used until the 13th century. It is a trickier matter to fix the exact date at which their issue began: two times can be considered, the end of the 5th century[47] or the 6th century.[48] The coinage of Samarkand also underwent an Iranian influence, due to the prevalence of coins paid by Pērōz after his defeat by the Hephtalites as well as imitations of drachms, and was further influenced in the 7th century by the Bukhar Khuda coins[49] as well as those of Chinese type with a central hole.

The penetration of Sassanid models is not explained solely by the abundance of coins associated with the tribute sent by the Sassanid state after the defeat of Pērōz. The creation of the Bukhar Khuda series and its diffusion in areas beyond the reach of possible Sassanid incursions attests to the existence of a deeper influence, of an economic rather than a military nature. The period of the invasions temporarily put an end to the features of the local coinage, which were six centuries old, in favor of an alignment with the neighboring Iranian and Chinese monetary systems. In the 7th century, several cities struck imitations of Chinese coins, just as several struck Bukhar Khuda. The princes did not have a monopoly over their issue: coins in the name of the goddess Nana were minted at Panjikent, which suggests that they were issued by the great temple of the city.[50] I have already mentioned the issue of coins in the name of the *nāf*.

But one of the characteristics of the local coinage persisted, because the coins rapidly lost a good part of their value,[51] and their circulation was forced, being established and valid within the states that issued them. They bear overstrikes attesting to their validity, not to their quality.[52] One text shows quite clearly that the Sogdians, great

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[47] Loginov and Nikitin, 1985.
[48] Zeimal', 1994, p. 246.
[49] Zeimal', 1994, p. 249.
[50] I owe this suggestion to Frantz Grenet.
[51] As early as the 7th century the Bukhar Khuda had lost from 20 to 30% of their silver, and the content declined further afterward. The last series of the archer type of Samarkand contained between 0.2 and 0.3 grams of silver in the 5th century. On the circulation of money in Sogdiana see Belenickij, Maršak and Raspopova, 1980.
[52] It is possible that their name also reflects the same idea: in the documents from Mount Mugh we find the term "drachms [of the type of] religion," *δrγmyh δyn'kknh* (Livšic, 1962, document Nov. 3, recto l. 20, p. 21; Nov. 4, recto l. 20, p. 22; V 8, l. 12, p. 47, read by Livšic as *δrγmyh δyn'rk'h*—the correction has been made by I. Yakubovich, who is preparing a new edition of these texts). This term probably designates the group of coins of Sassanid type struck in the 7th century,

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traders, had perfect awareness of the necessity, for their purposes, of having a currency without worth, for fear of seeing it leave the country in the merchants' bags:

> The coins should be (such) that no one would take them from us nor out of the city, so we can carry on trading among ourselves with (this) money.[53]

The Sogdian coins were simple tokens of account issued by city-states with feeble political power and were intended solely for economic exchange in Sogdiana, in contrast to the Sassanid coins, which were instruments of dynastic prestige whose value remained more or less accurate over the long term. Minted in small quantity, the Sogdian coins played only a very minor role in great commerce, and are unknown in China.

When the Sogdians used a currency in their large-scale commercial activities of the 6th and 7th centuries, it was the Sassanid drachm. The example of the principal Sassanid hoard found in China is revealing: the hoard of Ulugh Art includes 947 Sassanid and Arab-Sassanid coins, of which 567 are coins of Khusrō II (591–628) and 281 are Arab-Sassanid coins of the Khusrō II type. It also contains 13 gold bars. It was hidden hastily in a cleft of rock at the exact opening of the pass joining Ferghana and the Tarim basin by way of the high valley of the Alai, and thus shows what a merchant or refugee reaching China from Central Asia in the 7th century could carry with him.

When a Sogdian sold a slave at Turfan in 639, he asked to be paid in "drachms [coins which are] very pure [and were] minted in [Sassanid] Persia." They were present in the mouths of the deceased, following a practice which recalls the obols offered to Charon.[54]

Sassanid silver coins, although found in limited number in China, unquestionably were circulated over a vast area as a result of Sogdian commercial activities. This is attested in the written sources. For want of Persian or Bactrian merchants, who are never or very rarely mentioned in the texts, it was the Sogdians who transported these coins on the land route.

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long after the fall of the empire, the members of which contain a quite variable amount of silver, but all of which bear on the reverse the symbol of the Zoroastrian religion, the fire altar.

[53] Narshakhī, trans. Frye, p. 36.

[54] See Thierry, 1993, pp. 100–2.

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The Sassanid drachms were not circulated solely because of their weight in silver: they were occasionally able to serve as monetary instruments in China.[55] These coins were legal tender in the Gansu corridor (Hexi) at the end of the 6th century, the only region of China, together with Canton and Tonkin, in which this was the case.[56] Under the Tang they also posed difficult problems for the authorities charged with control of the markets in the capital, where they circulated.[57] A fragment of the Tang fiscal statutes provides an interesting detail: the westerners who settled in the empire had to pay their first taxes in silver coins, changing to payment in kind only after two years had passed.[58]

On the whole, Sogdian great commerce did extremely well without any coinage of its own. A large-scale barter economy operated from one end of Asia to the other, composed of a few deluxe products in universal demand—precious metals, silk, spices, perfumes. Yet it must be noted that what appears to be barter from a western perspective is actually a monetary exchange from the perspective of the Chinese: Sogdian products were paid for in rolls of silk in China, where silk was in fact a money.

Sogdian Products

The main text enabling us to know precisely what products were traded by the Sogdians on a daily basis along the Chinese route is certainly the *Register of the Customs* of Turfan, mentioned in the previous chapter. A fragmentary text, it gives us details of commercial operations over a few months.

The goods exchanged fit perfectly into the general framework of Sogdian commerce: gold, silver, brass, ammonia, saffron (or turmeric), silk thread, medicinal plants, "stone honey," perfumes. Only silk came from the East; the other commodities were typically occidental

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[55] See the objections of Zeimal', 1991/2, p. 171. Thierry, 1993, p. 134, concedes the existence of a circulation of silver coins in Hexi due to the presence of strong *hu* communities.

[56] This is also a very good example of the difficulties to be met in systematically passing from archaeological finds to history, for none of the monetary finds from 6th century Hexi contain Persian coins. See Thierry, 1993, pp. 98–9 and 133, and the *Sui shu*, chap. 24, p. 691.

[57] See Twitchett, 1967, p. 213.

[58] Twitchett, 1963, p. 142 (*Tax statutes*, Art. 6, from 624 and 719).

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to the Chinese. All of these products were rare and precious, even brass, produced in Persia.[59] The Sogdians had an important silver mine in Čāč.[60] Saffron could have come from neighboring Tukharistan, which produced it in abundance.[61]

To this list must be added musk, which the Sogdians traded from the time of the *Ancient Letters*, and which is mentioned again as the commodity carried by a Sogdian merchant in China in a text by Abū Zayd written at the beginning of the 10th century.

We must also include slaves. The only Sogdian sales contract from Turfan is concerned with the sale of a young girl from Turkestan. Sogdian slaves are mentioned on several occasions in the documents from Turfan. Above all, in the Chinese capitals the Sogdians specialized in the importation of young female servers, musicians, singers and dancers who pleased the fashionable quarters of Chang'an.

To the west, a Byzantine text notes that the silk trade occupied the primary position among the enterprises conducted by Sogdian merchants. Archaeological excavations also indicate the role played in Sogdian commerce by the export of Sogdian and Sassanid silver tableware. On the edge of the forests of the Upper Volga, these objects were exchanged for Baltic amber, furs and slaves.[62] Such dishes are also found in China.

What emerges from these lists is that Sogdian commerce was not specialized—rather, the Sogdians traded everything that could have value in Inner Asia. It is a fact that at certain times these very diverse products were principally exchanged for silk.

The Status of Silk in Sogdian Trade

The distinctive role of silk in Sogdian commerce is connected to its function as money in China. In fact, monetary circulation in China acted according to a very different model from that which prevailed in the West. Together with a metallic currency without intrinsic value

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[59] For each of these products, see Laufer, 1919, and Schafer, 1963.

[60] Burjakov, 1974, pp. 102–7, points out that production at the mine in Čāč began well before the Muslim period and grew strongly in the 7th century.

[61] Ibn Ḥawqal, trans. Kramers and Wiet, p. 459: "Saffron in abundance is found from Washjird and Shuman as far as Quwadhiyan, and is exported to a great number of regions and countries."

[62] See below, chap. VIII, pp. 249–253.

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and of a chronically insufficient quantity to satisfy the needs of economic life, the roll of silk and the bushel of grain served as monetary instruments in their own right.[63]

There were two causes for the flow of silk to the West. The first is attributable to Chinese diplomacy against the nomads: I have already alluded in the first chapter to the driving role that this played in the birth of long-distance commerce in Central Asia during the 2nd century BCE. The second cause was no more commercial than the first. After the Han period, the 7th century and the first half of the 8th century were the second great period for the movement of silk by land to the West: at that time the Tang dedicated a considerable part of its budget to financing the expansion of the empire westward. Around 750, silk and hemp fabrics represented 55% of the receipts of the state, while grain accounted for 35% and coins 9%. In the first half of the 8th century, 20% of the receipts in fabric were dedicated by the state to control of the western regions, which amounted to more than 5 million pieces of cloth every year.[64]

These were the circumstances in which considerable quantities of silk arrived in the Tarim basin, in the form of salaries and expenditures for the soldiers and Chinese administrative personnel stationed in all the towns from Dunhuang to Suyab. The example of a high Chinese military functionary at Dunhuang (in manuscript Pelliot 3348 V 2 B) shows that for the first 6 months of the year 745, the army owed him 120 piculs of grain, or more than 8 metric tons, a sum which was converted to coins and then paid in silk. If it had been paid in coins, 160 kg of bronze would have been sent by the army to Dunhuang, and that only for the pay of a single functionary . . .[65] This phenomenon had two consequences for the Sogdian merchants. One was positive: the transportation costs of the silk were cut in half, as the Sogdians were responsible only for the second half of the journey, from the Tarim basin to Sogdiana and beyond, while the first half was financed by the Chinese state. The other consequence was more negative: from the time that the administration took charge of the transport of silk from the capitals to the Tarim basin, the milieu of the Sogdian caravaneers in the towns of Gansu,

[63] Thierry, 1993, pp. 132–4.
[64] Trombert, 2000b, pp. 108–9.
[65] *Ibid.*, p. 109.

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one of their oldest areas of settlement, must have known some hard times, since one of the most important commodities had escaped from their hands. Is it a matter of chance that the Sogdian families which integrated themselves into the Chinese administration came from *sartapao* circles in Gansu that had changed their activities?

It is therefore necessary to differentiate the periods of Sogdian commercial history according to the presence or lack of abundant and inexpensive silk in Eastern Turkestan. It was the stability of the Han Empire over centuries that made it possible for western merchants to come and settle in Chinese territory and to establish their networks there. From the 3rd to the 5th century silk still circulated—this is shown by the document from Niya, cited in chapter II, concerning the silk merchants from China during the second half of the 3rd century, but this commerce was conducted under much more difficult conditions that increased its cost, and it is indeed of a shortage that the text speaks.[66] After the period of disorder in the 4th century, the Sogdians succeeded in reconstructing their networks in a satisfactory manner, for according to the text of Cosmas Indicopleustes, considerable quantities of silk circulated by the land route at the beginning of the 6th century. The success was in this case purely commercial, as the Chinese state was absent from Central Asia. The birth of the Türk Empire brought silk of diplomatic origin to the market in force, sent by the states of North China to the new nomadic power beginning in the 550s. The conquest of the Tarim basin by the Tang from 640 onward at last opened the way to silk of administrative origin. Then the Sogdians sold all of the exotic and expensive products mentioned above to the Chinese armies in exchange for the silk paid them as salaries until the 760s, at which time Chinese control over the area totally collapsed. The Chinese state needed the Sogdians in order to maintain its hold over its Central Asian territories, and the benefits they received during this period were certainly very considerable: it can be shown that the price of silk precisely doubled between Dunhuang and Samarkand at the beginning of the 8th century.[67] This was a matter neither of

[66] "At present there are no merchants from China, so that the debt of silk is not to be investigated now [. . .] When the merchants arrive from China, the debt of silk is to be investigated." Trans. Burrow, 1940, p. 9, document 35.

[67] See the demonstration of this in chapter X, p. 271.

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commerce between merchants, nor of commerce between states, but of the balance between the needs of the Chinese state and those of the Sogdian merchants.

The only silk available afterward was either produced locally or, up to the year 840, sent by the Tang to the Uighurs in Mongolia. Meanwhile, an economic phenomenon of major importance had taken place: between the time of Cosmas Indicopleustes and the 9th century, the maritime route supplanted the land route both in terms of the volume and of the value of trade. Perhaps the Sogdians owed the preservation of their position in the great commerce of China to the continuous shipment by the Chinese administration, from 550 to 760, of extensive quantities of silk of non-commercial origin to the west. But after the revolt of the Turco-Sogdian general An Lushan, who put North China to fire and the sword beginning in 755, Persian commerce prevailed.

4. *The Sogdians and their Rivals*

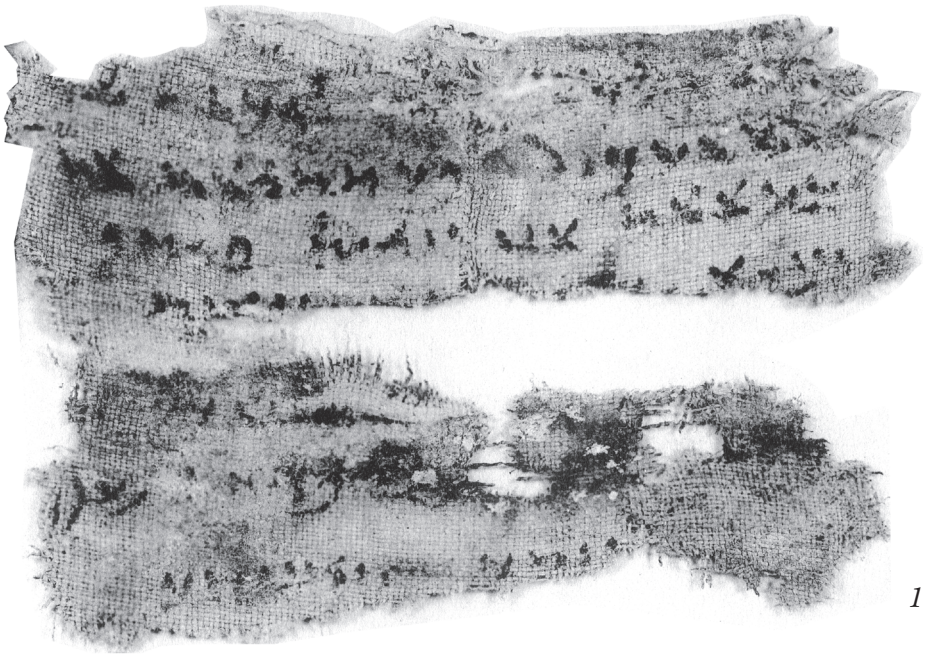
My study is devoted exclusively to the Sogdian merchants. Other merchants are however mentioned in the texts I have cited, and it may be wondered how these different communities coexisted and competed with each other. Certain peoples were able to rival the Sogdians over the entire extent of their commercial lines, while others engaged in a more local competition, or one limited to certain well-defined products.

The Societies of the Tarim Basin

Among competitors of the more local variety were first of all the merchants of Khotan. They are indeed a good example of those peoples who enjoyed both a commercial niche—precious stones, in their case—and a geographical niche: jade came from their territory, and their city was the largest on the route between Badakhshan, whence came garnet and lapis lazuli, and the Chinese possessions. Together with the Sogdians, the Khotanese were thus the great merchants dealing in precious stones in the Tang Empire.[68] They were

[68] Schafer, 1963, p. 224 ff. The Sogdians exported carnelian and rock crystal (quartz), among others.

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Plate I. Documents pertaining to Sogdian commerce. Ill. 1: The linen envelope of *Ancient Letter II* (courtesy of the British Library Board). Ill. 2: A Sogdian inscription of the Upper Indus (from Jettmar, 1989). Ill. 3: Sogdian *ostrakon* from the Strait of Kerch (© V. Livshic).

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Plate II. Merchants and ambassadors of the steppe. Sogdians in Chinese funerary reliefs. Ill. 1: Caravan on the Miho relief (© Miho Museum). Ill. 2: Ambassador An Jia (© CNRS, Fr. Ory).

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Plate III. Life in the communities in China.
Ill. 1: A banquet (© Miho Museum).

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Plate IV. Chinese statuettes representing Sogdians. Ill. 1: Caravaneer (© Musée Cernuschi). Ill. 2: Merchant on foot (© Musée Guimet). Ill. 3: Groom (© Musée Cernuschi).

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Plate V. Iconography of the merchants. Ill. 1: Merchants at a banquet in Panjikent (© Hermitage Museum).

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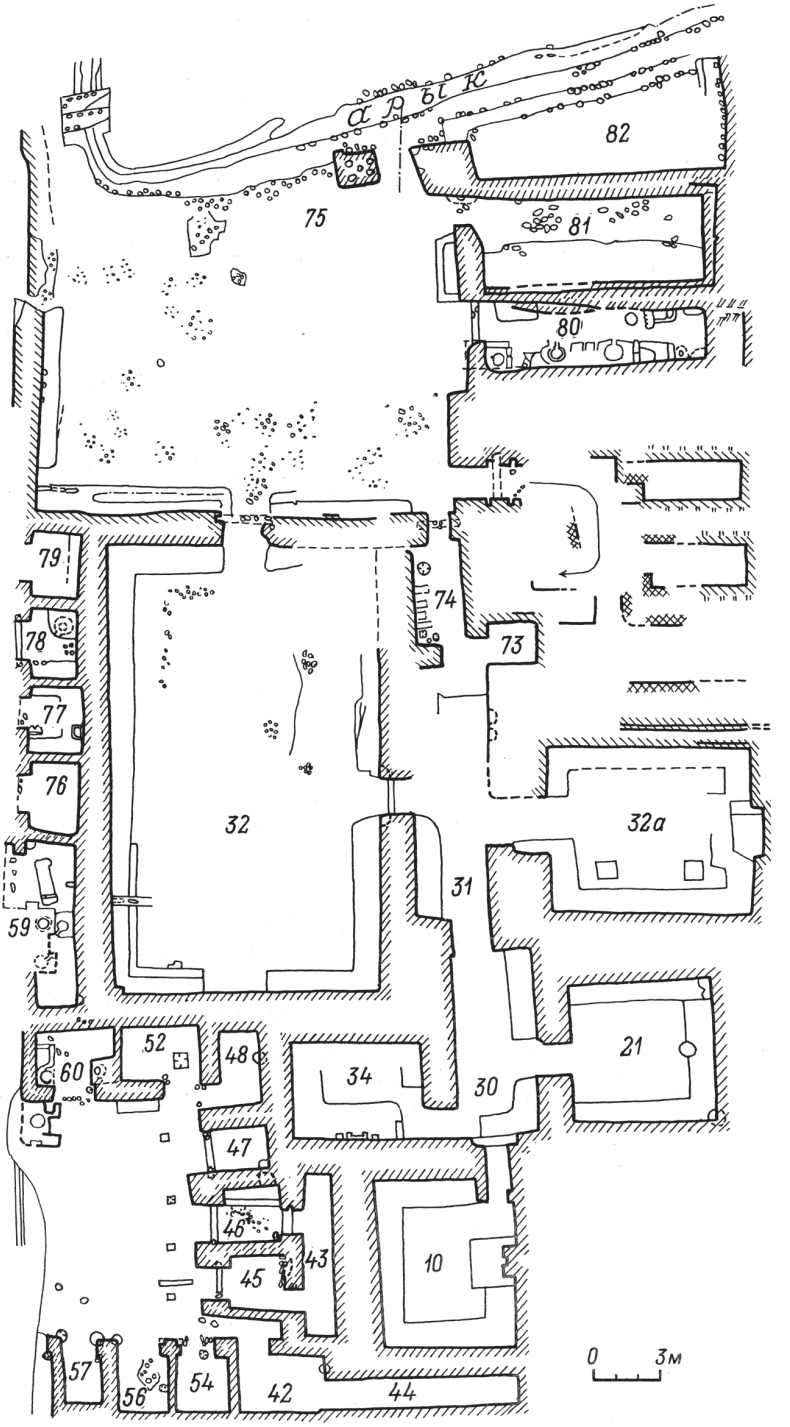
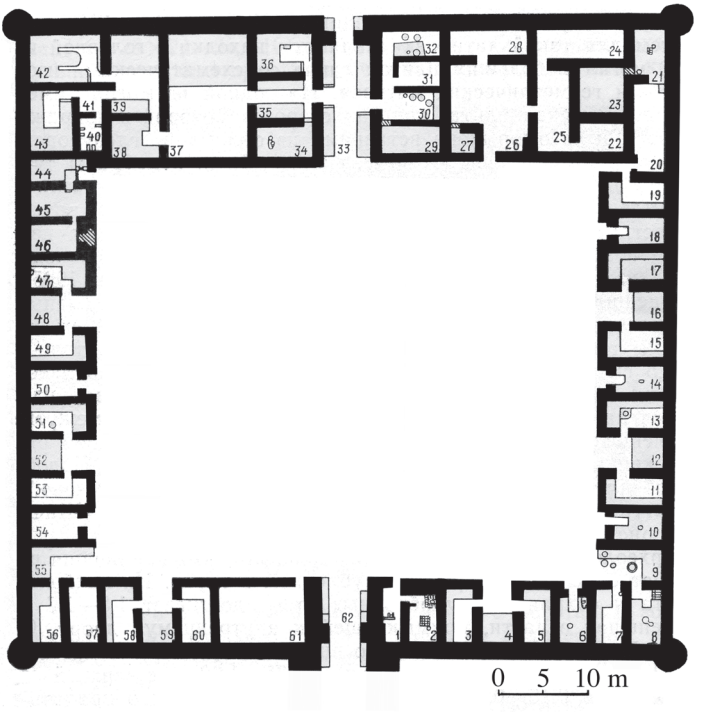
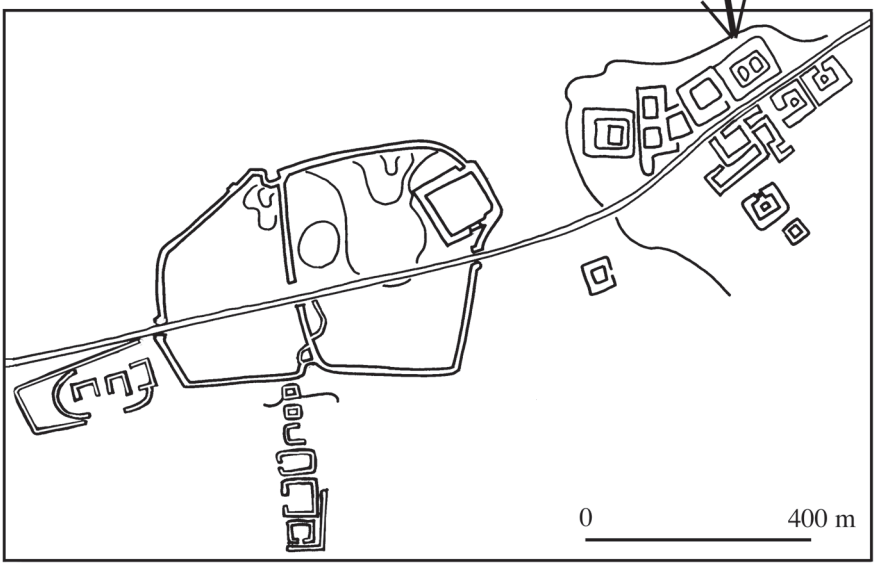


Plate VI. Panjikent. Ill. 1: A bazaar integrated into the plan of a property (from Raspopova, 1990).

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Plate VII. Paykent. Ill. 1: A Muslim fort (*ribāṭ*) (from *Gorodišće Paykent*, 1988). Ill. 2: Plan of the city and its *ribāṭ* (© CNRS, Fr. Ory, from Semënov, 2002).

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Plate VIII. Silver objects made or sold by the Sogdians. Ill. 1: The head of Senmurv, found on the Ob (from Marshak and Kramarovskij, 1996). Ill. 2: Sogdian pitcher with its Khorezmian inscription (from Smirnov, 1909). Ill. 3: Sassanid dish with its weight incribed in Sogdian (from Smirnov, 1909).

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also probably the predominant merchants in Tibet;[69] furthermore, the principal market of Khotan was that of furs.[70] The long-standing presence, since at least the 4th century,[71] of Sogdian merchants in the city thus in no way prevented the development of a significant Khotanese commerce, even though it did not have the range of that conducted by the Sogdians. No document describes the relations between the two merchant groups,[72] but we may suppose that the Khotanese could surely have possessed the political means to chase the Sogdians from their city, which had long been independent, had there been conflict between them. We may therefore imagine that their relationship was one of cooperation. A man named Mi Liang 米亮, perhaps a Sogdian, sold jade from Khotan to Chang'an during the second half of the 8th century.[73]

Sogdian dominance is more apparent on the northern route. We have few documents which indicate the presence of other merchants: at the Customs of Turfan at the beginning of the 7th century, two transactions involving a Kuchean are mentioned against 29 involving Sogdians. The Kuchean economic texts are primarily of an agro-pastoral nature.[74] Some commercial contracts in Saka have also been recovered at Maralbaši, to the east of Kashgar.[75]

But the most striking absence remains that of Chinese merchants. They appear only very rarely in the sources. It is true that the lawsuit already mentioned opposed a family of Sogdians and a Chinese merchant, but this document is the exception. In China, very little is known about the exact role of merchants during the first period of the Tang dynasty, up to the year 755. When the government tried to stimulate economic life and commerce in the Chinese territory furthest to the northeast, it called upon western merchants

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[69] Nevertheless, Khotan was not the "City of Tibet" (*madīna al-Tubbat*) of the Arab geographers, contrary to what is often read. Thus, for example, in Idrīsī (trans. de la Vaissière, 2000, 3rd climate, section 9): Rubinacci, 1974, has shown that it was Kashgar that was so named.

[70] Bailey, 1982, p. 38. See also the *Ḥudūd al-ʿĀlam*, trans. Minorsky, p. 92, for a list of the furs exported from Tibet.

[71] See the document from Endere Kh. 661, cited above (p. 64), which is difficult to date.

[72] The documents cited in Vorobyova-Desyatovskaya, 1992, seem to belong to the world of the village and countryside.

[73] Xiong, 2000, p. 182.

[74] See Pinault, 1998.

[75] Henning, 1936, p. 11.

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(*shang hu*). It is only with the second period of the dynasty that the texts present Chinese merchants,[76] when the role of the foreign merchants—who were cut off from their bases and too closely linked to the rebellion of An Lushan—had diminished. Mi Liang sold jade at Chang'an under the direction of a great Chinese merchant.

Western Neighbors

Of the ancient Bactrian masters there remained only rather weak heirs at the time of the Sogdian zenith. The merchants of Tukharistan are occasionally mentioned in the Chinese texts, and the very fact that they are treated distinctly allows us to point out their feeble representation. At Chang'an, the production (and importation?) of fine-quality glass seems to have been their specialty.[77] Very few Bactrian texts have been found in the Tarim basin. On the other hand, a few Bactrians are mentioned in the Chinese documents. While we know more than 850 Sogdian names at Turfan, there are 2 Tuhuoluo 吐火羅 in all (and 26 if we include the Luo, of which only around ten were actually Tokharians). This is a very small number, especially compared to the number of Sogdians.

Some of these references are nevertheless not without interest for our subject: among the ten or so Luo, at least four appear in a clearly commercial context. One document is particularly worthy of mention: in a travel permit issued by the Chinese administration, a *gosuo* 過所, dating from 685, Tokharians are seen to have travelled with Sogdian merchants. One of the Tokharians, named Moseduo 磨色多, 35 years of age, was en route with one male and two female slaves, two camels and five mules. The other Tokharian Fuyan 拂延 *p*^{h}*ut jian* ("favor of Buddha"?) was 30 years of age, with two slaves and 3 mules. They were part of a group led by the Sogdian Kang Weiyiluoshi 康尾義羅施, which also included two other Sogdians. None of them spoke Chinese, and they had to await the services of an interpreter, Nanipan 那你潘 (or Ninapan) in order to obtain the right to go beyond Turfan. They were guaranteed by five citizens from cities of the region—Turfan, Beshbalik, Hami, Qomul and Qarashahr—who very probably were locally settled caravaneers, four

[76] Twitchett, 1968.
[77] Enoki, 1969, p. 1, citing the *Bei shi*, chap. 97, p. 2275.

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of whom bore Sogdian names. They had come from the West and sought to go eastward to the capital, Chang'an.[78] The other commercial document mentioning a Tokharian, Luo Yena 也那 is a contract for the sale of a horse from 733, drawn up for a Sogdian at Turfan. The Tokharian, who was called a "prosperous *hu*" 興胡—a merchant—was one of the witnesses of the sale, together with other Sogdians.[79] Lastly, a travel permit from the same year lists one Luo Fujie 伏解, a laborer employed by a Sogdian and registered with him on the permit.[80] Continuously associated with Sogdians, these Bactrian merchants hardly seem to have been autonomous.

At Gilgit, much closer to Bactriana, only twelve Bactrian inscriptions are known. In the 6th and 7th centuries, the coins of northeastern Tukharistan, under Türk domination, bore Sogdian countermarks,[81] which seems to imply Sogdian economic control of the region.

Later I shall analyze Khorezmian long-distance commerce, which certainly existed in the western steppe but was little developed in the East.[82] Khorezmian commercial activities were included within the Sogdian commercial lines in the 8th century: in the middle of the 8th century, the silver coins of Khorezm began to carry a Sogdian legend, while those made of bronze continued to have one that was purely local. No political reason justifies this novelty: the only explanation lies in the inclusion of Khorezm in the Sogdian economic sphere, and particularly in its commercial area; this fact would account for the contrast between silver coins, intended for great commerce, and bronze coins.

The Great Rivals: The Persians

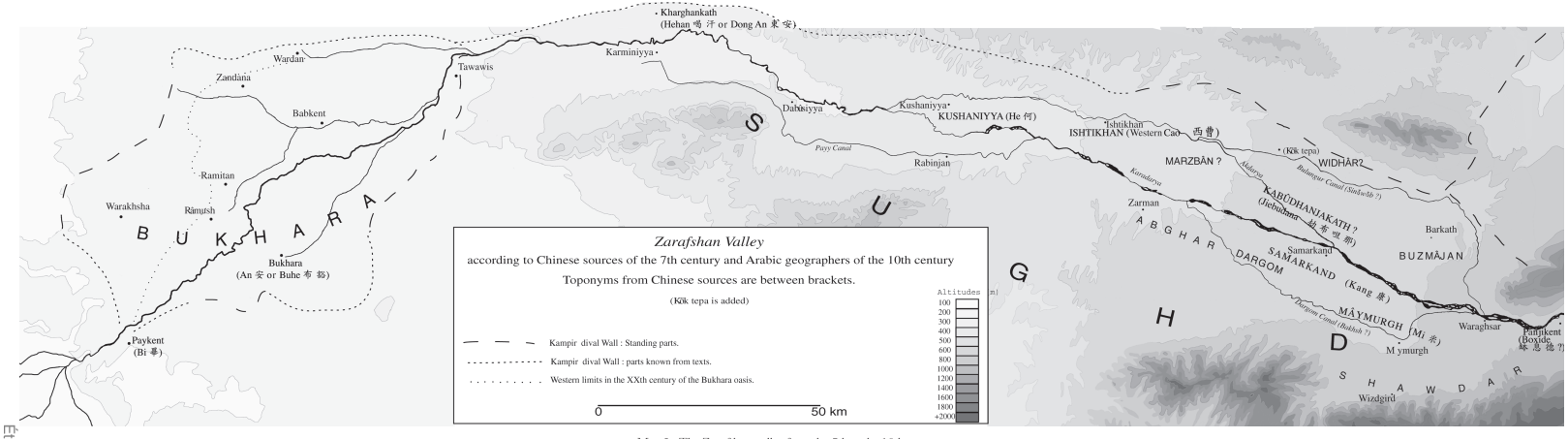
Two peoples were able to try to compete with the Sogdians throughout their domain: the Persians and the Jews of the Diaspora.

The diplomatic aspects of the connections between the Sogdian merchants and the Sassanid state will be analyzed at greater length further on.[83] It is certain that from the 5th century the Persians had

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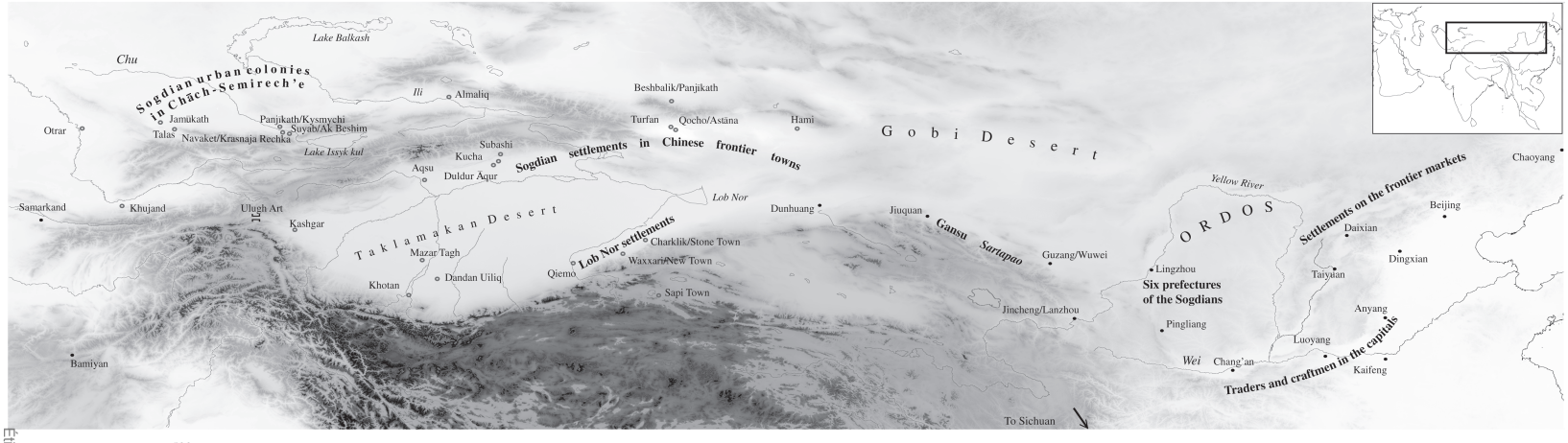
[78] 64 TAM 29: 107, vol. VII, p. 88 ff. See V. Hansen, "The Impact of the Silk Road Trade on a Local Community: The Turfan Oasis, 500–800," forthcoming.
[79] 73 TAM 509: 8/10, vol. IX, pp. 48–9.
[80] 73 TAM 509: 8/21a, vol. IX, p. 68.
[81] Rtveladze, 1987, p. 127.
[82] See below, chapter VIII, pp. 255–258.
[83] See below, chapter VIII, pp. 227–232.

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Map 5. The Zarafshan valley from the 7th to the 10th century.

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Map 7. Sogdian commercial expansion to the east.

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organized a maritime commercial network which reached its apogee in the trade with China during the 9th century. A large amount of archaeological information and a few texts show the importance and strength of their commercial activities. Concurrently with the Sogdian commercial expansion, a Persian commercial expansion took place, and throughout the history of Sogdian trade the Persian network acted as its counterpart.[84] In terms of commercial geopolitics, the formation to the southwest of Sogdiana of a merchant class supported by one of the leading states of the time could not remain without major consequences, particularly for the land routes that constituted the Sogdian domain.

In the Sogdian inscriptions of the Upper Indus, we find some names of Sassanid merchants, as well as that of a more distant Syrian merchant,[85] which at least proves the existence of a cooperation that we may imagine to have been reciprocal, to a certain extent. The passage from Cosmas cited in chapter III, while showing the partial separation of the two networks' areas of influence in Asia during the first half of the 6th century, also implies points of contact, since Chinese silk was able to pass from Sogdiana to the Persian Empire.[86] Geographically, Merv and Bukhara were the two hubs necessary for these contacts. Items have been found at Merv which attest to the importance of connections with Sogdiana. In fact, several Sogdian *ostraka* have been found at the Sassanid site of the city (Erk Kala). In an area developed in the course of the 5th and 6th centuries, the rubbish heaps of a huge house contained writing exercises in Sogdian, Bactrian and Middle Persian.[87] With good reason, the archaeologists think that a school of languages existed there, which is evidence for the Central Asian connections of Merv. The discovery of a mold for the fabrication of crosses is a sign of the role that Merv played as a stage in the spread of Nestorianism in Central Asia.[88]

In addition to this archaeological evidence, we also have texts which show Merv to have been the great Sassanid stronghold in the direction of Central Asia. We have already seen that, from a mon-

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[84] Kervran, 1994, Piacentini, 1992, as well as Hall, 1992, and Pigulevskaja, 1951.
[85] Sims-Williams, 1997, pp. 65 and 71.
[86] See Frye, 1993.
[87] See Herrmann and Kurbansakhatov, 1994, p. 69, and 1995, p. 37. See also Frejman, 1939.
[88] Herrmann and Kurbansakhatov, 1994, p. 68.

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etary perspective, it was from Merv that Sassanid models reached Sogdiana and became established there.

There is every reason to believe that an important interface between Persian and Sogdian merchants existed at Merv. This is in fact affirmed in certain texts, which ought therefore to take precedence over the indirect evidence mentioned above. These texts are, however, all from the 10th century at the earliest, even though at times they give accounts of events at the end of the 7th century. They too will be used in detail later in this study.[89] Let us here simply note the most significant of them: at the beginning of the 10th century, the historian Ṭabarī details the circumstances of one of the expeditions led from Merv against Bukhara in 699, and indicates that at that time the Sogdians were the principal moneylenders in the marketplace of Merv, although we cannot determine how far back in time this situation extended.[90] The texts of the Muslim period also provide evidence for a Persian commercial presence in Sogdiana.[91]

To my knowledge, the Chinese texts do not mention any Persian merchants who had arrived in China by the land route. On the other hand, an Arabic text speaks of a merchant from eastern Iran who had made the journey to China in the second half of the 8th century.[92] It is therefore probable that Persians joined the Sogdian caravans to China. Furthermore, a text from the middle of the 8th century mentions a merchant from the empire of the Arabs at Turfan.[93] A significant Persian and Arab presence is well known in South China, particularly from the 8th century. Yet the Persian political refugees who fled to the Chinese court after the fall of the Sassanid Empire were very probably more numerous than the Persian merchants who had come by the land route.

The relationship between Persians and Sogdians thus appears to have been based upon a relative separation of their respective areas of influence, in which contacts were made in a specific zone. In 568, when the Sogdians attempted to break the equilibrium in their favor by establishing themselves in the Persian commercial area—as I will

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[89] See chapter VIII, pp. 273–276.

[90] Ṭabarī, II, 1022, Eng. trans. vol. XXII, pp. 165–166.

[91] In 701, some Arabs and Persians passing a party of Türks between Kesh and the Amu Darya were assumed to be merchants (see Ṭabarī, II, 1078, Eng. trans. vol. XXIII, p. 27).

[92] Sadighi, 1938, p. 118.

[93] My thanks to Éric Trombert for having brought this to my attention.

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show in chapter VIII—the Sassanid government firmly turned them away and reestablished the *statu quo ante*, which remained in effect until the first half of the 8th century, when the Persian network and the heart of the Sogdian network were incorporated into the same political space, the Muslim Caliphate.

Sogdians and Rādhānites

The Rādhānite Jewish merchants are assuredly the most famous great merchants to be found in the historiography of the Near Eastern early Middle Ages. Only one text is known,[94] a passage from the *Kītāb al-Masālik wa'l-Mamālik* by the postmaster Ibn Khurdādhbih (middle of the 9th century), which describes the extraordinary maritime and terrestrial itineraries of these Jewish merchants, ranging from Spain to China. One of the land routes passed through the Maghreb, Egypt, Baghdad, Fars, India and China. The second is of more direct interest:

> Sometimes also, they take the route beyond Rome and, crossing the land of the Slavs, travel to Khamlydj, the capital of the Khazars. They embark upon the sea of Djordjân [the Caspian], then arrive at Balkh, they go from there to Transoxiana, and continue on the road to Urt (Yurt) of the Toghozghor [the Uighurs], and from there to China.[95]

Very few documents are available to confirm this text. In China, only two isolated fragments testify to a Jewish presence: a Hebrew manuscript from Dunhuang (9th century)[96] and a Judeo-Persian fragment mixed with Sogdian from Dandān-Uiliq (8th century)[97] are the oldest pieces of evidence known. The first was used as an amulet, and the second dates from the second half of the 8th century and was found near Khotan. It is a letter about the trade of livestock and perhaps also of clothing and slaves. A certain number of words seem to be Sogdian (the words signifying "slave" and "harp"). These are the only documents for the early Middle Ages. No Sogdian document attests to a Jewish presence in Transoxiana before the Arab invasion, but one text, the Persian *Qandiyya*, reports that Jews who

[94] A second text by Ibn al-Faqīh only repeats in an incomplete manner the information provided by Ibn Khurdādhbih.
[95] Trans. de Goege, p. 116, Arabic text p. 153.
[96] See Wu Chi-yu, 1996. Reproduction in *Sérinde*, 1995, p. 78.
[97] Utas, 1968.

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had come from China played an important role in pre-Islamic Samarkand. Unfortunately the information is not dated.[98] In Persia, a Jewish cemetery existed at Merv at least since the 6th century,[99] and several cities of Khurasan possessed strong Jewish communities (e.g., Nishapur and Maymana, near Balkh).[100] In the direction of India, the Jewish presence is attested by a few graffiti in the passes of the Indus[101] and especially by a passage from Bīrūnī.[102] Lastly, the cities of the Khazar Empire, which from the end of the 8th century dominated all the steppe north of the Caucasus and the Crimea, harbored strong Jewish communities.[103]

It is probably not impossible for these different communities from the south to have been organized into east-west networks. The text of Ibn Khurdādhbih, in spite of the great mistrust it has inspired, probably describes a historical reality that existed in the middle of the 9th century.[104] The general historical interpretation that could be given it has been shown: this Rādhānite network could have taken its name from a region in the immediate neighborhood of Ctesiphon, the Sassanid capital.[105] From this one can deduce that the network was a Jewish duplication of Persian commercial operations, and that *rādhāniyya* could simply be an archaic name for the network of the Diaspora of Iraq. Within this framework, if it can be considered in tandem with the better-known Sassanid networks, there is no reason to doubt the reality of this Jewish network.[106] We do not know

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[98] See the translation of Vjatkin, 1906, pp. 247–9: there is no edition of this highly composite text, only a Russian translation.

[99] See Klevan, 1979, and Rtveladze, 1997. The Jewish community of Merv probably existed from the Parthian period.

[100] Rtveladze, 1997.

[101] Jettmar, 1987a. Written in square Hebrew characters of eastern type, these inscriptions find a close paleographical parallel in a Bukharan codex of 847. They are situated in the same region as the Sogdian inscriptions already alluded to. One Sogdian inscription is found in the same location (Campsite).

[102] *Indica*, trans. Sachau, p. 206: the inhabitants of Kashmir allowed only Jewish merchants into their territory, for fear of invaders. On the grounds of this passage and the inscriptions referred to above, K. Jettmar has hypothesized that Sogdian merchants were replaced by Jewish merchants in the 8th century, which is possible but cannot be proven with so few elements. Note that the Sogdian inscriptions probably do not go beyond the 5th century: the question of the 6th–8th centuries thus remains unresolved.

[103] See Golb and Pritsak, 1982, p. 35, for the evidence of an important presence at T'mutorokan, Phanagoria, Kerč and to the north of the Caucasus.

[104] Cahen, 1972.

[105] Gil, 1974, p. 320.

[106] At the beginning of the 7th century, Theophylactes Simocatta wrote of a

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what the relations between Sogdian and Rādhānite merchants might have been. The fame of the Rādhānite network is entirely due to the text of Ibn Khurdādhbih—whose duties as postmaster of a government centered on Iraq made him particularly suitable to speak of these merchants—but it should be clear that, even though we have no equivalent text concerning them in the Arabic and Persian sources, the Sogdians were masters of the terrain over a large part of the Rādhānite network. Until the beginning of the 9th century, great commerce by land was Sogdian. On the other hand, it is possible that in certain areas it was replaced by a Jewish network—whose importance in the Mediterranean and the Indian Ocean during the 10th and 11th centuries is known thanks to the documents of the *Geniza* of Cairo[107]—which could have benefitted in earlier centuries from the religious neutrality of these merchants and the conversion of the Khazars to Judaism.

All things considered, Eurasia during the early Middle Ages appears as a remarkably integrated space of commercial networks united by relations of dependence, collaborations, interfaces and interlockings which enabled them to cover the entire continent. In Asia the Sogdian, Persian, and surely the Syrian and Indian networks are particularly conspicuous, but these groups of great merchants also relied, regionally and locally, on smaller-scale merchant groups. These merchants must have maintained points of contact between the great networks, as Merv, the markets of Chang'an, the Crimea, the Upper Volga and northern Mongolia did for the Sogdian merchants.

5. *Mastering the Distance*

A Caravan Commerce

The Sogdians were carriers as much as they were merchants. The role of the *sabao* in their communities, the very fact that the Chinese chose this word to name the community officials who were promoted to mandarin rank, the text of the *Ancient Letters* as well as the Chinese

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significant Jewish commerce supported by the Sassanid state which operated towards the Red Sea (V 7.6, trans. Whitby).

[107] See the works of Goitein: Goitein, 1967 (in which, moreover, a Jew from Samarkand is mentioned, p. 400, n. 2) and 1973.

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documents from Turfan—all show the importance of the Sogdians in the transport of merchandise. In China, it seems that they played a quite important role as auxiliaries of the army in its expansion to the northwest as well as the northeast.[108] We know little about the concrete realities of Sogdian transport.

The classic image of trade in Central Asia is that of a caravan commerce, organized around great caravans of camels. The reality which the documentation allows us to outline is far more complex.

In this sphere there exists a marked contrast between the business documents and the other texts. The business documents report small caravans, at the most composed of some forty people, and often considerably fewer, as well as donkeys, mules or horses. The more literary texts, whether Chinese or Arabic, for their part evoke great caravans of camels with several hundred caravaneers. The travel-permits of Kuchean caravans provide a good example of everyday traffic north of Kucha in the middle of the 7th century: a group of wooden tablets was recovered by Pelliot at the foot of an old guard tower, located at the opening of a gorge six kilometers to the northwest of Kucha on the mountain route to Aqsu.[109] This tower was part of a group of guard towers constructed at regular intervals in order to monitor the caravan traffic. The caravans travelled from one post to another, provided with travel permits which precisely described their composition (name of the leader of the caravan, number of individuals and beasts of burden, date, the post from which they had departed and the post to which they were heading). The travel permits studied are from the years 641–644. Some examples: one caravan was composed of 20 men, 3 donkeys and a horse; another included 6 men, 10 women and 4 donkeys; a third had 32 men and 4 horses. These Kuchean data, bearing upon a small local trade, are amply confirmed by the rare Sogdian data available. Thus in 732–3, the caravan of Shi Randian 石染典 was made up of four Sogdians, including a laborer, two slaves and Randian himself, and ten mules; he added a horse in 733.[110]

[108] See notably Arakawa, 1992, on the role played by Chinese and Sogdian merchants in the transport to Central Asia of merchandise destined for the armies. For the northeast, see above, p. 143.

[109] Pinault, 1987, pp. 67–8.

[110] Ikeda, 1981, p. 78.

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In the *Ancient Letters*, however, a possibly extensive group of travellers is mentioned (*Ancient Letter V*, lines 13–4: "Many Sogdians were ready to leave, (but) they could not leave . . .") and the caravans from Dunhuang to Loulan mentioned in *Ancient Letters I* and *III* seem to have been sufficiently large to assure the protection of a woman travelling on her own.[111] At the same period of time, a document from Khotan describes a caravan of 319 beasts of burden transporting 4,326 rolls of silk.[112] Later, texts of every origin mention caravans of several hundred merchants. Without again going over the Tibetan Buddhist text already cited, whose 500 Sogdian merchants belong to the style of the *exemplum* rather than to objective reality, we can consider the caravan of 240 *hu* merchants and 600 camels and mules captured by the Chinese in the region of Qinghai,[113] or the reference by the Arab traveller Ibn Faḍlān to an enormous caravan which took him from Khorezm to the Upper Volga in 921.[114] The historian Ṭabarī speaks of Sogdian merchants returning as a group from China in 722,[115] and Narshakhī does the same in his *History of Bukhara*.[116]

There is nothing strange about the existence of two principal modes of travel. The very etymology of the word "caravan," like the first references to the institution in India, refers to the idea of a military convoy, to travelling as a group for reasons of security. It may be supposed that in safe regions the Sogdian merchants moved in small groups or individually, but that they regrouped in order to cross areas that were difficult, either due to the nature of the terrain (the desert between Dunhuang and the southern route, or the Qaidam) or to political conditions (Sogdiana when the Arab armies were present, the territory of the Ghuzz).

The same pragmatism explains the references in the sources to every kind of pack animal. The camel was employed: to the Sogdian woman from Dunhuang who wrote Ancient Letters I and III, a priest promised to supply one camel in order for her to be able to join the caravan and make the journey to Loulan.[117] Furthermore,

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[111] Reichelt, 1931, pp. 8–9 and 22–5.
[112] Lubo-Lesničenko, 1994, p. 237.
[113] Schafer, 1950, pp. 180–1.
[114] Ibn Faḍlān, trans. Charles-Dominique, p. 38.
[115] Ṭabarī, II, 1444–1445, Eng. trans. vol. XXIV, p. 176.
[116] Trans. Frye, pp. 44–5.
[117] Trans. Reichelt, pp. 8–9, line 11.

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several Chinese texts insist upon the superiority of the camel in this desert region:

> Northwest of Chü-mo [Qiemo] there are several hundred li of shifting sands. On summer days there are hot winds which are a calamity to travellers. When such a wind is about to arrive, only the old camels have advance knowledge of it, and they immediately snarl, and standing together, they bury their mouths in the sand. The men always take this as a forewarning, and they too immediately wrap their noses and mouths in blankets. The wind is swift, and passes by in a moment, but if they did not protect themselves, they would be in danger of death.[118]

Tang iconography abundantly represents westerners arriving in the Chinese cities on the backs of camels. While some of these terracotta statuettes do not represent merchants, but musicians and particularly grooms bringing camels or horses to China [see plate IV, ill. 3], it nonetheless remains true that a large number of them clearly represent Sogdian merchants, dressed in characteristic costume [see plate IV, ill. 2], seated on the backs of camels with full packs [see plate IV, ill. 1].[119] Northern Sogdiana raised camels, and the Chinese captured large numbers of them in the course of their raid on Čāč in 751;[120] moreover, half-wild Bactrian camels are still common in the Uzbek steppes. The Türk general Toñuquq prided himself on camels brought back from a raid on Sogdiana.[121] A Sogdian sold a ten-year-old yellow camel to a Chinese at Turfan in 673.[122]

But in no case was the camel the sole means of transportation: the caravans in the documents from Kucha as well as the texts from Turfan referred to above indicate the presence of horses, donkeys and mules. In certain areas, such as the passes of the Upper Indus, transport on camel-back was impossible—only yaks were able to travel there. At any rate, no large caravan could have found sufficient pasturage in those desolate areas. Sometimes goods even had to be transported on the backs of people, as on the "suspended paths"

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[118] *Bei shi* 97, p. 3209, cited by Schafer, 1950, p. 181.
[119] The highly fanciful identifications in Mahler, 1959, should not be relied upon.
[120] Schafer, 1963, p. 71.
[121] Inscription of Baïn-Tsokto, line 48. Trans. Giraud, 1960, p. 64: "Yellow gold, white silver, virgins and women, humped camels and pieces of silk were brought in abundance."
[122] Yamamoto and Ikeda, 1987, text 29, p. 13.

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made of planks suspended from posts on the sides of cliffs, which made such an impression on the Chinese pilgrims travelling to India.[123]

Sogdian Ethics and the Spirit of Caravanserai

Masters of great caravan commerce over several centuries, the Sogdians had to solve one of the major problems facing this kind of commerce, that of daily halts in the city or between cities. We know the solution that the Muslim world worked out over time: networks of caravanserais lined the main commercial highways of Iran, Turkey and the Arab world. The origin of the Islamic caravanserai is one of the most debated problems of eastern historical architecture, and it is unresolved to this day. While numerous hypotheses have been formulated,[124] the almost complete absence of data concerning the material organization of terrestrial commerce in the Sassanid Empire makes the reconstruction of this origin difficult.[125] In the context of a study of Sogdian commerce, it is natural to pose the question of a possible Sogdian origin or influence.

None of the caravanserais or buildings known in Sogdiana that were constructed on the same plan can be attributed with certainty to the pre-Islamic period. Thus, assuming their function as caravanserais to be proven, the *ribāṭ* constructed at the gates of the merchant city of Paykent date only to the end of the 8th century, and were built on virgin soil[126] [see plate VII, ill. 1 and 2]. Excavations in the Kyzylkum desert, at a stopping-place for caravans between Samarkand and the delta of the Syr Darya, show the development of a simple encampment into a permanent facility at the turn of the 8th-9th centuries.[127] At Kanka on the other hand, to the south of Čāč, the excavators have apparently located, beneath a Qarakhanid caravanserai, the remains of a building on the same plan from the Sogdian period, and they hypothesize that this was also a cara-

[123] Jettmar, 1987b.
[124] Kervran, 1999.
[125] Currently the Sassanid maritime warehouses are better known: see Kervran, 1994, for analyses of several of these sites.
[126] Here I should like to thank Djamal Mirzaaxmedov, who was kind enough to allow me take part in his excavations of the *ribāṭ* of Paykent, as well as Gregori Semënov for our long conversations about Sogdian commerce at the same site. For the *ribāṭ* of Paykent, see *Gorodišče Pajkent*, p. 113 ff.
[127] Manylov, 1996, pp. 122–3.

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vanserai.[128] But the excavation is not sufficiently advanced for this information to be considered reliable. At the current time, archaeology has not provided us with knowledge of any pre-Islamic caravanserai in Sogdiana.[129] From a linguistic point of view, it should be noted that in Sogdian, the word meaning "inn," "hotel"—the only word comparable to the notion of caravanserai—was borrowed from Chinese (*tym* < Chinese *dian* 店).[130] The institution was therefore not local, and nothing allows us to establish a connection between the Chinese inns and caravanserais. When the Sogdian translator of the *Vessantara Jātaka* attempted to convey the Indian idea of hospices for travellers founded by royal charity at the gates of cities, he was obliged to coin a half-Sogdian, half-Indian word, *pwny'nkt'k* ("houses of merit"), as the necessary term was not available to him.[131]

There are thus no Sogdian caravanserais. Paradoxically, it seems that the Muslim institution of the caravanserai may have been of East Iranian—and more specifically of Sogdian—origin. Ibn Ḥawqal devotes a long passage to the manner in which travellers were accomodated in the region:

> In every part of Transoxiana there is no person having an estate or farm at his disposal who does not apply himself night and day to put this custom into practice. It is really an object of competition among them, which leads to the disappearance of fortunes and the ruin of properties, while ordinarily the people try to accumulate more than the others, show off their properties and go to a lot of trouble to add to their possessions. I myself have noticed in Sughd the remains of an abode, where the entrance had been closed by beams,[132] and it seemed evident to me that this door had not been closed for a hundred years and even more and that no passer-by had been prevented from staying there: occasionally the accomodation was occupied unexpectedly and without anything having been prepared, by one hundred, two hundred people, or even more, with beasts and servants; they found

[128] Personal communication from the excavator, M. G. Bogomolov. See Burjakov, 1989, pp. 27–31.

[129] The building of Aktepe Čilanzar, interpreted as a temple by the excavators, nevertheless has features typical of a caravanserai. But the dating of this site is not precise enough—7th or 8th century—to be certain that it is pre-Islamic. See Filanovič, 1989, p. 47.

[130] Moreover, it passed from Sogdian into Persian with the meaning of "caravanserai" (Henning, 1939).

[131] Trans. Benveniste, 1946, line 43, p. 4.

[132] Note here a misinterpretation by the translator: the door was blocked (in an open position) by posts, see BGA (*Bibliotheca Geographorum Arabicorum*) II, p. 466.

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> forage for their animals, food for themselves and bedding in sufficient quantity to enable them to avoid using their own blankets [. . .] Let us add that the greater part of the wealthy in the lands of Islam only make expenditures for their personal amusements [. . .] On the contrary, one notes that the inhabitants of Transoxiana devote their fortunes to the construction of hospices (*ribāṭāt*), to the repair of roads, to the establishment of waqfs [religious endowments] for the pursuit of the holy war, or to works of charity, to the construction of stone bridges. Rare indeed are the frivolous people who refrain from such activities. There is no gathering place, no frequented waterpoint, no inhabited village which might not be endowed with hospices with more than enough room for the influx of travellers who stay there.[133]

It is a description of the very concept of caravanserai which is given here, a concept which took root in an ethic specific to Transoxiana, and therefore probably in pre-Islamic Sogdian culture. For all that, Ibn Ḥawqal does not specify the architectural form of these *ribāṭāt*, and the conclusion drawn from archaeological data remains entirely valid. The Muslim caravanserai probably emerged in the 9th or 10th century from the adaptation of this pre-Islamic ethic to a new architectural form, that of the square Muslim fort (*ribāṭ*), which the Muslim governments scattered along the frontiers to face the infidels in the course of the 9th century.

For the situation before that period, the idea advanced by the Soviet researchers, that the oversized courtyards of the Sogdian castles could have served as accomodation along the routes, seems to me to be very sound. The case has been studied particularly at Zaamin, where two great routes of Sogdian commerce diverged, one leading to Čāč, the other to Ferghana: a great enclosure measuring 100 meters per side, whose ceramics date from the 7th century, corresponds well to the text of Ibn Ḥawqal.[134] In its presentation of the manorial way of life, his text entirely confirms this idea, in my opinion. The ostentatious generosity of these charitable works and accomodations seems to be the counterpart in the commercial sphere of the aristocratic way of life which completely dominated Sogdiana. At Panjikent notice has been made of the attention that the Sogdian nobles gave to greeting and reception in the superbly decorated halls

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[133] Ibn Ḥawqal, trans. Kramers and Wiet, II, pp. 448–9, Arabic text BGA, II, pp. 466–7.

[134] *Drevnij Zaamin*, ill. 2, pp. 96–7 and pp. 22–5. At Čāč, some castles seem to have large enclosures (Filanovič, 1989, p. 40, and Filanovič, 1991, fig. 2, 3, 4).

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planned for this sole purpose, which formed a significant part of the area of noble houses.[135] The underlying ethic is the same: a noble has a duty to appear and accomodate guests at his home. Economic necessity and the aristocratic way of life thus went hand in hand and converged in the utilization of the courts of the castles, which were very numerous in Sogdiana, by the merchants and their caravans.

The connection between manor and caravanserai is not certainly architectural, as has been occasionally supposed.[136] It is functional: the one succeeded the other for the purpose of housing travellers. On their own lands the Sogdians did not have need of caravanserais, for a sufficiently strong social obligation enabled the integration of commerce into the aristocratic culture.

In less populated areas, on the other hand, the caravans used tents. One text which treats of the Türk postal system between Semireč'e and northern Mongolia, an itinerary of long standing which was frequently travelled by merchants as often as officials of the various successive Türk empires, explicitly mentions tents in the steppe that were established in order to lodge couriers and travellers.[137] No provision was made for a permanent building. Likewise, the embassy in which Ibn Faḍlān participated in 921 crossed the Ust-Yurt plateau to reach the country of the Bulgars of the Upper Volga, just as many Sogdian and Khorezmian merchants had done in the preceding centuries, but the route was provided with a succession of caravanserais only in the 14th century [see map 8].[138]

More generally, it seems from a technical point of view that the Sogdians did not develop their roads to a great degree for the purposes of commerce. One example is particularly striking. To the north of Samarkand, between Ustrushana and Čāč, the "Steppe of Hunger" formed a considerable obstacle on account of its aridity. It compelled travellers to follow the piedmont north of the Turkestan range as far as Zaamin, and thereafter to reach either Ferghana or the Syr Darya as rapidly as possible, then the piedmont west of the Tianshan to finally get to Čāč. A more direct route was conceivable, in a straight line from Samarkand to Tashkent: beginning in

[135] Raspopova, 1990.
[136] Hillenbrand, 1994, p. 341.
[137] See the narrative of Tamīn b. Baḥr, ambassador to the Uighurs in 821, trans. Minorsky, 1948.
[138] Manylov, 1982.

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the 9th century it was provided with a line of cisterns which made possible a gain of two days' travel.[139] But this occurred during the Islamic period, and archaeology shows that the soils were virgin beneath these improvements.[140] The Sogdians had therefore not carried out necessary improvements over an extremely busy section of their network. A second example supports the first: between Merv and Bukhara, over the route by which all traffic with Iran necessarily flowed, and which was one of the major highways of the Muslim world under the Abbasids, the numerous improvements date in general from the 9th century at the earliest. Only a few wells—vital because no alternative route was possible—existed before that time.[141]

This analysis of a few of the internal characteristics of Sogdian commerce that can be drawn from our sources brings up the question of the possibly antiquated nature of that commerce from the 8th century on. The lack of organization of the area according to commercial imperatives is particularly striking in that regard. We should also note the simplicity of the forms of commercial organization attested in Sogdiana—based on the family—in contrast with the complexity seen further south in Sassanid law. The comparison is distorted by the absence of sources: the contract for the lease of the bridge at the very least shows the existence of sophisticated juridical forms in Sogdiana. The Sogdians were moreover able to work out a solution to the problem of caravan commerce on their territory. Even so, it may be supposed that the effect of the windfall represented by the massive transfers of Chinese silk to the west from 550 to 750 could have brought about a golden age for Sogdian commerce on a basis that was more political than strictly commercial.

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[139] *Drevnij Zaamin*, ill. 1, pp. 96–7.

[140] Personal communication from the excavator, M. Gricina. See Burjakov, 1990, p. 91, and Masson, 1935.

[141] Masson, 1966. This remarkable archaeological study of a commercial route, stage by stage, needs to be revised, for the dates have been assigned on the basis of surface materials. The study shows that the route was not entirely stable over the course of time: crossing the desert, its course was at the mercy of (for example) the drying up of a well.

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PART THREE

Commerce and Diplomacy (550–750)

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INTRODUCTION

The centers of Sogdian population stretched from Samarkand to Semireč'e, from the Tianshan to the Lobnor, and from Gansu to the great cities of China. All along this area of oases, mountains and deserts, the Sogdian merchants were in constant contact with an immediately neighboring nomad world. The central axis of the Sogdian network was in fact increased and extended by a series of north-south connections with the nomads of the steppe. Poorly known for the preceding nomadic empires, the role of the Sogdians in the Türk Empire is by contrast rather well defined. When this area was unified from China to Byzantium in the 6th century under the Türks, the Sogdians were naturally in the best position to furnish the new conquerors with the political, religious and especially economic means to manage their empire. A certain number of key texts enable us to comprehend the commercial use which the Sogdians were able to make of the Türk political ascendancy. Turco-Sogdian milieux formed at the northwest limit of China and played a large role in the economic history of the country. With the great rebellion of An Lushan, they ended up forming a major political force. Chapter VI is thus dedicated to the connections that were woven between politics and commerce in these Turco-Sogdian milieux. It was also by way of the steppe that the Sogdian network reached its greatest geographical extent, reaching as far as Byzantium: the Turco-Sogdian milieux were therefore at the root of Sogdian commercial expansion in the western steppe, which will furnish the subject of the following chapter.

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CHAPTER SEVEN

THE TURCO-SOGDIAN MILIEUX

To the Chinese the Sogdians were the main merchants of the Türk steppe. They played the role of counsellors to the nomads and had a strong foothold in the economic and political life of the successive Türk qaghanates which controlled the steppe from Mongolia between the middle of the 6th and the middle of the 8th centuries. Under what conditions was this establishment effected? The Sogdian presence from Čāč to Gansu—that is, all along the zone of contact between sedentary and nomadic lands—suggests several hypotheses. The Sogdians could have entered the world of the steppe from Sogdiana: this is the most common and immediately logical hypothesis. But it can be shown that the first contacts between Sogdians and Türks probably took place much further to the east, and that it was from their commercial bases in Gansu that the Sogdians gained a foothold among the Turkic-speaking peoples. The Turco-Sogdian cultural fusion, attested from the 6th to the 10th century, had been preceded by a long protohistory whose examination enables us to give an account of the Sogdian commercial monopoly among the Türks.

1. *Birth of the Turco-Sogdian Milieux*

The Türk Empire

The Türk Empire emerged abruptly from the fluid situation prevailing in the nomadic world at the end of the 540s.[1] Bumın Qaghan, of the Ashina clan, after having supported the Rouran, the ethnos then dominant in the steppe, revolted against them in 552 and destroyed them. His second successor, Muqan Qaghan (553–572), conquered all the steppe to the north of China, while his uncle İštemi

[1] A recent, handy and up-to-date review of the ethnogenesis and history of the Türks in its political, economic and cultural aspects can be found in Golden, 1992, pp. 115–154.

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(the Sizabul of Byzantine sources, 552–575/6) took control of the western steppes, and in 560, in agreement with the Sassanid sovereign Khusrō Anōshervān, crushed the Hephtalites and seized Sogdiana. At the end of the 570s, the Western Türks controlled all the steppe as far as the Crimea.

The half-century which followed is more confused: the western qaghanate became politically independent in 583, and dynastic rivalries emerged which were exploited on one hand by the Chinese, and on the other by certain subject tribes. Tardu (576–603), son of İštemi, briefly reunified the whole of the empire at the beginning of the 7th century. To the east, under pressure first from the Sui and then from the Tang, the qaghanate collapsed and disappeared after 630. To the west the situation was more stable, in spite of revolts, but after 630 the qaghanate disintegrated into several tribal confederations, with the On Oq in Central Asia and the Bulgars to the west. After 659 Central Asia was formally under Chinese control. The Khazars migrated from the Altai and seized the steppe north of the Caucasus from the 670s. To the east a second Türk qaghanate formed under Qutlugh (682–691), then under Qapaghan (691–716) and Bilge (716–734). This qaghanate gave way to the Uighur qaghanate after 744. Between 715 and 740 the Türgesh dominated to the west, but lost Sogdiana to the Arab armies, and then lost their own independence to China. The Chinese collapse in 755 opened the way to the Qarluqs in Semireč'e. In the western steppe, as far as Khorezm to the east, the Khazars were the dominant power from the 8th to the 10th century, and converted to Judaism.[2] Their empire served then as the hub of large-scale commerce in Eastern Europe.[3]

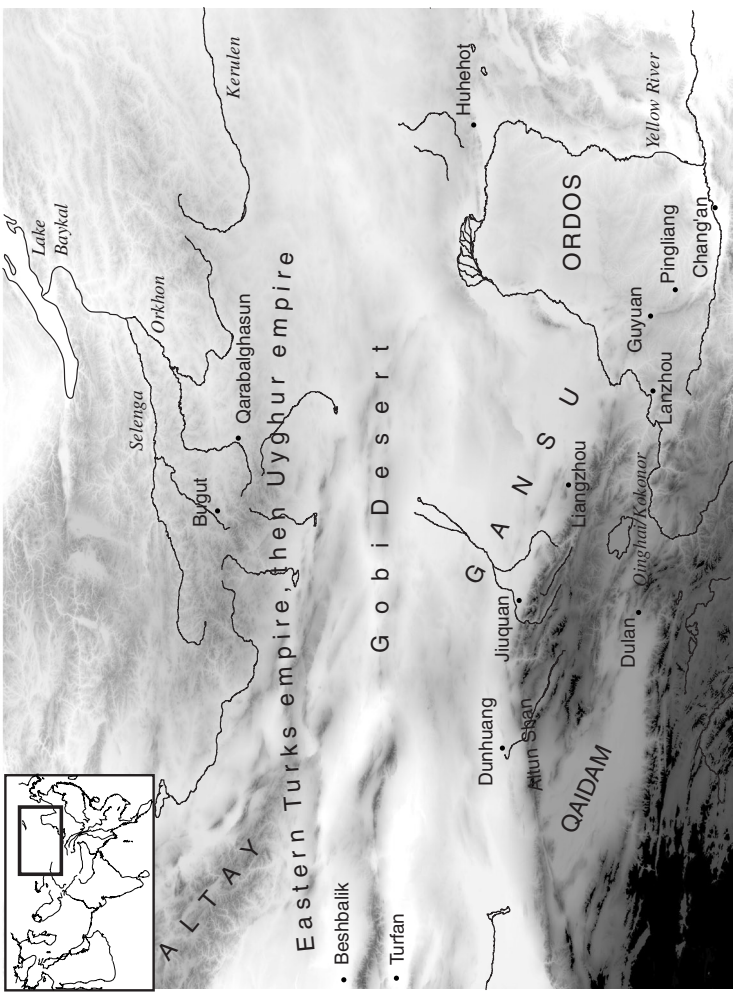
With the conquest of Sogdiana by the Türk armies against the Hephtalites, in 560, a genuine Sogdo-Türk fusion was created. Numerous examples attest to this. Thus, Čakin Čur-Bil'ga, one of the kings of Panjikent at the end of the 7th century, was a Türk, and his successor Dēwāštīč, though bearing an Iranian name, was himself of Türk descent, according to his genealogy as related in the *History of Nishapur*.[4] And again, the only Sogdian contract of marriage which

[2] The chronology as well as the extent of this conversion is highly disputed: see Zuckerman, 1995.

[3] De la Vaissière, 2000. The principal reference remains Dunlop, 1954.

[4] Livšic, 1979.

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Map 6. The Turco-Sogdian World

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has been preserved united a Türk and a noble Sogdian woman.[5] In the Sogdian colonies or in Čāč, the fusion is even more pronounced. In the necropolis of Krasnaja Rečka we thus have the example of tombs in which couples and horses were interred together according to Türk practice. This fusion is also evident in iconography: the persons depicted in the wooden frieze of Kujruk-tobe are dressed and coiffed in the Türk style and have Mongolic features.[6] The great painting of Afrasiab shows Türk warriors seated in a circle at the feet of a king or lost deity, while Chinese envoys and Sogdian nobles approach in procession. The examples could be multiplied. The great Sogdian urban centers certainly remained Iranian-speaking, as did the countryside, but in certain remote regions the Türk element began to be ethnically important (as in the mountains of Čāč, in Tukharistan and in Semireč'e) even if it was culturally under Sogdian domination (the overstrikes on the coins of Tukharistan under Türk control were in Sogdian).[7] The 6th and 7th centuries indeed witnessed the creation of a mixed civilization, at least within the ruling strata.

The Sogdian contributions to the Türk Empire were important. Chief among them was unquestionably writing. In fact, the Sogdian alphabet, adapted progressively to Turkic phonology, was used throughout the history of the Türk and then Uighur Empires to write Turkic texts, aside from a rather brief period of national xenophobic reaction within the elites at the beginning of the 8th century, during which the runic alphabet was used.[8] In our own day, too, the Mongol and Manchu alphabets are descendants of the Sogdian alphabet. Moreover, the earliest texts of the Türk Empire were written in the Sogdian language beginning in the last quarter of the 6th century: so it is with the Bugut inscription, the oldest known.[9] At the very beginning of the Türk qaghanate, the *Zhou shu* states "their writing resembles that of the *hu*" 其書字類胡.[10] Sogdian was the language of the Türk chancellery: when in 568 a Türk embassy travelled to Constantinople, the missive was written in "Scythian letters" and was carried

[5] Livšic, 1962, p. 17 ff.
[6] Bajpakov, 1986, p. 95.
[7] Rtveladze, 1987.
[8] Giraud, 1960, pp. 17–9. On the Aramaic origin of the runic alphabet: Giraud, 1960, Kljaštornyj, 1964, pp. 44–50, Róna-Tas, 1987, and Kyzlasov, 1991.
[9] Kljaštornyj and Livšic, 1971 and 1972. See also Bazin, 1975.
[10] Liu, Mau-tsai, 1958, p. 10, *Zhou shu*, chap. 50, p. 910.

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by a Sogdian ambassador, Maniakh.[11] Surely in these Scythian letters we should see the Sogdian alphabet.

Together with writing, the Sogdians also brought Buddhism. Türk Buddhism was, in its oldest stratum, under Sogdian and Chinese influence.[12] The Bugut inscription shows that Buddhism was present in the empire at the time of the first sovereigns.[13] Maniakh, the ambassador of the Türks at Constantinople, bore a Buddhist name[14] and his family seems to have been well established at the court of Sizabul, since his son was raised there and while still young was given the second rank in a second Türk embassy: everything therefore indicates that this Sogdian family was strongly integrated into the framework of the Türk hierarchy, where it possessed rank and hereditary titles even thought the Türk Empire had only just been created.

Other examples exist of the dominant role played by the Sogdians in the political life of the young Türk Empire, and these examples are not limited to the western part of the empire.[15] At the beginning of the 7th century, the minister Pei Ju 裴矩 declared to the Chinese emperor:

> The Tujue 突厥 are of an honest and simple nature, and one could sow discord among them. But numerous *hu* live among them, all in the highest degree cruel and perspicacious, who instruct and guide them.[16]

Another Chinese text, moreover, explicitly attributes to the Sogdians and other *hu* the responsibility for the fall of the eastern qaghanate in 630:

> Xieli 頡利 entrusted everything to the various *hu* and put his own people at a distance. The *hu* are grasping and presumptuous and by nature uncertain and changeable. So the laws were multiplied and the army

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[11] Menander, fragment 10. Trans. Blockley, p. 115. See below, p. 209, and the following chapter, p. 228 ff.

[12] See Asmussen, 1965, and especially Laut, 1986. But see Moriyasu, 1990, who sees borrowings from Manichaean Sogdian of the 7th or 8th century in the Türk Buddhist vocabulary of Sogdian origin.

[13] See the new translation of Yutaka Yoshida in Moriyasu and Ochir, 1999, p. 123, and the remarks of Tremblay, 2001, p. 66, n. 110.

[14] Lieu, 1985, p. 185.

[15] In this connection, Yutaka Yoshida has informed me of the article by M. Mori: Mori, 1967.

[16] Liu Mau-tsai, 1958, p. 87, taken from the biography of Pei Ju in the *Sui shu*, chap. 67, p. 1582.

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> put into motion year after year. The people of the nation (i.e. the Turks) resented it and the tribes deserted.[17]

We have several names of important Sogdian individuals in the Türk Empire. One can also mention An Suijia 安遂迦, the lover of the Chinese wife of a qaghan at the end of the 6th century, and described as *hu ren* (western Iranian speaker) in the texts.[18] The use of Sogdian as the language of the chancellery and its influence on Old Turkic guarantee that a large part of these *hu* were indeed Sogdians.

But the role of the Sogdians in the Türk Empire was not restricted to the summit of the state. The Sogdians lived in large numbers within the eastern Türk Empire, centered on Mongolia. A tribe of *hu* (*hu bu* 胡部) is mentioned on the same level as the other tribes of the empire.[19] Sogdian communities probably existed far to the northwest, at the center of the Türk Empire, but only their names have reached us.[20]

Present in large numbers in the administration, the army and the diplomatic service, the Sogdians were also present as simple merchants. The Türk Empire was an area of Sogdian expansion of the kind I have described in the preceding chapter, spreading out from the Sogdian colonies of Semireč'e in the western part of the empire as much as from Turfan and Gansu in the eastern part.

Peddlers and Conquerors

The first reference to the Türks, transcribed into Chinese as Tujue 突厥 in the Chinese *Dynastic Histories*, immediately introduces central Turco-Sogdian commercial problems:

> [The Tujue] first came to the Chinese frontier to buy silk and silk floss. They sought to enter into relations with China. The eleventh year Datong (545), the emperor Taizu [of the Zhou] sent an emissary named An Nuopantuo 安諾槃陀,[21] a *hu* from Jiuquan 酒泉, to the Tujue. There

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[17] *Jiu Tang shu* 194 A, p. 5159 and *Tongdian* 197.5.a, translated by Pulleyblank, 1952, p. 323.

[18] Pulleyblank, 1952, p. 318, *Bei shi*, chap. 22, p. 820.

[19] Pulleyblank, 1952, p. 323, *Xin Tang shu*, chap. 215, p. 6038.

[20] For example, the town of Samarkand, in which the khan Güyük died in 1248, seven days' journey north of Beshbalik (see Bartold, 1964, p. 466, following Juvaynī). This name is, however, only attested in certain manuscripts and was rejected by Pelliot (Pelliot, 1931, p. 460).

[21] The final character is a variant of 陀.

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> the Tujue congratulated each other and they said: "Our land is going to blossom, for today an envoy of the Great Empire has arrived." The twelfth year Datong (546), Tumen 土門 finally sent an emissary who brought the products of his land.[22]

An Nuopantuo, pronounced Nakbanda in the Chinese of the time,[23] was without any doubt a Sogdian: the family name An suggests this already, although at that time we might still be dealing with an inhabitant of Merv or an Indo-Parthian; but the transcription proves it, as we can recognize therein the Sogdian name Anāhitā-banda, "servant of Anāhitā," which is attested in Sogdian onomastics.[24] Jiuquan is located in Gansu, and in *Ancient Letter II*, l. 5, it is there that Armat-sāch resides. The very first text in history which mentions the Türks also mentions a Sogdian and the silk trade.

This episode had a precedent during the struggles between nomadic tribes in the 5th century: when the qaghan of the Gaoju tribe, from his capital of Bešbalik, attempted in 490 to conclude an accord with the court of the Wei against their common Rouran enemy who then dominated the steppe, he used the services of a *hu* merchant:

> The fourteenth year, Afuzhiluo 阿伏至羅 sent a *hu* merchant named Yuezhe 越者 to the capital.[25]

Yuezhe is equally a transcription of a Sogdian name, Wātč, "little wind."[26]

The association between Sogdians and Türks was therefore present from the start. The commerce in silk pushed the Türks to enter into contact with the Chinese, and it was a Sogdian who then served as emissary. The origin of the dominant clan of the Ashina can partially explain these early contacts:

> The ancestors of the Tujue were mixed *hu* (*za hu* 雜胡) from the region of Pingliang 平涼. Their family name was Ashina 阿史那. When the emperor Tai Wu of the Later Wei crushed the clan of the Juqu 沮渠, the Ashina fled with five hundred families to the Ruru 茹茹 (Rouran). They dwelt from generation to generation on the mountain of gold (Altai) and employed themselves in the fabrication of iron objects.[27]

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[22] *Zhou shu*, chap. 50, p. 908: trans. Liu Mau-tsai, 1958, pp. 6–7.
[23] Pulleyblank, 1991b, p. 228, no. 149:9; p. 231, no. 75:10; p. 314, no. 170:5.
[24] See Sims-Williams, 1992b, p. 41, and Yoshida, 1994.
[25] Text noted by Thierry, 1993, p. 113: *Wei shu*, chap. 103, p. 2310.
[26] Pulleyblank, 1991b, p. 388, no. 156:5 and p. 400, no. 125:4. Yutaka Yoshida informs me that it is also possible to read this name as Warč, "miracle."
[27] Liu Mau-tsai, 1958, p. 40, citing the *Sui shu*, chap. 84, p. 1863.

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Pingliang is located between Gansu and Chang'an. We know, moreover, that the names of all the earliest Türk qaghans were not Türk.[28] The imperial clan of the Türks came from the same mixed milieux of the frontier areas of Northwest China in which aboriginals, Xiongnu, Iranians, Indians and Chinese had mingled for several centuries. The text of the *Sui shu* concerning the "mixed *hu*" says nothing more. In such conditions is the early role of the Sogdians among the Türks to be understood.

This information is extremely important for understanding the genesis of Sogdo-Türk contacts: they indicate that it was well before the establishment of Sogdian colonies in Semireč'e and the Türk conquest of Sogdiana that these contacts developed. The presence of Sogdian merchants in the steppes can be considered to have begun prior to the arrival of the Türks, dating at least from the 5th century. The Türks were the heirs of an older history of relations between Sogdians and nomadic peoples originating from the Sogdian bases in Gansu. From the beginning these connections were commercial.

We can, in other words, formulate the following hypothesis: the Sogdo-Türk fusion from the 6th to the 8th century simply updated—in alignment with the Türks and in a context illuminated by numerous written sources—a much older relation between Sogdians and nomads, which only remains as traces in the sources. Commerce very probably had played a great role in that relation at least since the 5th century. I would willingly consider the possibility that this had been the case from the days of the kingdom of Kangju, which would enable us to explain Ptolemy's good knowledge of regions situated well to the north of the Bactrian route (and in particular the mountains north of the Tarim basin). In this case, parallel to the trade described in the *Ancient Letters*, one could imagine a Sogdian commerce already partially oriented toward the steppe, perhaps in the direction of the Xiongnu so well supplied with Chinese silk. But given the total absence of commercial documents concerning these areas, this possibility remains only a hypothesis.[29] Be that as it may, and taking again as our starting point the available information from the 5th and 6th

[28] See Golden, 1992, pp. 121–2.

[29] The military data cited in Pulleyblank, 1991a, are not reliable. A "Kang the Sogdian," *Sute Kang* 粟特康, indeed participated in the struggles of the Sixteen Barbarian Kingdoms (*Jin shu*, chap. 107, p. 2795), but it is in no way certain that the name of Shi Le 石勒 had any connection with Sogdiana (see Honey, 1990, p. 193).

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centuries, the existence of a commercial area in the steppe, controlled by the Sogdians and operating out of Gansu, is an established fact. This is confirmed by scarce archaeological evidence.

In Mongolia, near Hohhot (Huhehot), the abandoned body of a merchant was discovered, still carrying all of his goods, composed of Byzantine and Sassanid silver cups.[30] A gold coin of Leo I (457–474) allows us to date his journey through Inner Asia to the second half of the 5th century. There is nothing to prove beyond a doubt that he was a Sogdian; but his equipment and thoroughly western merchandise strongly encourage this belief, given the Sogdian presence at Gansu which I have described, an area through which he surely passed. The case is quite interesting, as the preservation of his wares proves that this merchant was travelling by himself and died alone, without being robbed. We therefore have here a small peddler, who nevertheless carried precious merchandise. This man might be a good example of what we would expect the Sogdian merchant in the steppe to be, and the date of his probably early trek—even if we only have a *terminus ante quem non*—fits the historical framework established by the texts. Sassanid coins have also been recovered in the region: minted under Kawād (year 41 = 525) and Khusrō I (year 14 and 41 = 572), they were probably buried at the very beginning of the Türk period.[31] Lastly, still further to the east at Dingxian, one hundred fifty kilometers southwest of modern Beijing, the religious offerings found in a stupa dated to 481 contained 41 Sassanid coins, of which 4 were of Yazdgird II (438–457) and 37 were of Pērōz (457/9–484), the last one of which was struck nine years before the time at which the deposit was hidden.[32] Is it a coincidence that the Türks borrowed from the Sogdians, among other numerous words, those signifying "debt" (*borč* < Sogd. *pwrc*) and "coin" (Uighur *stir* < Sogd. *styr*)?[33]

The Sogdians carved out a commercial domain north and east of the Tianshan, thanks to a small-scale trade in prestige goods, and to an intimate knowledge of nomadic peoples which rendered them indispensable when it was necessary to approach the nomads with diplomacy. The Chinese also employed them further to the south, among the nomads of the Tibetan plateau.[34] The birth of the Türk

[30] Cited by Lieu, 1985, p. 181.
[31] Thierry, 1993, p. 94.
[32] *Ibid.*, p. 103.
[33] Livšic, 1981, and von Gabain, 1983, p. 624.
[34] Molè, 1970, pp. 13 and 103. The episode took place after 470.

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Empire abruptly thrust this hitherto discreet presence to the forefront of the political scene.

For the later period, one must note the absence of Türk business documents as well as archaeological data which would enable us to better know the details of the Sogdian commercial ascendancy among the Türk tribes. It has been thought that archaeological remains of Sogdian settlements have been found at the very north of the Türk Empire, not far from Lake Baikal, but these are much more probably later and Uighur.[35]

But in China, a recently discovered iconography shows the historical reality of Sogdo-Türk commerce. Several series of funerary reliefs have in fact recently been discovered.[36] These reliefs come from Sogdian tombs and represent the activities of the Sogdian milieux in China. Several panels present scenes of trade with the nomads, while others portray the Sogdians' ambassadorial role[37] [see plate II, ill. 1 and 2, and plate III].

We possess several pieces of evidence concerning Türk policy on behalf of commerce. In the kingdom of Gaochang (Turfan) during the first half of the 7th century, the Türks had functionaries responsible for the supervision and taxation of commerce.[38] The qaghan Bilge, in the eighth century, addresses a speech to the Türk people, saying:

> If, dwelling in the Forest of Ötüken, you dispatch caravans and convoys, you will not have the least misfortune.[39]

Türk Silk and Sogdian Commerce

But this traditional small- or medium-scale trade was not the primary one. The Sogdians were able to introduce themselves into a commercial activity of much greater size, between Chinese and Türks. This commerce between Türks and Chinese was part of a long line of contacts between nomadic and sedentary peoples.[40] Economic life was

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[35] Okladnikov, 1963 and 1976, pp. 42 and 327 on the subject of Lake Baikal (Unga River).

[36] See Lerner, 1995.

[37] Institute of Archaeology of Shaanxi, 2001a, ill. 26, 27, 28, 31, and Marshak, 2002. An Jia, *sabao* under the Zhou, who died in 579, explicitly presents himself as a diplomat.

[38] Thierry, 1993.

[39] Giraud, 1960, p. 57.

[40] For a thorough analysis of the commercial aspects of relations between the Chinese and Türks in the 6th century, see Ecsedy, 1968.

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then inextricably tied to extremely variable political circumstances. But the examination of economic exchanges resulting from the balance of military forces is essential to one who wishes to understand every aspect of Sogdian commercial expansion. Two periods must be distinguished: the first corresponds to the creation, from 550 to 580, of the unified Türk Empire; during the second, economic relations stabilized and the role of the Sogdians advanced.

One text shows that the Sogdians within the Türk Empire also controlled commerce: I have already mentioned this account of the embassy of Maniakh to Constantinople, taken from the *History* of Menander Protector.[41] This work has come down to us in the form of fragments preserved in compilations of the 10th century, and in particular, for the passages that interest us, the *Excerpta de Legationibus*. We know almost nothing about Menander, apart from the fact that he had an unfortunate childhood before setting himself, in order to survive, to write his *History*, which was intended to follow that of Agathias; afterward he probably had a diplomatic career. His *History* perhaps covered the period 557–582. Fragment 10 gives the following passage:

> As the power of the Turks increased, the Sogdians, who were earlier subjects of the Ephthalites and now of the Turks, asked their king to send an embassy to the Persians, to request that the Sogdians be allowed to travel there and sell raw silk to the Medes. Sizabul agreed and dispatched Sogdian envoys, whose leader was Maniakh.[42]

The western implications of this episode will be analyzed in the following chapter. It is first necessary to understand the specifically Türk aspects of the embassy. Under Muqan and for fifteen years thereafter, the Türks took part in the war between the Zhou and the Qi dynasties for control of North China. They conducted a policy of "running with the hare and hunting with the hounds" which greatly enriched them: the Zhou and the Qi each paid the Türks 100,000 pieces of silk per year to assure their neutrality or possibly their services against the rival dynasty.[43] The two dynasties thus emptied their treasuries in order to obtain the good graces and military services of the Türks. The silk which Maniakh and his Sogdians proposed to

[41] Trans. Blockley, 1985. See his introduction, pp. 1–32.

[42] Trans. Blockley, p. 111. My heartfelt thanks to Constantin Zuckerman, who has revised all of the translations from the text of Menander.

[43] Liu Mau-tsai, 1958, p. 13, citing the *Zhou shu*, chap. 50, p. 911.

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the qaghan to sell in the Persian Empire (then, after that effort failed, in the Byzantine Empire) was the silk paid by the Chinese in enormous quantities at precisely the same time. The Sogdians of the empire in fact proposed to the Türk princes that they double the profit from the Chinese ransom by utilizing the unused surplus from the phenomenal number of rolls sent by the Chinese. These enormous deliveries of silk, even if it is not necessary to take these overly round numbers at face value, lasted some thirty years, until the Sui put an end to them.[44] The text of Menander ought not to be understood in the context of classical Sogdian commerce that I have analyzed in the preceding chapters, but rather in the context of the integration of the Sogdian commercial and political elites into the Türk hierarchy, taking into account the access to Chinese silk which was granted to them by Türk military strength. The entire western development of the Sogdian networks emerged from this capture of Türk silk and from the extraordinary economic windfall that it represented for the Sogdian military and commercial elites, delivered without expense as far as northern Central Asia.

The split of the Türk Empire into two hostile branches in the 7th century changed the conditions in which the Turco-Sogdian milieux undertook the dissemination of Chinese silk to the west. For this period we no longer have Byzantine texts which might allow us to understand what happened at the other end of the network. The Chinese tribute did not disappear, but it was more dispersed, as it was distributed among the different claimants to the title of qaghan. The Western Türks themselves also received their portion. But the Sogdians, meanwhile, were able to find other sources of profit.

2. *The Horses of the Ordos*

Together with their trade in military force and in furs—in 642 one of the leaders of the Western Türks sent 38,000 marten pelts to the court[45]—the other great commerce of the Türks was that of horses. It had existed since the origin of the empire: in 553 50,000 horses

[44] See Liu Mau-tsai, 1958, p. 395. The establishment of frontier markets for the Türks in 588 indicates the change of policy.

[45] Trans. Chavannes, 1903, *Notes additionnelles*, p. 8.

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were sent to the Western Wei.[46] It was among the Türks that the Chinese found the horses of which their army had need from the 6th to the 8th century. After the exceptional enrichment of the Türks in the 6th century, linked to Chinese weakness, the trade in horses became the normal form of relations between the Chinese and Türks in the 7th and 8th centuries. The Tang created a large cavalry which their Sui predecessors had lacked, and they were supplied by the Türks:[47] from 5,000 at the accession of the dynasty in 618, the number of horses grew to more than 700,000 in the middle of the 7th century.[48] Also, in 643 the Tarduš sent 50,000 horses along with other animals to the Tang.[49]

But beyond the official forms of commerce as recorded in the dynastic annals, a trade in horses was continually conducted on a small or medium scale. One region became particularly renowned for this trade: the Ordos, in the great bend of the Yellow River, the only region of grassy steppe south of the Great Wall.

The Shi Families: sabao, *Translators and Horse Breeders*

Guyuan 固原, named Yuanzhou 原州 under the Tang, is situated on the route from Gansu to the capital by way of the plain, avoiding the gorges of the Wei 渭 and Lanzhou 蘭州. Well sheltered behind a portion of the Great Wall, a large part of the pastures and military stud farms of the Tang were concentrated in its environs. Between 1982 and 1987, the seven tombs of the members of two Sogdian families were excavated by Chinese archaeologists. This is the first and, up to the present, the only example of a familial group of Central Asian sepulchres which, as the object of a scientific excavation, enables the reconstruction of the history of Sogdian émigré families in China.[50]

The names and occupations of the ancestors of one of the people whose tomb was found, Shi Shewu 史射勿, are given on his stele. The family was originally from the lands of the West. His great-grandfather, Miaoni 妙 尼, and grandfather, Boboni 波 波 匿, were

[46] Liu Mau-tsai, 1958, pp. 7–8, citing the *Zhou shu*, chap. 50, p. 909.
[47] Schafer, 1963, p. 63.
[48] Schafer, 1963, p. 58.
[49] Sir-Tarduš in Schafer, 1963, p. 59. On the distinction between Sir and Tarduš, see Boodberg, 1951.
[50] Luo Feng, 1996.

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both "civil servants in their country of origin" 並仕本國, and were both *sabao* 薩寶. Of Renchou 認愁, his father, we know that he had an eventful life, with high and low points, without his occupation being specified. Shi Shewu himself had a military career in the service of the Sui, and died in 610. His son, Shi Hedan 史訶耽, was an official interpreter at the Tang court, the first one known to us for that dynasty. He died in 669 at the age of 86, after having retired to Yuanzhou. Lastly, his nephew, Shi Tiebang 史鐵棒, was in charge of a large imperial stud farm near Yuanzhou. He died in 666. Shi Daode 史道德, a member of another and probably related Shi line, is interred in the same place; he held the same office and died in 678. We also have the stele of Shi Suoyan 史索岩, the uncle of Shi Daode, who made a military career at the court and then at Yuanzhou. We know the name of the wife of the latter, An, as well as that of the wife of Shi Hedan, Kang. Likewise, we know the names of numerous members of the family, whose tombs remain yet undiscovered. Although several had been thoroughly robbed, the tombs have yielded certain archaeological material, and in particular, placed in the mouths of the deceased, Sassanid silver coins and imitations of Byzantine gold coins. A Pahlavī seal was found in the tomb of Shi Hedan.

Shi is the Chinese name for the town of Kesh, modern Shahr-i Sabz, to the south of Samarkand. Moreover, the stele of Shi Shewu mentions the western origin of the family. The names are transcriptions of non-Chinese given names (at the time, Shewu was pronounced *žia^{h}-mut*, or the well-attested Sogdian given name Žimat). While the given names generally became Chinese in the following generation, the older branch, Shi Hedan and his son Shi Huluo 護羅, still bore given names which do not seem very Chinese in the fifth and sixth generation. After five generations in China, the marriages took place within a Sogdian milieu: so it was for Shi Hedan, great-great-grandson of Shi Miaoni, who married a Kang. The coins and the seal attest to the maintenance of contacts with western religion[51] and commerce, a connection which included Shi Tiebang, who represents the sixth generation. The ancestral occupation—dri-

[51] The custom of placing a coin in the mouth of the deceased is attested in Sogdiana (see Grenet, 1984, p. 219). It is well known in the Tarim basin, and particularly in Astana. The custom is of western origin, not Chinese (Thierry, 1993).

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ver of caravans—and that of their descendant—official translator at the court—also indicate membership in the Sogdian milieu. We are in the presence of a process in which Sogdian families were integrating into Chinese society, a typical example of those families enriched by commerce which incorporated themselves into the milieu of court functionaries despite all of the official taboos weighing upon their merchant origins, and which retained their original identity for a very long time. The case is quite precisely parallel to that of the family of Li Baoyu, which I have already mentioned on several occasions in order to reinforce the evidence of the *Ancient Letters* and in connection with the *sabao* of Gansu, but this time divested of the legendary scraps which the family of the great minister felt it ought to provide itself. The milieu of the Central Asian *sabao* was one of the circles in which the Tang administration and especially the army recruited. The occupation engaged in by several members of these families, that of manager of military stud farms, as well as the geographical location of their settlement to the south of the Ordos, is no less an indicator that these families were also situated at the junction of contacts between Türks and Chinese that I have mentioned above. They seem to be the counterpart, in the service of the Chinese, of the Sogdian clans of the Türk Empire. But it is not necessary to construct a definite opposition between the mercantile and military milieux, between turkified Sogdians and sinicized Sogdians: the Shi families show that the situation was very fluid, at least in the 7th century, and that all seem generally to belong to the same milieu, precisely at the geographical and social intersection of Sino-Türk relations in China.

The Six hu *Counties*

The area between Guyuan in the south, where the Shi families had settled, and Hengshan 橫山 and Lingwu 靈武 in the north, surrounded on three sides by the great bend of the Yellow River, was called the "*hu* park" 胡苑 by the Chinese in the 7th and 8th centuries. Numerous Sogdo-Türk families developed a cohesive settlement there, organized in 679 by the Chinese administration as the "six *hu* counties" 六胡州.[52]

[52] I here follow Pulleyblank, 1952.

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The origin of this settlement must be sought in the surrender of numerous Sogdians of high status in the Türk Empire after 630: thus Kang Sumi (康蘇密 < Sogd. *Sumit < Middle Indic Sumitta) surrendered to the Tang in 630, bringing with him the last Sui princes who had taken refuge with the Türks. He was made governor of Bei An Dudu fu 北安都督府 in the Ordos. At the same time, An Tuhan 安朏汗 surrendered with 5,000 men and was made prefect of the county of Wei 維. The political and administrative history of the region is rendered complex by the comings and goings of the Chinese and Türks. People with Sogdian names appear throughout the period: when the six counties revolted in 721, all the leaders bore "Sogdian" names (Kang Daibin 康待賓, An Murong 安慕容, He Heinu 何黑奴, Shi Shennu 石神奴, Kang Tietou 康鐵頭, and certain given names can be interpreted as Sogdian, in particular Shennu, a translation of Bagavandé "slave of God"). These Sogdians were highly turkicized and sinicized, but they preserved their original identity: other Sogdians who had made careers in the Chinese army were charged with suppressing the rebellion and returning the rebels to obedience. Moreover, Chinese texts periodically contrast the *hu* with the other inhabitants of the region.[53] Above all, the Türk texts designate the same region by the name of "Sogdians of the six districts" (*alty čub sogdak*),[54] furnishing a striking example of the connection which must be made between *hu* and Sogdians in the 8th century.

The breeding and trading of horses was the *raison d'être* for the settlement of these Sogdians in the Ordos. The vast pastures which were the only natural resource of the six counties region supplied the Tang army with mounts. In 714, for example, the court tried to organize a large-scale purchase of horses in the six *hu* counties.[55] In 727 an entire system of markets was established in the Ordos for the supplying of horses.[56] The transactions at these gigantic annual horse-trading fairs involved several hundreds of thousands of pieces of silk.[57] The capture of control over the commerce in horses by

[53] See Pulleyblank, 1955, pp. 336–7. The interpretation of Shennu is from Henning.
[54] Kljaštornyj, 1964, pp. 78–101, analyzes at length the signification of the expression in the inscriptions of the second Türk Empire and concludes that these *čub* were identical with the Chinese counties (*zhou* 州).
[55] Pulleyblank, 1952, p. 331.
[56] Schafer, 1963, p. 65.
[57] Twitchett, 1967, p. 223.

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these Turco-Sogdians found expression in iconography. Indeed, quite a number of Tang statuettes represent persons dressed in Sogdian style, arriving at the capital on camels or horses. They are often interpreted as representations of merchants. Sometimes they in fact portray Sogdian grooms from the Ordos, figures who were very familiar in the Tang capital, which was not far distant [see plate IV, ill. 3].

Of nomadic origin, these Turco-Sogdian settlements did not differ fundamentally from the purely Sogdian settlement of the Shi at Guyuan. In both cases they wished to place themselves at the heart of the most profitable traffic between Chinese and Türks. But we have other examples of this Sogdian participation in the commerce in horses. A document from Turfan dating from 728 shows a Sogdian, Mi Zhentuo 米真陀, charged with buying horses for the army at the markets of Hexi.[58] Several contracts of sale from Turfan, already mentioned in the preceding chapter, concern the small-scale purchase of one or more beasts of burden. At the other end of society, the emperor Taizong (626–649) commanded that the six extraordinary horses which had served him so well in establishing the Tang dynasty on the field of battle be sculpted and celebrated in song: these horses bore the Sogdian name of Cherpādh ("quadrupeds").[59] In the middle of the 8th century, his successor Xuanzong received six more of them from Ferghana, and they bore the same name.

3. *From An Lushan to the Uighurs*

The rebellion of An Lushan reveals the degree of influence possessed by the Turco-Sogdian milieux in North China.

History of the Rebellion

An Lushan 安祿山 was born in 703, of a Sogdian father and a Türk mother.[60] His father, An Yanyan 安延偃, was a Sogdian officer in the Türk armies. His mother belonged to the important Türk clan of the Ashide 阿史德. Lushan is a good transcription of

[58] Ikeda, 1981, p. 79.
[59] Schafer, 1963, p. 69.
[60] The origins and youth of An Lushan have been reconstructed by E. Pulleyblank, whom I follow once again (Pulleyblank, 1955, pp. 7–23).

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the Sogdian Roxšan—"the luminous"—and other examples exist of Sogdians who were present in China and so named. The family probably took refuge in China after Kül-tegin took power in 716. Adopted by his uncle, An Bozhu 安波注, An Lushan worked in the markets of the military towns of Northeast China, and is said to have served there as a commercial interpreter. Whether he actually was one or not is of little importance:[61] it is in itself interesting that a Chinese would consider the occupation of interpreter in the frontier markets to be a perfect example of a Sogdian profession. Several sources incidentally point out the linguistic knowledge of An Lushan. Afterward he was a soldier in the wars against the Khitans, in which he won renown, and in 742 he became governor of the military province of Pinglu 平陸, at the Korean and Khitan frontier.[62] He rose in the shadow of the dictator Li Linfu 李林甫, who favored barbarian generals over Chinese aristocrats who were likely to diminish his prestige.[63] Before launching the revolt to which his name was given, An Lushan controlled all the armies of the Chinese Northeast, and these continued to devote a cult to him long after his death.[64]

An Lushan revolted in December 755 and took the capital in July 756. He was assassinated by his son, An Qingxu 安慶緒, who succeeded him in January 757. From Gansu the imperial armies recaptured the capital of Chang'an with the aid of the Uighurs in November, and Luoyang in December. Luoyang was taken a second time in October 759 by Shi Siming 史思明, one of An Lushan's generals, who proclaimed himself emperor after having killed An Qingxu. The rebellion was definitively quelled only in January 763. The seven years of revolt ruined Tang China. The dynasty never succeeded in reimposing a centralized state. The provincial governors seized their autonomy. The most distant provinces, in particular the Tarim basin and Turkestan, were completely lost: their armies were recalled to fight against the rebellion, and the Tibetans to the south and the Uighurs to the north divided the old imperial possessions between them.

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[61] Pulleyblank rejects this aspect of the biography on the grounds that it is too typically Sogdian, which seems a little unwarranted: Pulleyblank, 1955, p. 19.

[62] Pulleyblank, 1955, p. 83.

[63] The political context of the ascension of An Lushan at the court is treated by Pulleyblank, 1955, pp. 82–103.

[64] Pulleyblank, 1955, p. 17.

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The Turco-Sogdian Milieux and the Imperial Order

The revolt of An Lushan certainly confirms the irruption of the largely turkicized professional armies of the North upon the political scene at the capital. Several of their officers were *hu* of mixed origin who came from Irano-Türk or Türko-Iranian marriages. Besides An Lushan and his family, we can note in particular Shi Siming, his principal successor.[65]

The Sogdian presence also made itself felt in the commercial sphere: the city which witnessed the youth of An Lushan and Shi Siming, Yingzhou 營州 (today Chaoyang 朝陽), the principal Chinese stronghold on the very troubled Korean frontier, is also the city in which the Chinese government settled western merchants (*shang hu* 商 胡) when it was reestablished in 717, according to explicit evidence which I have already cited.[66] There is nothing coincidental about the presence of An Lushan in these areas.[67]

In the first half of the 8th century, therefore, the Sogdians were present throughout the frontier markets that adjoined China to the north: there is no reason to think that they were the only ones to play this role, but no other people was so active to the south of the entire range of the steppes.

It has been pointed out that the economic background of the rebellion was that of professional soldiers, and in no case that of peasants. But the commercial role that the Sogdians could have played there has remained unknown up to the present. The rebellion began in mixed Irano-Türk milieux and had an extremely specific military-commercial background.

It is thus possible to establish that the military milieu of the rebellion of An Lushan was not isolated: the texts show that this milieu was in contact with that of the Sogdian merchants throughout North China. It was not confined to the Northeast but made use of the Sogdian merchant networks to prepare the rebellion. The central text, from the *History of An Lushan*, composed some fifty years after the events, is the following:

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[65] Pulleyblank, 1955, pp. 16–7. There are many examples of Sogdians who made a career in the Tang army—see the references in Pulleyblank, 1952, pp. 336–7.

[66] Pulleyblank, 1955, p. 80 and p. 159, n. 26: see the *Jiu Tang shu*, chap. 185, p. 4814.

[67] Contrary to the assertion of Pulleyblank, 1955, p. 75.

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> In secret, in the various districts, western merchants established [markets] to buy and sell. Every year they brought the precious merchandise of foreign lands, the total value of which can be estimated at a million. Every time that the merchants arrived, [An] Lushan, in *hu* dress, remained seated on a double bed (?) while incense was burned [before him] and precious objects were arranged. He ordered the *hu* to stand to his right and to his left. The crowd of *hu* then surrounded [An Lushan] and prostrated themselves at his feet to implore the blessings of Heaven. [An] Lushan had the animals prepared and arranged for the sacrifices. The sorceresses beat the drums, danced and sang. Evening having come, they dispersed. Following this, he ordered the crowd of *hu* [to go] into the various districts in order to secretly sell pieces of gauze or silk as well as robes made of red silk or violet silk, purses embellished with gold or silver containing insignia in the form of fish, belts which are worn around the waist and other articles by the millions, and this in order to build up a reserve with a view to the revolt. He acted in this way for eight or nine years.[68]

This rebellion therefore touched the Sogdian merchant milieu of the Northeast, and not the military towns alone. The passage demonstrates a very important fact: the connections between the Sogdo-Türk military milieux and the Sogdian merchant milieux were not broken, and the episode shows a veritable solidarity between them. A second text reports an attempt made by An Lushan to win over another *hu* of mixed origin, in this case Khotano-Türk, the powerful military governor Geshu Han 哥舒翰:

> At this time (February 753) [An Lushan] addressed himself brusquely to [Geshu] Han in these terms: "My father was *hu*, my mother was a Türk woman; your father was Türk and your mother was *hu*. [My family] is therefore altogether identical to your family; how can we not have the feeling of friendship for one another?"[69]

An Lushan therefore manifestly tried to play upon a feeling of solidarity among minority *hu* in China, the same that he relied upon with the merchant networks in order to raise money. Certain indications show attempted uprisings or support for An Lushan in areas which he did not control. Thus, in 756, the Sogdians of the six *hu* counties attempted to take control of Shaanxi, and the following year, when he fled Luoyang, the son of An Lushan was accompanied by *hu* of these same six Sogdian counties of the Ordos. We

[68] Trans. des Rotours, pp. 108–9, slightly modified.
[69] Trans. des Rotours, p. 120.

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also know that a revolt took place at Liangzhou in 757 under the command of a certain An Menwu 安門物.[70]

Another piece of information is equally interesting: certain soldiers in the army of An Lushan bore the Sogdian title of *chākar*. In the *New Tang History*, in connection with an episode which took place during the advance of the rebel armies in 755–6, it is written that the imperial general Feng Changqing "sent intrepid cavalrymen to repel them; these killed the Zhijie 拓羯 to the number of 1,000."[71] One year later, when the territory under rebel control had expanded south of the Yellow River, a group of their armies besieged the city of Suiyang, which was defended by the loyalist Zhang Xun 張巡. At one point during the siege, "there was a great chief, covered in armor, who led some of the Zhijie, cavalrymen to the number of 1,000, with flags and banners, to ride before the walls and provoke Xun."[72]

A striking confirmation of the idea set forth above has been found in the quite recent discovery of the tomb of the second successor to An Lushan, his right-hand man Shi Siming, which shows that he proclaimed himself simultaneously emperor of China and Sogdian noble, in assuming the mixed title of Zhaowu Huangdi 昭武皇帝, Emperor Jamūk ("Jewel"), adding the title of the emperors of China to that of the Sogdian royal families.[73]

The rebellion of An Lushan and his generals thus had a very precise cultural identity. There clearly existed in North China a structured Sogdo-Türk milieu. The Sogdians of Turfan, the *sabao* of Gansu, the Sogdian horse breeders of the Ordos, the small and great merchants of the capital as well as the great generals all knew that they belonged to a shared community, that of the *hu* of North China.

Supported by the Uighurs, the Tang power maintained control of the situation to the west. At the height of his power, An Lushan dominated only a third of the country. The West, so rich in Sogdian communities, escaped him, and he hardly concerned himself with

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[70] Pulleyblank, 1952, p. 322.
[71] *Xin Tang shu*, p. 4581.
[72] *Xin Tang shu*, chap. 117, p. 5537.
[73] Rong, 2000, p. 150. The identification of the mysterious name Zhaowu 昭武, given by the Chinese to the Sogdian princes, and which had remained unexplained, is due to Smirnova (1970, pp. 24–38), who made the connection with an Arabic text of the 10th century which explicitly associated the title of Jamūk with the Sogdian nobles, translating it as "Jewel" (see Frye, 1951). See now Yoshida, 2003.

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conquering it.[74] It was from Gansu that the crown prince organized the reconquest with the troops recalled from the Tarim basin. The old family connections of the Tang—who claimed to be descendants of the Liang of Gansu—were moreover explicitly mentioned when it was necessary to decide upon a place of refuge for the emperor.[75] The nomadic background of the Tang was often pointed out. It is known, for example, that Taizong (626–649) had himself proclaimed celestial qaghan, and dreamed of reigning over an empire in which Chinese and nomads would be equals. And the troops upon which the Tang relied were themselves also largely turkicized.[76]

The Chinese reaction was brutal: as the imperial troops progressed and retook the cities, they ordered the massacre of those same *hu* upon whom An Lushan relied. This was notably the case at Beijing:

> [Gao] Juren 高鞠仁 then ordered that within the city those who killed *hu* would be highly rewarded. Following that, the *Jie hu* 羯胡 were completely exterminated; small children were thrown in the air and caught on the points of spears. Those who had large noses resembling those of the *hu* and who [because of this] were killed in error were extremely numerous.[77]

More generally, the attitude of the elites underwent a dramatic change, which is quite strongly reflected in Tang poetry: while formerly xenophilic, after the rebellion it became largely xenophobic.[78]

The direct consequence of this new attitude toward the *hu* was a change in the processes of Sogdian assimilation in China in the course of the second Tang period, after the revolt.

Assimilation and Dissimulation

The *hu* began to hide their origins. This is the principal phenomenon which is found at every level and in various forms, but which took place in several stages. Even before the revolt, without concealing their western origins, Sogdian families as a last resort linked their

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[74] Pulleyblank, 1952, pp. 288–9.

[75] *Ibid.*, pp. 271–2. See Yihong, 1992, pp. 63–64. See also Twitchett, 1973, pp. 50–1.

[76] See Skaff, 2000, on this point.

[77] Trans. de Rotours, p. 346. *Jie hu* was an archaic designation during the Tang for the *hu*. An Lushan, who is certainly known to have been Sogdian, is himself also called *Jie hu* (trans. des Rotours, p. 254).

[78] See Hu-Sterk, 2000, for a detailed study of this phenomenon, together with many translations of poems.

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ancestors by a veritable genealogical coquetry to a mythical Chinese émigré, a son of the first emperor who had departed for the West, by a process parallel to that which, during the same period, portrayed Buddhism as a outgrowth of the preaching of Laozi in India. But once the revolt had begun, the stakes involved were quite different. There was a great danger in being associated with the revolt, whether rightly or wrongly, on the strength of a Sogdian family name. People of high status in the state who were of *hu* origin were also massacred on the basis of a simple denunciation, even though—relatives of An Lushan—they had remained faithful to the Tang.[79] Others preferred to adapt to the nationalist excess in order to escape the same fate: it was at this time, in 756, that the Baoyu family changed its name from An to Li. The reason given is clear: it was the shame of having "the same family name" as An Lushan or sharing "a common ancestor" with him. This measure was made retroactive over four generations: the family ancestor An Xinggui, for example, became a Li as well.

Lacking the influence to change their names after the manner of those close to power, other Sogdians made every effort to link their names to regions of China that were quite distant from the henceforth sensitive areas of the Northwest. Thus we have several examples of Sogdians who, after the rebellion, claimed to be natives of Guiji 會稽. During the Tang Guiji was a city in the south of China renowned for its rich cultural past. But it was also the ancient name, almost forgotten, of a district situated at the western extremity of the Gansu corridor, near Dunhuang, whose name at the time was Changle 常樂 and from which certain sources thought the ancestors of An Lushan had come. In claiming to be natives of Guiji rather than of Changle, the Sogdians played upon the homonymy of the two places and thus tried to hide their western origins.

In this way, the ancestors of Kang Xixian 康希銑—according to his epitaph, which was composed after the revolt of An Lushan—were linked to a Kang clan descended from king Wu, the founder of the ancient Zhou dynasty (1121–771 BCE).[80] The ancestors of Xixian had served the Han, then the Western Jin; after that they "crossed the (blue) River" with the founder of the Eastern Jin (317–323), who quit the North to establish his capital at Nanking, and

[79] Trans. des Rotours, p. 122.
[80] Rong, 2001, p. 62.

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they ended up settling further to the south, at Shanyin in the region of Guiji. The text makes no mention of any Sogdian affiliation, but, two precautions being better than one, provided the deceased with roots in Chinese antiquity and familial settlement in the far South.

Another example: He Hongjing 何弘敬 (805–865) was military governor of Hebei, where he succeeded his father.[81] His mother was a Kang, and he married an An from Wuwei, which unquestionably makes him a Sogdian who preserved the memory of his origins. Nevertheless, he endeavored to hide such origins on his stele: while his father acknowledged that he was originally from that same region of the Ordos where the six Sogdian counties were to be found in the 7th century, Hongjing, for his part, claimed to be from Lujiang, to the southeast of Nanking. Well into the 9th century, this family continued to marry within the Sogdian milieu, all the while attempting to conceal its origins.

There are, however, counterexamples to be found among families whose records of service were beyond suspicion. Thus He Wenzhe 何文哲 (764–830), whose stele, found near Chang'an, specifies that he was a "descendant of Pi 丕, king of the land of He at the 5th generation," his ancestor having been sent to China in the middle of the 7th century as a royal hostage. He successively married two Kang sisters, and presents all the classic traits of Sogdian émigrés in China from the time before the rebellion. But his father, Youxian 游仙, had aided the Tang against the "traitorous bandit Lushan," had received in 762 the title of "Meritorious Functionary of the Baoying Era," and had been named *Da Dudufu Changshi* of Lingzhou, probably in consequence of the support he had offered to the heir to the throne, Suzong, when he took refuge there during the rebellion.[82]

For the observer, the consequence of these acts of concealment is important: very rapidly, the Sogdians disappear from the sources. We are quite poorly informed about the evolution of the Sogdian milieu in North China after the 8th century. There is every reason to think that the Sogdian families must have integrated themselves into Chinese society at an accelerated pace due to the suspicion that weighed upon them.[83]

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[81] Rong, 2001, p. 92.

[82] Details concerning these two persons can be found in de la Vaissière and Trombert, 2004.

[83] Moribe, forthcoming in 2005.

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The Conversion of the Uighurs and Fusion of the Elites

The revolt of An Lushan was suppressed only at the cost of a heavy Uighur hegemony over North China. The foreign policy of China—reduced to the territories east of Gansu after the repatriation of the garrisons and the Tibetan invasions—could only play upon conflicts between Tibetans and Uighurs in order to try to escape incursions into Central China and the loss of Chang'an, henceforth located very close to the frontier. The defeat of the rebellion and the Tibetan invasions which followed dealt a serious blow to the Sogdian merchant milieux of the old Tang Empire. In the first period after the rebellion at least, the government favored a xenophobic reaction. In this context, the conversion of the Uighurs to Manichaeism through Sogdian mediation seems like a desperate but fruitful attempt, the last-ditch effort of communities at bay that had need of a powerful protector.

The trilingual inscription of Qarabalghasun was composed in the first quarter of the 9th century at the command of an Uighur qaghan whose identity is disputed.[84] Next to a well-preserved Chinese text, the Sogdian and Türk versions are much more fragmentary.[85] This text relates in particular the conversion of the qaghan to Manichaeism at Luoyang in 762–3.[86] The connections between the Sogdians and Manichaeism were extremely strong, to the point that Manichaeism seemed at times to have been the official religion of the *hu* in China.[87] It had been established in Sogdiana at least since the 5th or 6th century, like Nestorianism, and afterward spread to all of the Sogdian émigré communities, while Buddhism in general only reached the latter. It was Manichaean Sogdians who obtained protection for their coreligionists and compatriots from the principal military power of North China, which led the Chinese to put an immediate end to the xenophobic policy which had begun to emerge. From that time on, the Uighurs played the role of protectors of the *hu* in China. As soon as their power faded, in 840, the persecutions resumed.

While one can see quite well why it was important for the Turco-Sogdian populations of North China to place themselves under the Uighur aegis, on the other hand one might wonder what impelled

[84] See Mackerras, 1972, pp. 184–7.
[85] Moriyasu and Ochir, 1999, pp. 209–224.
[86] See Chavannes and Pelliot, 1913, p. 177 ff.
[87] See Lieu, 1985, and Tremblay, 2001.

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the qaghan to take the part of these populations. The whole history of Sogdian commerce can be invoked here: the Uighurs were then a relatively new power on the Central Asian scene. Though of ancient ancestry,[88] it was in 744 that they succeeded in replacing the Türks in the eastern steppe for the first time in two centuries. Once their hold had been consolidated, they definitely had to find a model on which to organize their new power. The only available cultural model, aside from the Chinese model, which was overly burdened with subservience, was the Sogdian model—well anchored, as I have had occasion to point out, not only at the court of the old Türks, but also throughout the zone of contact between the nomads and the sedentary regions further to the south.

The conversion of the qaghan was thus only the first stage in a much more extensive movement leading to fusion between the Uighur and the Sogdian colonial elites. This fusion went beyond the religious sphere: not only did the Uighurs adopt the religion of the expatriate Sogdians, they also adopted their writing, following the example of the first Türk Empire, as well as a large part of their vocabulary and urban pattern.[89] The Sogdian influence on the Uighurs was greater even than their influence on the Türks.

This fusion was not accomplished without reverses. Just as under the second Türk Empire, a whole party existed at the court which was favorable to Türk traditions and hostile to foreign importations. Between 779 and 789, this faction took power under Dun *mohe dagan* 頓莫賀達干and had the previous qaghan Mouyu 牟羽 killed, together with numerous Sogdians, the "*hu* with nine names":

> Moreover, the Sogdians, who formed a normal part of the Uighur state, were trying to entice [the khaghan] by telling him how convenient and profitable China would be to him. The khaghan was thereupon about to take advantage of our court mourning, mobilise his nation, and come down south. However, his Chief minister, Dun mohe dagan, admonished him [. . .] The khaghan did not listen to him so Dun mohe, taking advantage of the wish of some other people, attacked and killed him, and at the same time killed his relations and confidants

[88] Golden, 1992, p. 155 ff.

[89] The inscription of Šine Usu notes that Bayan Čor "ordered the Sogdians and Chinese to construct Bay Balıq on the Selenga," trans. Golden, 1992, p. 158; see also pp. 171–176; Moriyasu and Ochir, 1999, pp. 177–195.

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> and those of the Sogdians who had tried to entice him into invading China, in all 2000 people.[90]

But the situation of the Sogdians and of Manichaeism thereafter recovered, until the disappearance of the first Uighur Empire under the blows of the Kirghiz in 840.[91] They were an integral part of the great commerce of the time, that of horses for silk, between the Uighur and Chinese Empires.[92]

Sogdian commerce at its greatest extent was inextricable from a very specific political history. The birth and development of successive Türk empires, from the Ashina to the Uighurs, was accompanied by a more and more perceptible integration between Sogdian and Türk populations on the Chinese borders. These Turco-Sogdian milieux played a key role in all of the commerce that connected China and its nomadic neighbors, but they also played such a role in political life as well. Commerce and politics were not fundamentally distinct, and the Turco-Sogdian milieux unquestionably had a merchant component which formed an integral part of Sogdian great commerce. While these milieux had been growing over several centuries, the revolt of An Lushan definitely marked their apogee, but also the beginning of a precipitous fall, which they were nevertheless able to retard thanks to the conversion of the Uighur qaghan to Manichaeism. But the contribution of these milieux to Sogdian great commerce was not only in the East. They also made possible a vast development of Sogdian commerce toward the West.

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[90] Mackerras, 1972, p. 10 and p. 88, text from the *Jiu Tang shu*, chap. 195, p. 5208.

[91] *Ibid.*, p. 12.

[92] See below, chapter X, p. 308 ff.

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CHAPTER EIGHT

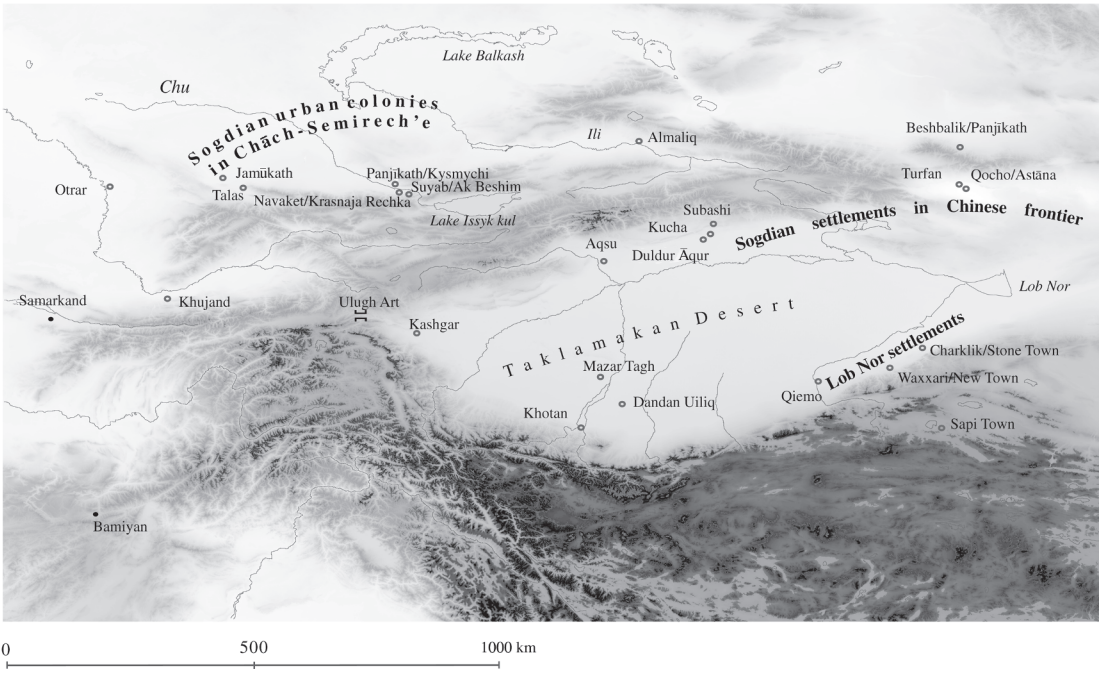
AMBASSADORS AND MERCHANTS: THE WESTERN ROUTES

In the first chapter I have shown that great commerce in Central Asia was most probably developed from Chinese diplomatic initiatives. At that time only states like China had the means, both material (particularly financial and military) and cultural (in diplomatic policy and the formation of elites) to overcome the very great distances involved, or even to consider doing so. It was only later that the Central Asian merchants took over from them, and their own activities developed on the basis of older diplomatic exchanges. An analogous process occurred in the 6th century, which led to bridging the other great area that separated Central Asia from the centers of consumption, the western steppe. A Byzantine historian, Menander Protector, describes how the Sogdians were able to use their influence within the Türk state for commercial ends. This other side of Sogdian commerce, to the west of Central Asia, should first be analyzed in the context of the relationships between diplomacy and large-scale commerce; then we can examine the more exclusively commercial initiatives which characterized its development.

1. *Sogdians, Türks and Sassanid Markets*

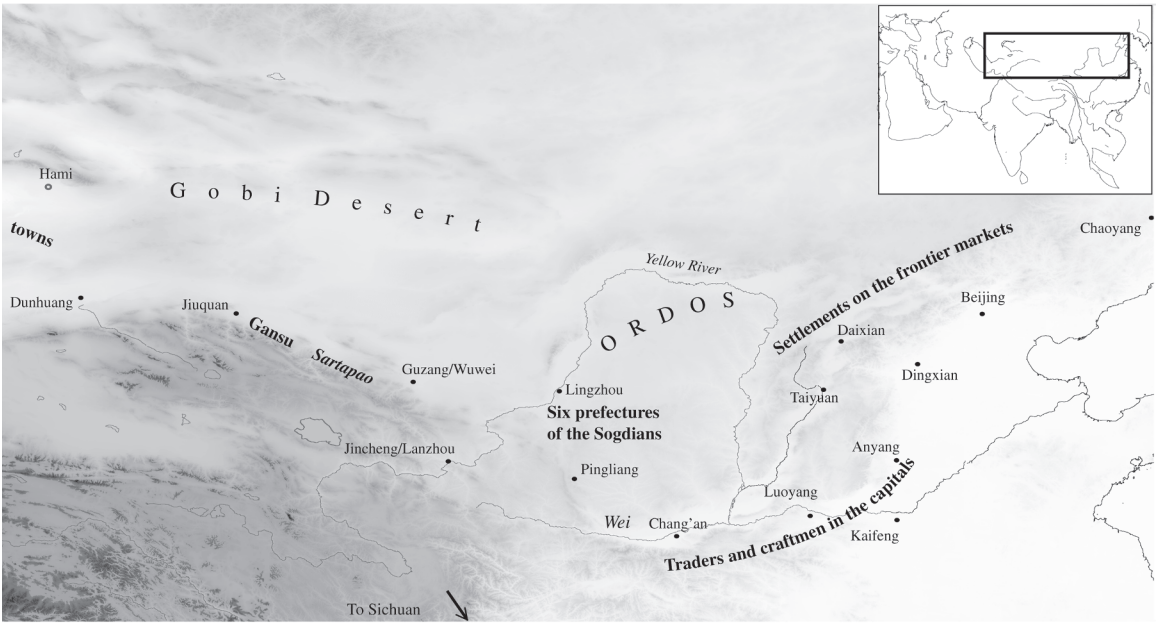
In the 6th century—after the disasters of the end of the 5th century and before those of the 7th—the Sassanid state was at its apogee. It possessed a powerful merchant class whose members were the true rivals of the Sogdians during the period which began just after the great invasions. One text shows the concrete outcome of a political attempt by the Sogdians to establish themselves in the heart of the Sassanid Empire. It supplies us with precious clues about the extension of Sogdian commerce toward Iran.

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Map 7. Sogdian commercial expansion to the east.

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Sassanid Commercial Policy

The commercial relations between Sogdians and Sassanids are known to us primarily through the text of the Byzantine historian Menander Protector which I have already mentioned. Fragment 10[1] is of exceptional importance for the history of Sogdian commerce. After the Sogdian merchants had requested the support of the Türk state to help them sell silk in Persia,[2] the narrative continues:

> When they reached the king of the Persians, they asked that they be given permission to sell the raw silk there without any hindrance. The Persian king, who was not at all pleased by their request, being reluctant to grant to these men from now a free access to the territory of Persia, put off his reply until the next day and kept postponing it. After a series of postponements, as the Sogdians were pressing insistently for a reply, Khosro summoned a council to discuss the matter. Katulph, the Ephthalite [. . .] advised the Persian king not to return the silk, but to buy it, paying the fair price for it, and to burn it in the fire before the very eyes of the envoys, so that he would not be held to have committed an injustice but that it would be clear that he did not wish to use raw silk from the Turks. So the silk was burned, and the Sogdians returned to their homeland not at all pleased with what had happened. [. . .] Maniakh, the leader of the Sogdians, took this opportunity and advised Sizabul that it would be better for the Turks to cultivate the friendship of the Romans and send their raw silk for sale to them because they made more use of it than other people.[3]

It is difficult to find, even in the Chinese sources, a clearer and more comprehensive picture of the activity of the Sogdians at the intersection of commerce and politics. Relying upon Türk power, they attempted to commercially force their way into the heart of the Sassanid Empire, and were capable of developing a commercial strategy on a continental scale in Asia.

The product concerned, silk, corresponds perfectly to the information provided by Cosmas Indicopleustes, who mentions the cargoes of silk arriving in Persia by the land route. The reaction of the Sassanid government was harsh, but should not be overinterpreted. Indeed, some have wished to see it as proof of a commercial war, a veritable blockade between Sassanids and Sogdians.[4] The reasoning for this

[1] Trans. Blockley, pp. 111–27.
[2] See the passage in the preceding chapter, p. 209.
[3] Trans. Blockley, pp. 111–5, revised by Constantin Zuckerman.
[4] Haussig, 1983, pp. 165–6, followed by Grenet, 1996a, p. 75.

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might be that at exactly the same time, in 568, the Sassanids could have secured control of the maritime route by seizing Yemen, and could thus have implemented a total blockade of the Byzantine Empire and forced the prices to rise; hence the Sogdian attempt to bypass the Persians to the north of the Caspian, an account of which follows the passage from Menander quoted above. But this analysis rests upon an insufficiently detailed chronology: the capture of Yemen came after the events in Central Asia. The text of Theophanes of Byzantium, the major Byzantine source for this episode, clearly shows that the conquest of southern Arabia was a Persian riposte to the Byzantine embassies to Central Asia and not the reverse: Theophanes first describes these embassies, then passes to an account of the Persian conquest in Arabia by means of the following phrase: "It is this which determined Chosroes . . ."[5] He then describes the Armenian revolt of 571, supported by the Byzantines. The combination of these episodes let to the outbreak of war in 572.[6] The text of Menander thus cannot be explained by a blockade of all of the commercial routes; regarding the land route, the text of Cosmas proves that such a blockade would first have made a principal victim of the Sassanid Empire itself! Certainly the commercial war between the Byzantines and Iranians was old: for the Parthian period a Chinese text attests to a deliberate Iranian policy of controlling the activity of merchants.[7] Numerous Byzantine texts depict the attempts of Byzantium to evade the Persian monopoly in the 6th century. But this war quite often seems to have been more of a Byzantine than a Sassanid initiative; as for the rise in the price of silk at Byzantium, it seems to have been the consequence of risky maneuvers on the part of Justinian . . .[8] On the other hand, it is certain that the Iranian state did everything it could to retain the monopoly of its merchants over the sale of silk to the Greeks once that commerce had been threatened: this is the significance of its counteroffensive in Yemen.

A close examination of the text of Menander corroborates this analysis. Menander writes that the shah was loath "to grant to these men from now a free access to the territory of Persia." This expression

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[5] French translation and Greek text in the *Bibliothèque* [*Library*] of Photius, volume 1, trans. Henry, p. 78.

[6] Concerning these subjects, see Shahid, 1995, pp. 364–6.

[7] Chavannes, 1907, p. 185.

[8] Procopius, *Secret History*, XXV 13–22, trans. Dewing, pp. 297–301.

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exactly matches what we know about Sassanid commercial policy.

All of the Byzantine-Sassanid treaties attempted to fix precise locations at the frontiers for trade, for customs purposes but also for reasons of strategy. The merchant was also a messenger, an ambassador, a spy.[9] It was necessary to try to limit and control their movements, and to prevent them from reaching the heart of the empire.[10] The Byzantine-Sassanid treaties by their repetition also testify to the failure of this policy. Procopius mentions false merchants spying on behalf of Byzantium as far as the palace of Ctesiphon, the heart of the empire.[11] Syrian and Greek merchants were present in Mesopotamia. It is also known that Indians were established there. What the shah was refusing to the Sogdian subjects of the Türks was the right to have access to the whole of the empire. Further to the south, Abū Sufyān, a Meccan famous for his opposition to Muhammad, seems to have been alluding to this same policy when, en route for Iraq at the beginning of the 7th century, he declared:

> On this route we are in danger so long as we approach a despotic king who has not given us authorization to approach him, and his land is not a place of commerce for us.[12]

Lastly, a passage from Ibn Khurdādhbih indicates, admittedly in a diplomatic context:

> Access to the court of Kisrā was not free to foreigners. There were five waiting places [. . .] for those who had come from the lands of the Türks: Holwān.[13]

Independent sources thus converge on the idea of a policy of controlling the frontiers, and more precisely the frontier commerce of

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[9] See Lee, 1993, p. 175, for the connections between commerce and espionage.

[10] The places mentioned in these treaties were primarily, but not exclusively, on the Byzantine side: thus Nisibis, mentioned in 410 with Callinicon and Artaxata in a rescript of Honorius and of Theodosius II, was then in Persian territory (it was definitively lost by the Romans in 368). Furthermore, the wording of the rescript emphasizes the reciprocity between Persians and Romans on this point, which makes the presence of Roman and Persian towns in the text quite reasonable. Byzantines and Sassanids had entered into a mutual agreement intended to limit the possibilities of espionage (Christensen, 1944, pp. 126–8).

[11] Procopius, *Secret History*, XXX 12, trans. Dewing, p. 351.

[12] *Kītāb al-Aghānī*, XIII, p. 207, quoted and translated by Simon, 1970, p. 228; see equally Crone, 1987, p. 130.

[13] Ibn Khurdādhbih, adapted from the translation of de Goeje, 1889, p. 135, Arabic text p. 173.

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the Sassanid Empire, by means of the issue of permits to trade in the large frontier towns. The Sassanid Empire had a powerful merchant class: it was therefore natural for the shah to deny *direct* contact between the Sogdians and the Syrian or Greek merchants, which would have meant the end of Persian power as an intermediary and the ousting of his subjects from commerce by land. This was nothing other than the sound commercial policy of a king who needed a merchant class in his kingdom, and who favored it by attempting to maintain an exclusively Persian commercial area. This policy was therefore entirely consistent with the Sassanid maritime policy of supporting Persian merchants. To the east, only the distances involved—and the deserts—provided him with any weapons. The Sogdians must have been confined to Merv, or at least were probably not able to venture away from the old royal route that led to Holwān.

The king then had to decide what to do about the silk in grand council. Must we read in the following episode—and particularly in the phrase "but that it would be clear that he did not wish to use raw silk from the Turks"—a general ban on commerce originating from lands under Türk rule? It rather seems that we have left the commercial sphere for that of great politics: the attitude of the Persian Empire is evoked not in connection with the Sogdians, but with their Türk masters. Later in the text, it is said that the Türks sent a second embassy:

> When this second Turkish embassy arrived, the king, after discussion with the Persian high officials and with Katulph, decided that because of the untrustworthy nature of the Scythians it was completely against Persian interest to establish friendly relations with the Turks.[14]

A second group of reasons is thus superimposed on the commercial reasons mentioned above, political reasons, linked to a marked cooling of relations between the Türks and Persians. In order to protect Persian commerce, the silk could not be sold on the western frontiers by the Sogdians, but if it were confiscated, neither could it be used at the court of Khusrō Anōshervān, for it represented the very symbol of the wealth and power of the new enemy, the Türks. This raw silk of the Türks was indeed directly connected to the tribute paid by China following the Türk victories. It was the product of it, and the symbol. The Persian court therefore decided, after their common

[14] Trans. Blockley, p. 113.

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victory against the Hephtalites, to check Türk expansion by every means, beginning with a lofty refusal to use the most symbolic fruit of that expansion, while avoiding the *casus belli* of spoliation.[15]

This attitude, quite logical politically, is in fact economically comprehensible only if the Sogdians could have continued to trade in the eastern part of the empire. The Sassanid Empire was strictly dependent upon the land routes for its supplies in the first half of the 6th century.[16] There is no indication that the maritime route had developed sufficiently to render the evidence of Cosmas Indicopleustes invalid. For the Sassanid Empire there could be no question of breaking off all economic contacts, as it would no longer have been able to obtain enough silk. The Sogdo-Türk coup struck at the economic heart of the empire; it failed, but this attempt proves that the Sogdian merchants were present in sufficient strength on the Khurasan route to be able to contemplate expanding further to the west.

Let it be added that this setback concerned only the very short term. The political motive at the root of this spectacular measure faded rapidly. A policy of alliance between the Sassanids and Türks is attested by Menander himself, after the embassy of Valentinus in 576.[17] I do not however believe that there was ever a massive Sogdian presence in the western regions of the Sassanid Empire, even after the improvement of relations with the Türks. No data enable us to actually decide the issue for the Sassanid period, but the existence of a merchant class protected by the sovereigns conflicts with the granting of too great a liberty to its competitors. On the other hand, with regard to eastern Iran, or at least Merv, nothing allows us to exclude a Sogdian presence, at least by way of hypothesis.[18] In any case, at the beginning of the 6th century the probable presence of Hephtalites at Merv as well as at Samarkand could have made such a settlement politically possible.[19]

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[15] A cause of war frequently employed in Asian history, as it was later between Chinggis Khan and the Khorezmshāh.

[16] As is shown explicitly by the passage from Cosmas Indicopleustes quoted above, p. 86 (*Christian Topography* II, 46).

[17] Fragment 19, 1–2, trans. Blockley, pp. 171–9.

[18] I do not know where Litvinskij, 1998, p. 146, has read that the prophet Muhammad had a Sogdian suit of armor in Arabia. The list of his sets of armor is known, and one of them is said to have been from Sa'd. Could this have been a cause for confusion?

[19] Under Kawād, Sassanid coinage temporarily disappears from Merv for some twenty years. See Callieri, 1996.

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Antecedents

The text of Menander narrates an episode of a highly political nature. To interpret it economically, we must consider it within a longer period of time.

The Khurasan route, which connected Central Asia to Iran and Mesopotamia, was ancient. A royal route under the Achaemenids, it was still the major highway of the Muslim East under the Abbasids. It seems that commerce is attested there from the third millenium BCE,[20] and that its first peak was reached in the 1st and 2nd centuries of our era, followed by a decline linked to political troubles in China and the Roman Empire. Other data show that it was being travelled frequently in the 5th century. Let us here consider a passage from the *Ecclesiastical History*, attributed to Zacharias of Mitylene, on the subject of the defeat of the Sassanid king Pērōz at the hands of the Hephtalites in 484:[21]

> The Huns issued forth from the gates that were guarded by the Persians, and from the mountainous region there, and invaded the territory of the Persians. And Piroz became alarmed, and he gathered an army and went to meet them. And when he inquired from them the reason of their preparation and invasion of his country, they said to him: "What the kingdom of the Persians gives to us by way of tribute is not sufficient to us Barbarians [. . .] and the king of the Romans has promised by his ambassadors to give us twice as much tribute whenever we shall dissolve our friendship with you Persians" [. . .] And four hundred of the chief men of the Huns assembled, and they had with them Eustace, a merchant of Apamea, a clever man, by those advice they were guided [. . .] But Eustace the merchant encouraged the Huns that they should not be alarmed even though they were very much fewer.[22]

This text shows the existence of contacts between Byzantium and the Hephtalites of Central Asia well before the embassies between the Sogdo-Türks and the Byzantines of the last third of the 6th century. The changing of alliances was not an invention of Justin II, of the Türks or of the Sogdians, but was quite an old feature of Middle Eastern diplomacy.[23]

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[20] See Majizadeh, 1982, pp. 59–69 and Briant, 1984, pp. 19–21.

[21] This passage is not by Zacharias, it was perhaps written at Amida (Diyarbakir), between 551 and 569: See Hamilton and Brooks, 1899, pp. 2–5.

[22] Book VII, chap. 3, pp. 151–2 of the translation by Hamilton and Brooks, 1899. Hannestad, 1957, p. 440 draws attention to this important text.

[23] It is moreover indirectly confirmed by Procopius, who mentions that Zeno

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Furthermore, the merchants played a similar role in both cases, since Eustace, like Maniakh, seemed to be the real master of events. Eustace probably ranked among the Byzantine ambassadors whose presence is mentioned among the Hephtalites. He certainly behaved as such.[24] But, between the death of Pērōz in 484 and the embassy of Maniakh, the initiative changed from one camp to another: the Sogdians, and no longer the Syrian merchants, played the driving role.

The text of Menander should therefore be placed in the much larger context of a dual history—a political history composed of very short term fluctuations,[25] and the economic history of a commercial route which was travelled continuously, save perhaps during the worst of the periods of troubles (last third of the 4th century and the last third of the 5th century?). The Syrian merchants used it in the 1st century just as they did in the 5th, and the Sogdians then succeeded them. Already under the Hephtalites, reversals of political alliance could at certain times have enabled the penetration of Central Asian merchants into Iran, and the text of Menander describes only the resumption of fruitless contacts soon after the defeat of the Hephtalites at the hands of the Türks.

2. *Approaching Byzantium*

The Text of Menander

The text of Menander lends itself equally to an examination of the connections between Sogdian merchants and Türk political power in their joint approach to the Byzantine Empire. The next passage resumes the narrative from the conclusion of the passage I have already studied. It relates what took place after the failure of Maniakh's commercial embassy to the Persians:

> Maniakh, the leader of the Sogdians, took this opportunity and advised Sizabul that it would be better for the Turks to cultivate the friendship of the Romans and send their raw silk for sale to them because

sought to buy from the Hephtalites a large pearl that had belonged to Pērōz: *History of the Wars* I, 4, 16 (trans. Dewing, p. 27). See Hannestad, 1957, pp. 440–1.

[24] Or at least as one of the secret agents very widely infiltrated among the travelling merchants: see Lee, 1993, p. 175.

[25] Soon after the death of Pērōz against the Hephtalites, a policy of alliance took place under Kawād.

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> they made more use of it than other people. Maniakh said that he himself was very willing to go along with envoys from the Turks, and in this way the Romans and Turks would become friends. Sizabul consented to this proposal and sent Maniakh and some others as envoys to the Roman Emperor carrying greetings, a valuable gift of raw silk and a letter. (Look for the letter in the Excerpts on Letters.) Carrying this letter Maniakh set out on his journey. He travelled very many roads and traversed very many lands, over huge mountains reaching near the clouds, through Caucasus and finally came to Byzantium.[26]

After having been received by the emperor Justin II, Maniakh departed, accompanied by a Byzantine ambassador, Zemarchos. When they reached the Türk court, negotiations began, of which only the diplomatic aspects are related. Then the text continues:

> After this he (Sizabul) summoned Zemarchus and his companions, reaffirmed the friendship that existed towards the Romans, and sent them away on their journey home. With them he sent another envoy, since the former one, Maniakh, had died. His successor's name was Tagma, and his title was Tarkhan. He, then, was sent by Sizabul as envoy to the Romans, and with him the son of the deceased Maniakh. Although he was a very young lad, he had been given his father's title and ranked immediately after the Tarkhan Tagma. In my opinion the boy received his father's title because Maniakh had been very friendly and loyal to Sizabul [. . .] When the news had spread through the land of the Turks to the nearby tribes that envoys from the Romans had arrived and that they were returning to Byzantium with a Turkish embassy, the leader of these tribes begged Sizabul that he be allowed to send some of his own people to see the Roman Empire. Sizabul agreed, but when other tribal leaders sought this also, he consented to none of the requests except that of the leader of the Kholiatai. The Romans received him across the river Oekh and having travelled for a long distance, came to that enormous, wide lake.[27]

The narrative continues with the adventures of Zemarchos on his return journey, where we learn incidentally that he was travelling with significant quantities of silk (he used silk as bait in order to send on a false trail a Persian army that was on the lookout for him).[28] An altogether different text directly confirms the success of these negotiations and the fruitful traffic in silk which was established: Gregory of Tours specifies that, at the time of the great Armenian revolt in

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[26] Menander, fragment 10. Trans. Blockley, p. 115.
[27] *Ibid.*, pp. 124–5.
[28] *Ibid.*, p. 127.

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571, Vardam Mamikonian in an embassy to Constantinople brought a great quantity of silk thread,[29] the fruit of these exchanges via the Caucasus.

Another fragment of Menander, fragment 19, describes the continuation of diplomatic relations between the Byzantine and Türk Empires, in 575–576:

> In the second year of the reign of Tiberius Caesar, shortly before the above transactions with Khosro took place, another embassy was sent from the Romans to the Turks. Its leader was Valentinus, who was one of the imperial bodyguard. When he was given this assignment, he set out on his journey with his attendants and, in addition, one hundred and six Turks. At that time Turks, who had been sent by their various tribes on various occasions, had been in Byzantium for a long while. Some Anankhast, when he had come to Byzantium on an embassy, had brought there with him, some had come to the capital with Eutychius. Others staying there had arrived with Valentinus himself on an earlier occasion (for he went twice as envoy to the Turks), and still others had come with Herodian and with Paul the Cilician. From all of these embassies there had collected at Byzantium one hundred and six Scythians of the people called the Turks, and Valentinus took them all with him when he set out from the capital. Taking fast merchant ships he travelled via Sinope and Cherson (which is situated on the western coast [of the Crimea]).[30]

At that time the context was one of a clear deterioration of political relations between Türks and Byzantines after the death of Sizabul, and in particular of a real Türk threat to the Crimea and a verbal threat to the Balkans.[31] The factual and political framework is very clear. The Türks reversed alliance in favor of the Persians. The large-scale relations planned by the Sogdians could not be established due to the uncertainties of the diplomatic world, just as they had failed in Persia a short time before. But through this political framework, we learn something about the actions of the Sogdian merchants.

The family of Maniakh belonged fully to the Sogdo-Türk milieux that I have characterized in the preceding chapter. This fact thus justifies us in making the connection between the commercial diplo-

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[29] In his *Ten books of Histories* (known incorrectly by the name *History of the Franks*), see Manandjan, 1962, p. 110. Trans. Thorpe, p. 235: "The Persarmenians visited the Emperor with a great store of unwoven silk, seeking his friendship . . ."

[30] Fragment 19, trans. Blockley, pp. 171–3.

[31] *Ibid.*, pp. 175–6.

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macy of the Türks—developed as far as the gates of Byzantium—and the ruling Sogdo-Türk milieu whose role in China we have already seen. It allows us to show that Sogdian commerce possessed a socially unified structure which organized its greatest development and was not a simple aggregation of audacious individual initiatives.

One cannot but be struck by the strategic clarity of the Sogdian commercial project. At a distance of several thousand kilometers, Maniakh was able to identify the Greek Empire as the principal center of western consumption and silk as one of the only commodities worth the trouble of transporting over such distances. The Chinese payments to the Türk Empire were very recent, and Maniakh was already proposing to send the enormous surplus to the other end of the continent.

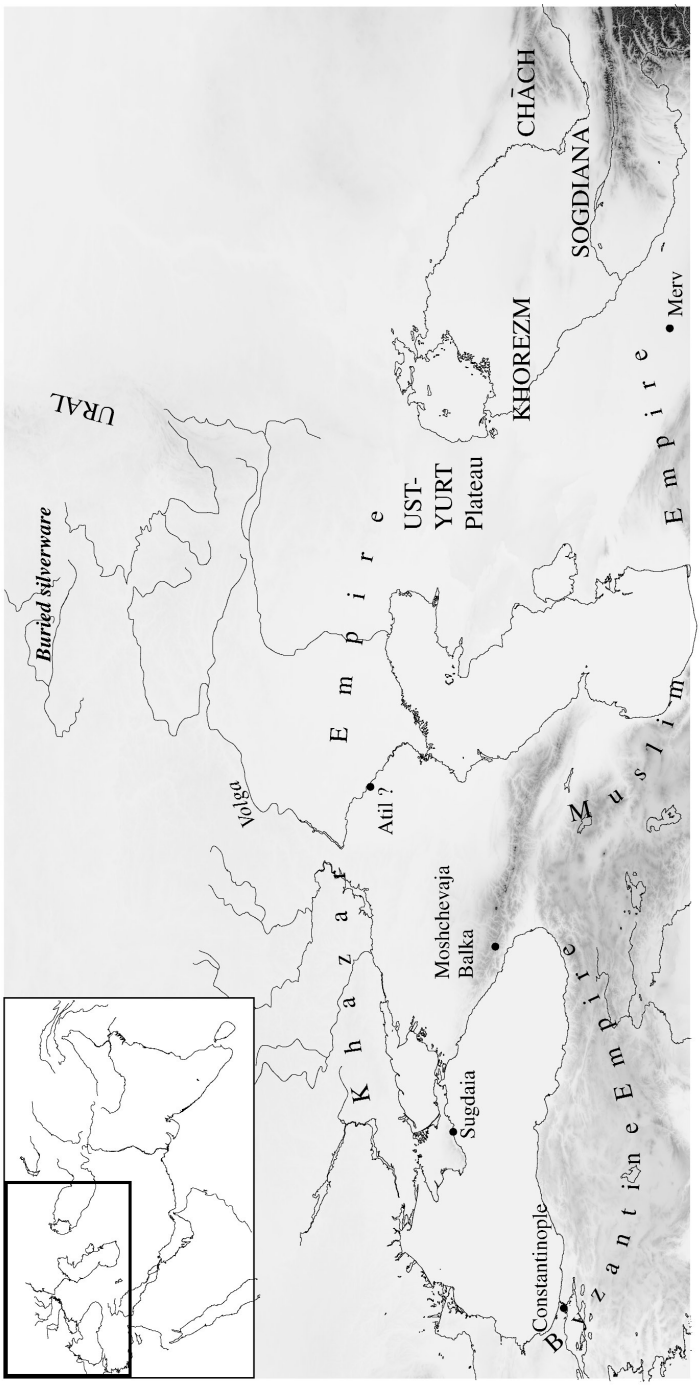
We are poorly informed about the period which followed this time of intense diplomatic exchanges between Sogdians, Türks and Byzantines. While Sogdian commercial diplomacy seems to have ended in failure, it must be emphasized that this is above all because we lack the written sources which might describe the continuation of diplomatic contacts between Byzantines and Türks, which certainly had not ceased. It is possible to show that the two routes giving access to Byzantium that were available to the Sogdians were utilized by them over the long term, well beyond the attempts of Maniakh.

Caucasian Problems

The necessary circumvention of the Sassanid Empire left two possible routes to the Byzantine Empire: either the western Caucasus or the Crimea. The text of Menander, which states that both the first embassy of Maniakh and the return trip of the embassy of Zemarchos travelled by way of the western Caucausus, invites consideration of the possible commercial connections between Central Asia and the Caucasus.

The discoveries from the necropolis of Moščevaja Balka support the simple geographical reasoning that led scholars to look for proof of the passage of merchants from Central Asia in archaeological results and in Armenian and Georgian texts. This site, upstream from the Great Laba, a tributary on the left bank of the Kuban, and situated at an altitude of one thousand meters, is on the route of one of the important passes of the western Caucasus, the Tsegerker, which makes it possible to descend directly southward to Sukhumi

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Map 8. Sogdian commercial expansion to the west

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and the Black Sea.[32] It has notably yielded silk fabrics which have been preserved thanks to the mountain climate. Among these are fabrics called *Zandanījī*, which came either from Sogdiana or from the Tarim basin. They attest to a great commerce linked to Central Asia and travelling by way of the passes of the Caucasus.[33]

The *Zandanījī* fabrics owe their fame in historiography to the fact that they are one of the rare types of ancient fabric to have been identified. At the collegiate church of Notre-Dame de Huy (in Belgium) a large piece of silk (1.9 m by 1.2 m) has in fact been preserved, on the back of which the following Sogdian text has been deciphered: "61 spans long, Zandanīčī . . ." with a final unknown word (*y'sδh*).[34] Zandana was a village near Bukhara, which in the 10th century produced a fabric of great price, without it being known whether this was silk, or, more probably, cotton:

> The specialty of the place is *Zandanījī*, which is a kind of cloth (*karbās*) made in Zandana. It is fine cloth and is made in large quantities. Much of that cloth is woven in other villages of Bukhara, but it is also called *Zandanījī* because it first appeared in this village. That cloth is exported to all countries such as 'Irāq, Fārs, Kirmān, Hindūstān and elsewhere. All of the nobles and rulers make garments of it, and they buy it at the same price as brocade (*dībā*).[35]

Based on this identification, the set of fabrics presenting the same technical characteristics as the silk from Huy have been grouped together, and it has been concluded that there are two groups of *Zandanījī* fabrics. The first dates from the 7th or the 8th century. Certain fabrics from Moščevaja Balka should be included in the second group, assigned to the 8th or 9th century.[36]

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[32] Ierusalimskaja, 1996, p. 17, and Ierusalimskaja, 1967a and 1967b.

[33] Ierusalimskaja, 1996, pp. 115–132. The site of Moščevaja Balka is not the only one to furnish silk from the early Middle Ages: see Voskresenskij *et alii*, 1996, for the finds from Nižnij Arxyz. See also Kuznecov and Runič, 1974, p. 200. There also exists at least one example of a Khorezmian coin recovered from the Caucasus (see Afanasev, 1975, p. 60; Noonan, 1985b, pp. 245–8), and several pieces of Sogdian silverware have also been found there.

[34] Shepherd and Henning, 1959. At the risk of complicating the problem, it should be pointed out that the text of Narshakhī which mentions Zandanījī fabric also mentions Yazdī fabric as another deluxe product from Bukhara. Should this not be read in the last unknown word of the inscription, *y'sδh*?

[35] Narshakhī, trans. Frye, pp. 15–6.

[36] Shepherd, 1980; see also Muthesius, 1997, pp. 94–8.

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From the time that these conclusions were drawn, the problem of the *Zandanījī* fabrics has certainly been one of the most debated in the history of medieval eastern fabrics. The debates still continue today, and the recent developments call into question the unity of the *Zandanījī* group, as well as its attribution to Sogdiana—it could be a matter of Chinese copies of Iranian models.[37] I certainly do not have the means to resolve these very technical questions. The production (or not) of silk fabrics of various degrees of quality is indeed an important economic question for the history of Sogdian commerce, in particular for an understanding of the connections between the milieux of merchants and artisans in Sogdiana. But for this chapter, it matters little whether the *Zandanījī* fabrics came from Samarkand or a little further to the east: they passed through Central Asia, and that is the only thing that counts here. Independently of the attribution of fabrics, the discovery of Chinese fragments on the site greatly reinforces the Central Asian element at Moščevaja Balka. The collection of fragments includes the remains of an invoice in Chinese on paper, papier-mâché bearing characters, an extract from a sutra and a fragment of a Buddhist icon.[38]

These fragments of silk or paper do not give the ethnic identity of the merchants who carried them. But a text enables us to affirm that it was indeed merchants from Central Asia, and not (for example) Byzantine or Caucasian merchants who were responsible for their presence on these western mountain passes. The Caucasian sources, though relatively numerous, do not for the most part concern themselves with commerce. The rare references generally concern either Black Sea commerce[39] or east-west commerce to the south of the Caucasus before the fall of the Sassanids.[40] However, in the 7th century *Geography* which is attributed to him, Ananias of Širak[41] distinguishes himself by the interest which he shows in economic and

[37] Lubo-Lesničenko, 1993, and Sheng, 1998.

[38] Ierusalimskaja, 1996, p. 128.

[39] The Black Sea commerce is also mentioned by Procopius, *History of the Wars* II, 15, 4–5 (trans. Dewing, p. 387), in which he refers to the traffic between Lazica and the Byzantine frontier, by sea: it was essentially a trade in foodstuffs (salt and wheat).

[40] Manandjan, 1962. This author points out the very difficult economic situation of Armenia in the 7th and 8th centuries. The trade with the North began only at the end of the 8th century, see p. 189 ff.

[41] Ananias of Širak, *Geography*, pp. 32–5.

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commercial information. For the regions known by the author and in particular for the steppe, the Caucasus and Iran, the information is from the 7th century. Interpolations on the subject of the Arabs could have been made, but in no case are they later than the end of the 8th century.[42] Ananias of Širak mentions the precious products which could be found in each of the lands he describes.[43] In one of the two versions of the *Geography* we read:

> Scythia has mountains, and dry waterless plains. It has five countries [among which are] Sogdiana, i.e., Sagastan and Saké. [Together], these two contain fifteen rich, industrious and mercantile nations who dwell between Turkestan and Ariana by the Imaeus Moutains [. . .] Among the fifteen nations [. . .] the Chorasmians [who are] merchants [dwelling] towards the northeast.[44]

And in the abbreviated version:

> The Sogdians are wealthy and industrious merchants who live between the regions of Turkestan and Aria.[45]

The references to Sogdian and Khorezmian merchants in this text is particularly remarkable, considering the total absence of commercial commentary about the peoples settled directly to the north of the Caucasus. To the north and northeast of Armenia, these were the only merchants whom Ananias knew. Note that nothing enables us to distinguish between the Sogdians and Khorezmians. One group just as much as the other could have been responsible for the presence of silk at Moščevaja Balka.

Another text could pose a tricky problem. Balādhurī (d. 892) writes with regard to the constructions of the great Sassanid king Khusrō Anōshervān (531–579) that:

> He founded a town, Sughdabîl, in the land of Jurzân, which he peopled with a group of Sogdians and Persians, and fortified it.[46]

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[42] There are two versions of this text, one long, known only from a single manuscript, the other short, of which many copies exist. The long version must be a little older, and the short version would then epitomize it in the process of bringing it up to date after the destruction of the Sassanid Empire.

[43] Thus for Armenia, pp. 59–60, or for Asia Minor, pp. 52–4.

[44] Ananias of Širak, *Geography*, trans. Hewsen, 1992, pp. 74–5. The gloss of Sogdiana by Sagastan is an error, as Seistan was meant. See also Cardonna, 1969, for the eastern aspects of this text.

[45] Ananias of Širak, *Geography*, p. 74A.

[46] Balādhurī, *Kītāb Futūḥ al-Buldān*, trans. Hitti and Murgotten, I, p. 306.

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The temptation is great to draw a parallel with what we know about the military role of the Sogdians and the colonies of the Lobnor. But Balādhurī probably misinterprets the Georgian name of the site, Sagodeb-eli, "place of lamentations," and tries by a folk etymology to recognize in it a name known to him, that of Sogdiana.[47]

The other great route giving access to the Byzantine Empire, the Crimea, was more specifically Sogdian.

Sogdaia of the Crimea

The text of Menander and the Caucasian discoveries do not themselves make up the totality of available sources for the extension of Sogdian commerce toward the Byzantine market. Byzantine texts hitherto unexploited for this purpose can be added to the corpus.

The Crimea, in antiquity as in the Middle Ages, was the terminus for commerce passing by way of the steppe. It represented the western extremity of the Türk Empire. In the middle of the 6th century, the bishop Jordanes alluded to this traffic in a striking manner when he spoke of "Chersona, where the merchant eager for gain brings the products of Asia."[48] Beginning in the 9th century, and for a long time thereafter, the town of Sogdaia, modern Sudak, played a role of primary importance in the organization of these trading activities. Marco Polo's uncle and father made it their base. The resemblance between the name of this commercial town and that of Sogdiana is striking: could there thus be a connection between the foundation of Sogdaia and Sogdian commerce?

The origin of this town has been the subject of numerous works on the part of philologists since the beginning of the 20th century. Archaeological excavations, still in progress, make it possible to shed more light on the matter.[49] The responses to this question, given when the importance of Sogdian civilization and the breadth of its commerce were still unknown, were on the whole negative: the distance involved was great enough to suggest that another explanation should be sought. Sogdaia was thought to be certainly an Iranian name, but in fact Alan, by relating it to the root **suγda*.[50] This etymology

[47] Minorsky, 1930, p. 59.
[48] Jordanes, trans. Devilliers, 1995, p. 16.
[49] Frondžulo, 1974, Baranov, 1987, and Šandrovskaja, 1993 and 1995.
[50] Marquart, 1903, pp. 190–1, and Vasmer, 1923, pp. 71–2, who reasoned on

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appears to be possible,[51] but it collides both with the meaning ("holy town"? how is it holy?) and above all with the fact that the toponym only appeared quite late: the Crimea before the 7th century is well known from Byzantine sources, and it must be noted that the name is not found in them. Nor is there anything to be found archaeologically before the 7th century.[52] It is necessary now to reconsider the Sogdian hypothesis.

In both the eastern and western medieval ecclesiastical traditions there exist lists of apostles and disciples of Jesus, the *Indices Apostolorum*. These lists briefly mention their peregrinations and martyrdoms, and in particular state that the apostle Andrew travelled by the coast of the Black Sea. The oldest of the lists are from the 5th century, and all the manuscripts attribute them to Epiphanius of Cyprus.[53] Among the peoples converted by Andrew on the Black Sea littoral, the first known version of this text[54] names the Scythians, the Sogdians and the Saka.[55] We have here a division of the eastern world based on the *Geography* of Ptolemy: to Bartholomew the Indians, to Thomas the Parthians, Medes, Hyrcanians, Kirmanians, Margians and Bactrians, to Andrew the Scythians, Sogdians and Saka—an idea which had already occurred in embryonic form in the *Ecclesiastical History* (3, 1) of Eusebius of Caesarea, borrowed from Origen. This first list was modified, or more exactly updated, in the 6th or 7th century. Of the three peoples mentioned, the Scythians and Sogdians were preserved, but the Saka were replaced by the Georgians.[56] The replacement of the Saka by the Georgians, designated by their medieval name of Iberians rather than their ancient name, shows that we are dealing here with an updating of the list: the name of the Saka no longer evoked any associations, and that of another people, contemporary

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the basis of Ossetian *sugdāg*, "holy." It is worth noting that even a specialist in Central Asian studies like J. Harmatta agreed with this interpretation (Harmatta, 1979a, pp. 153–156).

[51] Despite Szemerenyi, 1980. Note however that the Chinese text which he invokes to support this reading has been misinterpreted, see Enoki, 1955.

[52] The date of the foundation of the town in 212, occasionally invoked in aid of the Alan etymology, is nothing more than pure fantasy: it is taken from a source from the the 16th century, the life of St. Stephen of Sudak, which is devoid of any historical value.

[53] Dolbeau, 1992.

[54] Verona LI (49)—compare with with Vat. gr. 1506 fol. 78a.

[55] Dvornik, 1958, pp. 197–199.

[56] Trans. in Dvornik, 1958, p. 178. Greek text in Schermann, 1907, p. 108.

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and important, the Georgians, was substituted for them. Why were the Scythians and the Sogdians preserved in this context? The retention of the name "Scythians" is perfectly natural, for this term served throughout Byzantine literature to designate all the nomadic peoples of the North. The preservation of the reference to the Sogdians is more surprising: in this update of the texts, it can only be explained by contact with the actual Sogdians of Central Asia. This contact is certainly attested in the sources: it is the series of embassies inaugurated by that of Maniakh in 570.

The list of peoples and places where Andrew preached is restricted to the area around the Black Sea: in this second version of the list the Sogdians would be the only distant people. All idea of division of the world, if such had been the original concept, is henceforth set aside. But here too the text of Menander can supply part of an answer: the embassy of Zemarchos travelled by way of the Crimea to rejoin the Türk leaders. The Crimea was thus a place providing access to the Turco-Sogdian world, which could be sufficient to explain the presence of Sogdians in this list.

In itself, this textual evolution would not be enough to demonstrate the existence of a connection between the Sogdians of Central Asia and Sogdaia. But the tradition of the *Index Apostolorum* was continued in the 9th century by the monk Epiphanius of the monastery of Callistratos, who explicitly cites the *Index*,[57] and who tried to reconstruct the path followed by the apostle by travelling it. His *Life of Saint Andrew*, written in the 830s, describes the path in these terms:

> Arriving at Sebastopol the Great, they taught the word of God. Andrew, having left Simon at that place, himself departed with his disciples into Zichia. After having left them, he went among the Upper "Sougdai". These are gentle men, who are easily persuaded and they received the Word with joy.[58]

From this point on the geographical location is without ambiguity, on the coast of the Black Sea, near the Strait of Kerč (Bosphorus), and the "Sougdai," as depicted by the well-informed pen of Epiphanius, seem to be quite a real people. Of the members of the original list, only the Sogdians remain: the Scythians have themselves also disappeared.[59]

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[57] Epiphanius used an old version of the Index, without the Gorsinians.

[58] Greek text in Migne's *Patrologie Grecque*, 120, p. 243.

[59] The precision of Epiphanius' text is extremely interesting: in fact Epiphanius no longer uses the word "Sogdianous" but "Sougdaious tous ano." He has cut the

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Lastly, a fourth stage in this long textual tradition is reached with the *Laudatio*, which, on the basis of the text of Epiphanius of Callistratos, is dedicated to Saint Andrew and his travels by the Byzantine panegyrist Nicetas the Paphlagonian (9th century), who states that the land called Upper Sougdia is now without inhabitants.[60] This text has passed from the name of the people to the name of the geographical area. The textual tradition of which it is a part, on account of its persistence, makes it possible to affirm that the toponym "Sougdaia" is indeed connected to the existence of a settlement of Sogdians on the shores of the Black Sea: the passage from the text of Epiphanius of Callistratos to that of Nicetas is enough to show it. The Sogdians, unlike all the others, are still present in these texts of the 9th century.

The problem has thus been shifted: by an examination of this long textual tradition which, beginning from a unique source, was regularly updated according to new historical realities, I have shown that the problem is not limited to accounting for a toponym: it also includes an ethnonym—an ethnonym, moreover, which is not explained by any text, if not by those which connect it to the Sogdians of Central Asia.

"Sougds" are mentioned in another text, this one written by Constantine the Philosopher, known in the realm of religion as Saint Cyril, evangelist of the South Slavs. He could have gained his knowledge from the embassy which he led in 861 to the Khazars, which went by way of the Crimea. In the famous debate in which he engaged the priests of Venice on the question of the translation of the holy books into vernacular languages, he declared:

> Are you not ashamed to establish only three languages and to ordain [therefore] that all the other peoples and the other nations remain blind and deaf? Tell me if you [thus] make of God an impotent one who cannot do [this] or an envious one who does not wish [it]? We know of numerous peoples who know the scriptures and who praise God, each in its own language: the Armenians, the Persians, the Abkhazians, the Iberians, the Sougds, the Goths, the Avars, the Turks, the Khazars, the Arabs, the Egyptians, the Syrians and still many others.[61]

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word "Sogdianous," which he read in the text but which he did not hear in the course of his journey, into two words "Sougdaios / tous ano" ("upper"), as Constantin Zuckerman has indicated to me. But one notes that in correcting the text in this way, he has but used the actual name of the Sogdians of the early Middle Ages, pronounced "Sogdē," hellenized naturally as "Sogdai." In other words, Epiphanius has corrected the archaic denomination "Sogdianous," inherited from the conquests of Alexander the Great, in accordance with the medieval pronunciation of that name.

[60] Ed. Bonnet, 1894, pp. 309–352, see p. 334.

[61] *Life of Constantine*, French translation in Dvornik, 1933, p. 375.

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It is simple enough to demonstrate that the "Sougds" of the *Life of Constantine* are again Sogdians. In fact, the "Sougds" are only characterized as knowing the scriptures and praying to God in their own language. It has been claimed that the "Sougds," like the "Turks," were peoples of the Black Sea coasts, Christianized and possessing their own liturgical languages.[62] Curiously, no other text mentions them . . . Conversely, it is certain that Christianity was well established in Sogdiana in the 8th century: for this we have both archaeological and textual proof. The Christian texts were moreover actually translated into Sogdian, as is proven by discoveries both at Dunhuang and in Sogdiana. Lastly the Sogdians transmitted this Christianity to the Türks, these unidentified "Turks." It was by the Sogdian network that Nestorian Christianity was spread to the East.[63] The *Life of Constantine* unquestionably refers to the Sogdians. But it does not provide us with proof of their presence at the Black Sea. The Christian Sougds and Turks mentioned by Constantine could also be sought in Central Asia. Constantine could simply have heard about them during his mission to the Khazar court, which would not be surprising, given the commercial connections of the Khazars, and he mentions them, just as he does the Persians or the Arabs, among the Christianized peoples who had mastered writing and possessed their own liturgical language. The text of the *Life of Constantine* is thus perfectly well explained without the need to invent supplementary systems of writing and liturgical languages that are, moreover, completely unknown. On the other hand, it shows that the Sogdians were still known under their own name in a text from the end of the 9th century. This argument again reinforces the Sogdian hypothesis.

But although a continuous tradition mentions Sogdians on the northern shore of the Black Sea from the 6th or 7th century on, and although the Alan etymology is far more difficult to invoke for a settlement dating from the 7th century, it nevertheless remains that the hypothesis of a complete coincidence between the names of Sogdaia and the Sogdians is possible in the abstract. There is one final element, however, that weakens it. A Sogdian *ostrakon*[64] has been

[62] Dvornik, 1933, p. 208.

[63] See Klein, 2000.

[64] My most sincere thanks to Boris Maršak for having drawn my attention to this unpublished *ostrakon*, and to Vladimir Livšic for having sent me a photograph, a commentary, which I follow here, and permission to publish this document. This *ostrakon* was part of the *nachlaß* of Professor Ju. M. Desjatčikov and was found at

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discovered at the end of the Taman Peninsula, in the same area that the apostle Andrew travelled when passing from the territory of the Upper Sogdians to Bosphorus (Kerč). It is the inscribed handle of a container, which gives the name of its Sogdian owner, Š'βnwšk, i.e., Šāfnōšak, "believing in immortality"—such inscriptions are a well-known phenomenon, particularly in Sogdiana[65] [see plate I, ill. 3]. This is not an object of luxury or for export, susceptible, on account of its value, to passing from hand to hand: the Chinese statuettes which portray Sogdians show these travel-flasks hanging from their belts. The person whose name is engraved on it therefore probably travelled through the Taman Peninsula. Paleographical criteria enable the inscription to be dated to the second half of the 8th century or to the 9th century. This discovery independently supports the hypothesis suggested by the texts. Together they form a chronological and geographical group. Only the hypothesis of a Sogdian presence on the coasts of the Black Sea allow us to interpret this collection of data.

Between the 7th and 4th centuries BCE, Sogdian civilization was that of a land endowed with important towns and a powerful aristocracy, well known from the historians of Alexander and their Greek and Latin successors. Consequently, when an early hagiographer wished to attribute to Saint Andrew an important role in the conversion of the peoples of the North, he quite naturally mentioned the name of the Sogdians, following Ptolemy, together with the Scythians and the Saka. This first reference is a distant consequence of the first, pre-Achaemenid and Achaemenid, period of Sogdian wealth. But, cut off from the Mediterranean world, Sogdian civilization underwent a second phase of great development beginning in the 5th century of our era—it was at this time that the Sogdo-Türk missions restored the links between the Greek world and Central Asia, and with a civilization that had again become quite brilliant. This renewal occurred just at the right time to enable the hagiographers to restore a quite contemporary meaning to the traditional list of the peoples converted by Saint Andrew: brought into line with the outlook of the times, the list kept the Sogdians at the rank of people whose conversion was likely to add to the prestige of the apostle, due no

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the end of the 1980s while he was excavating the sites of Kučugry, Zaporožskoj and Goluckaja.

[65] See Livšic, 1981.

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longer to the Ptolemaean tradition, but to contemporary Sogdian prestige, while the vanished Saka and Scythians were by stages forgotten. The Sogdians, with their refined civilization, made an excellent and prestigious flock. This legend was reworked in the 9th century and changed to once again take note of developments, and particularly of the existence of a Sogdian settlement on the Black Sea, on a site logically named Sogdaia, from the name of the people bearing the most precious of the "products of Asia," so prized by the Byzantines. The trait which Epiphanius of Callistratos attributes to its inhabitants, "easily persuaded," hagiographically counterproductive if it is pure invention, corresponds perfectly, by the way, to what is known of the religious adaptability of the Sogdians, by turns Mazdeans, Buddhists, Nestorians, Manichaeans and Muslims, according to their political and commercial interests . . .

A long-term Sogdian settlement thus existed on the northern coast of the Black Sea. For the history of Sogdian commerce, the information is important. But there is nothing surprising about it from a historical point of view: other regions, also quite distant, had known a Sogdian presence. The Black Sea and the rich and proximate Byzantine market had everything to attract the Sogdian merchants—the text of Menander has already shown this. The seals from the warehouse of Constantinople and the Byzantine *commerciarii* found on the site of Sogdaia, which make it possible to date the foundation of the town to the end of the 7th century at the latest, prove its commercial character.[66]

Although a chronological hiatus exists between the attempt mentioned by Menander and the first archaeological traces of Sogdaia, it is nonetheless tempting to suppose a continuity in the Sogdian presence in the region. The discovery of the connection between Sogdaia and the Sogdians shows that the generally unfruitful attempt made by Maniakh—which ended in the expulsion of all the "Scythians of the people called the Turks" from Constantinople—had been at the very least resumed. Expelled from the empire—probably as much for commercial as for political reasons, in the context of strict con-

[66] Šandrovakaja, 1995, for a seal of a *génikos logothétès* of the warehouse (*apothèkè*) of Constantinople. For several seals of *commerciarii* from the reign of Leo III (717–741) found on the site, see Šandrovakaja, 1993. These seals imply a commerce coming from Constantinople. See also Baranov, 1991.

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trol of commerce which characterized the Byzantine state—I suppose that the Sogdian merchants established themselves at the extreme limit of Türk, then Khazar, territory, following the fluctuations of the frontier: when this was fixed more firmly at the end of the 7th century, with the southern Crimea under Byzantine control while the north remained Khazar, it was precisely in the first important harbor site just to the north of the Byzantine frontier that the Sogdians settled.[67] Sogdaia was a frontier market, like those found in the Ordos at the other end of the steppe, where Sogdo-Türks and Chinese met. The Sogdians settled in Türk territory, then Khazar, within range of commerce, without being subject to the strict control exercised over the trade in silk by the Byzantine state.

3. *Commerce in the Khazar Empire*

Between the Caucasus and the Volga, upriver from the two routes which gave access to the Byzantine Empire—the Crimea and the passes of the Caucasus—the Khazar qaghanate was organized in the second half of the 7th century, on the ruins of the empire of the Western Türks. Expanding in the course of the 8th century, enriched by much plunder, it collided with the Arab armies in the Caucasus. A true hub of international commerce in the 9th and 10th centuries, the Khazar Empire must have been crossed, since the preceding period, by the Khorezmian and Sogdian merchants travelling to Byzantium, whatever the route taken. One can thus suppose that there existed a commercial presence from Central Asia within Khazar society. It remains to prove it.

Study of the Diffusion of Silver Objects (Tableware, Coins)

On the northern flank of the Khazar Empire, buried silver dishes, vases and pitchers of Iranian or Byzantine origin were concentrated in the Kama basin between the Volga and the Ural, a region which had long exported great quantities of precious furs. Eastern silver plate certainly constituted the most prestigious non-perishable merchandise

[67] See Menander, Fragment 19, trans. Blockley, 1985, p. 176.

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in this area during the 7th and 8th centuries. Numerous silver objects have been recovered, and twenty-five years of progress makes it possible to draw up a balance-sheet for the silver plate found in these forested regions west of the Ural, organized according to the objects' places of origin.[68]

A total of 82 precious dishes originating from Central Asia or from Iran, and fashioned before the end of the 8th century, have been found in the forest zone west of the Ural. Of these 82 dishes, 36 are Sassanid, 23 Sogdian, 10 Khorezmian, 8 Türk or Sogdo-Türk, 2 are from Tukharistan, 2 from Afghanistan or Northwest India, and 1 from Kabulistan. Therefore 46 dishes originated from the Central Asian commercial zone. Moreover, of the 36 Sassanid dishes, 5 had been in the possession of Sogdian and Khorezmian merchants, as they bear Sogdian and Khorezmian inscriptions. In all, perhaps only 31 of these 82 dishes escaped merchants from Central Asia, while 51 were marketed by Sogdians or Khorezmians at one point or another on their journeys.

If we restrict the field of study to dishes fabricated up to the year 700, we obtain the following result: of a total of 41 dishes, 27 are Sassanid, 6 Khorezmian, 4 Sogdian, 2 come from Afghanistan or Northwest India, and 2 from Tukharistan. Among the 27 Sassanid dishes, 5 bear Central Asian inscriptions. Nineteen dishes, against 22, probably passed through the shops of Central Asian merchants. In the 8th century, this is the case for three-quarters of them (32 against 9).

This study of silver dishes in itself shows that merchants from Central Asia had a strong presence in the commerce destined for the forest regions of northeastern Russia: at least 45% of the eastern dishes fabricated before 700 that were found on the Kama passed through their hands, and this percentage grows to 75% for those from the 8th century [see plate VIII, ill. 2 and 3].

Such precious goods could have travelled further still: at Helgö, a great commercial center of the early Middle Ages on one of the islands of the Swedish coast, a small Buddha was found in the remains of a house. The archaeological context is a bit disturbed, but the Arab coins found nearby are distributed over the years 742 to 833. Although first published as a Buddha from 5th century Chinese Turkestan, it

[68] For this purpose, I have combined data drawn from Darkevič, 1976, Marschak, 1986, Lukonin and Trever, 1987, and Noonan, 1985b, annex II. For details see de la Vaissière, 2000.

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is stylistically much closer to Kashmirī models of the 7th century.[69] One cannot be totally certain that it passed through Central Asia in the 8th century or the beginning of the 9th century, but this seems to be the most probable path.

Silver coins are the other archaeological tracer found in the Kama basin, and can be better utilized thanks to recent works which clearly establish the distinction between Sassanid coins and their Central Asian imitations, continuing in the numismatic sphere the process of differentiation that has helped to reattribute a large proportion of the pieces of silver plate.[70] The results are instructive: of 71 Sassanid or Central Asian coins,[71] 6 are Khorezmian, 4 are Bukharan imitations of Sassanid drachms, 9 are probably Central Asian imitations of Central Asian drachms, and lastly 1 Sassanid drachm is countermarked with the *tamga* of Bukhara. In all at least 20 coins, or 28%, came from Central Asia, whether they were produced there (Khorezmian coins and imitations of Sassanid coins) or passed through the region (Bukharan overstrike). The path taken by the other pieces is unknown, but nothing north of the Caucasus testifies to their passage, even though the Sassanid Empire was quite close: finds of Sassanid coins there are extremely rare.[72] The study of Sassanid coin marks does not allow us to associate them with precise regions, if not to the economic heart of the empire.[73] Conversely, Sogdiana has furnished numerous Sassanid coins, connected particularly to the tribute following the defeat of Pērōz (484) against the Hephtalites, coins well-represented among the Kama finds (ten coins and four copies).[74]

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[69] See Zav'jalov, 1995, and Jansson, 1988, for an overview of eastern imports in Scandinavia.

[70] Goldina and Nikitin, 1997.

[71] Out of a total of 78: there are also 2 Byzantine coins, 2 Arab-Sassanid, 1 Umayyad and 2 Abbasid.

[72] Noonan, 1982b, p. 272.

[73] Note the strong presence from the atelier of Ērān-xvarrah-Shabuhr, which corresponds to the region of Susa, with 8 coins and 4 imitations. But coins from very distant regions are also found, such as Merv (2), Āmul (2) and Sakastan (Seistan) (2). Overall it is the scattered nature of the representation which prevails. Note also that Ādurbādagān (Azerbaidjān) is represented by only one coin. On the identification of the places at which Sassanid coins were struck, one may consult Göbl, 1971, Gyselen, 1979, and Nikitin, 1995; for locations see the maps in Gyselen, 1989. The article by Nikitin, 1995, shows in particular that the Caucasian imitations of Sassanid coins are of a very different type.

[74] Livšic and Lukonin, 1964, p. 175, note the existence of other coins of Pērōz that were countermarked in Sogdiana, preserved in the Hermitage Museum, without indicating their provenance.

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These Khorezmian and Sogdian coins, of a rather mediocre quality,[75] and relatively rare even in Central Asia,[76] mixed with Sassanid coins, testify to the direction of the traffic. Other discoveries of Khorezmian coins could be added to the corpus.[77]

These pieces—which served as jewelry, for the majority of them are pierced—and the silver plate were commodities in a great commerce. The inscriptions borne by the objects were engraved by merchants. Silver was probably an external sign of wealth or had a religious significance in the Kama region. A demand existed, which created a commercial flow: if it were not so, nothing would enable us to explain the concentration of these silver objects in the northeast of European Russia. We are not dealing here with a simple diffusion by small-scale barter. To be sure, it is not a question of affirming that these Central Asian merchants travelled as far as the Kama: this would not be implausible, but it is equally possible that other peoples of the North took over their transport from the Central Asians at one point or another along the routes joining Central Asia and the fur-producing regions. The coins and silver dishes nevertheless show that merchants from Central Asia participated in these exchanges.

For what were these exports of silver plate and coins exchanged? These areas, in the 9th and 10th centuries, are described by the Muslim texts as exporters of furs, honey, amber and slaves. We can suppose that this was also the case in the preceding periods. For furs, at least, the data are clear. The *Hou Han shu* states that these regions were already supplying tribute in furs in the 2nd century CE:

> The kingdom of Yan 嚴 is to the north of Yancai 奄蔡; it is a dependency of Kangju 康居; it produces pelts of marten which it uses to pay its tribute to that country.[78]

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[75] Vajnberg, 1977, table XIV: the weights of the latest Khorezmian coins of Azkatsvar II are generally between 2.4 and 1.7 g.

[76] Noonan, 1985b, p. 245. Vajnberg, 1977, lists only 1417, and 500 fragments.

[77] See Mažitov, 1990, pp. 261–266, Muxamadiev, 1990, pp. 37–38, Tolstov, 1938, p. 121, and the details in de la Vaissière, 2000.

[78] Trans. Chavannes, 1907, p. 195, *Hou Han shu* chap. 88, p. 2922. Archaeologically, we note the very extensive presence of bones of fur-bearing animals in the forest zone (Kazanski, 1992, p. 95) and that other objects from distant places (Central Europe, the Dnepr region . . .) are concentrated there from the 2nd to the 5th century, before the arrival of eastern objects in the Kama region (Kazanski, 1992, pp. 90–1, pp. 111 and 114). On the fur trade in the Muslim world, see Lombard, 1969; and for the Byzantine world, see Howard-Johnston, 1998.

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Of these products, only amber is preserved (albeit poorly) in Central Asia. Recent analyses have shown that Sogdiana and Khorezm at this time unquestionably belonged to the exclusive sphere within which Baltic amber was circulated.[79] It was surely traded by the Sogdians: for example, it has been found in Samarkand and in the treasure of temple II at Panjikent, but also in that of the Shoshoin of Nara,[80] in Japan, dating in each case to the 8th century. The broad predominance of the Sogdians in contacts with East Asia allows us to attribute to them its diffusion to Japan. The amber could have been worked in Central Asia, as it has also been found in the form of small plaques.[81]

In the Khazar Empire

The low concentration of finds of precious plate within the Khazar Empire makes the use of available statistics tricky. Let us simply note that, of six hoards located within the empire (Dagestan, Groznyj, Azov, Limarovka, Pavlovka and Pereščepino), four are composed partially or entirely of objects that either originated in Central Asia or passed through the hands of Central Asian merchants. Thus, the hoard of Azov (mouth of the Don) contains a Sogdian pitcher of the 8th century; at Dagestan a Khorezmian silver cup from the 7th century has been found; at Limarovka, around one hundred kilometers to the north of the Sea of Azov, the Sassanid silver vase that was discovered bears a Sogdian inscription;[82] and lastly at Pereščepino the tomb of the Bulgar king Kuvrat contained Sassanid gold plate, Sogdo-Türk dishes from the 7th century and a dish representing Shāpūr II with a Sogdian inscription. This confirms the Central Asian commercial ascendancy, for the presence of these objects or inscriptions is not explained by Khazar plundering of the Caucasus.

Other objects, subject to the caprice of excavations, testify to the commercial links between Central Asia and the Khazar Empire at the beginning of the 9th century. At Sarkel, in the layers dating from

[79] See Bubnova and Polovnikova, 1986, 1991 and 1997.

[80] Many thanks to Boris Maršak for this information. Analyses have shown that this amber is of Baltic, not Burmese, origin.

[81] Mrs. Bubnova, paper at the Panjikent symposium of August 1997.

[82] Darkevič, 1976, p. 145 and p. 56. Lukonin and Trever, 1987, p. 127 and no. 19, pp. 112–3; Marschak, 1986, pp. 325–9; Maršak, 1996.

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the very beginning of this Khazar fortress (around 830), excavators have found on the one hand a fragment of paper, then produced at Samarkand, and on the other hand a 7th century Sogdian chess-piece. Ceramics from Džety-asar (delta of the Syr Darya) were also found there.[83] The hoard of Devitsa, on the Don, buried a little after 838 (the date of the latest coins), contains a very high percentage of coins struck at Samarkand and more generally in Transoxiana: among the latest coins, minted after 830, those from Eastern Iran and Central Asia represent 90% of the total.[84] It differs profoundly from the hoards found further to the north in the Kama region, which themselves testify to links beyond the Caucasus with Iraq.[85]

While information about the central area of the empire, between the Volga and the Caucasus, is unfortunately scattered, it is on the other hand certain that this vast space was, from a commercial point of view, controlled by merchants of foreign origin. I have shown elsewhere that the available texts concerning the Khazars permit us to exclude the hypothesis of a properly Khazar great commerce.[86]

The routes mentioned above led the Central Asian merchants through the heart of the Khazar Empire as much as along its margins. The Khazars thus had far-ranging foreign merchants on their territory, while their expansionist policy, their plundering of Byzantine and Sassanid lands, and the submission of peoples to the north of their empire placed great riches in their hands. These merchants were probably responsible for the exchange of these goods for the rare commodities of the East and the North, within the framework of a large-scale commerce of which they were the foremost specialists.

This interpretation is confirmed by an indication supplied by two Byzantine dishes, one from the 6th century bearing an inscription in the Bukharan variant of Sogdian script, and the other from the 7th century bearing a Khorezmian inscription.[87] These inscriptions are not connected to the route Byzantium—Central Asia—Kama, as they are generally interpreted, but rather to the presence of Sogdian and Khorezmian merchants in the South Russian and Caspian steppe. This hypothesis allows us to avoid having to imagine an excessive detour

[83] Pletneva, 1996, pp. 43–4 and p. 12.
[84] Noonan, 1982a.
[85] See below, chapter X, pp. 292–3.
[86] De la Vaissière, 2000.
[87] Livšic and Lukonin, 1964, pp. 165–6 and Noonan, 1982b, p. 289.

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for these objects. Likewise, the Sassanid dishes bearing similar inscriptions could have been in the hands of Sogdians or Khorezmians in the Khazar Empire.

This situation probably goes back to the division of labor in the Türk Empire which I have mentioned in the preceding chapter. Sogdian great commerce with the West, described by Menander Protector in 571, survived the fall of the Türk Empire. Sogdiana and Khorezm were then areas of contact and fusion between nomadic and sedentary peoples, much more than the Caucasus, an area marked by confrontations. East-west commerce led to the permanent settlement of merchants among the Türk tribes, and then among the Khazars. These merchants were in the best position to exchange furs and other products from the Kama for silver objects either from Sogdiana or bought from the Arab conquerors after the Sassanid debacle.

4. *Khorezmians and Sogdians*

In the foregoing discussion I have not distinguished between Khorezmians and Sogdians. Among the peoples of Central Asia, they were both in a position to have dominated the commerce of the western steppe. Furthermore, the Khorezmians enjoyed a geographical advantage due to their position further to the west.

Khorezmian Great Commerce

It is certain that the Khorezmians engaged in long-distance trade by way of the steppe. The text of Ananias of Širak cited above testifies to this fact: to a greater extent than the Sogdians, it is the Khorezmian merchants to whom he refers most often. In 570, only the king of the *Kholiatai*—the Khorezmians—was authorized to accompany the Byzantine ambassadors and Sogdians who were returning to Constantinople at the time of the first embassy described by Menander.[88] Both the outward and return journeys passed through Khorezm. There seems to have been collaboration between the Sogdians, who played the driving role due to their political connections, and the Khorezmians, who made the most of the situation by entering into

[88] Ed. and trans. Blockley, 1985, fr. 10.4, pp. 124–5.

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these profitable commercial exchanges. Later, in the 8th century, the contacts existing between the Khazars and Khorezm were very important, as the two lands bordered each other. Khorezmians afterwards played a large role in the Khazar Empire. Here the main source is Masʿūdī, who describes how the *Arsiyya* left the vicinity of Khorezm in the 7th or 8th century due to troubles and went to place themselves in the service of the king of the Khazars. They constituted his elite troops and provided him with a vizier.[89] The route of the Ust-Yurt, which led from the principal Khorezmian centers in the delta of the Amu Darya to the Khazar steppe by travelling west around the Aral Sea, belatedly supported a network of caravanserais.[90]

The passage concerning Khorezm in the *Xin Tang shu* states:

> The land of Huoxun 火尋 is also called Huoliximi 貨利習彌 (Khārizm), or again Guoli 過 利. It is to the north of the Wuhu River 烏滸 (Oxus). At six hundred *li* to the southeast one reaches Shudi 戍地. To the southwest it borders Bosi 波斯 (Persia). To the northwest it adjoins the Tujue Hesa 突厥曷薩 (Khazar Türks). It is the ancient territory of the city of Aojian 奧鞬, a minor king [who was dependent on] the Kangju 康居. The king of this land had for his capital the city of Jiduojuzhe 急多颶遮. Among all of the *hu* peoples, this people is the only one which [yokes] oxen [to] wagons. The merchants ride [in these vehicles] in order to travel to various kingdoms. In the tenth year Tianbao (751), the prince [of this land], Shaoshifan 稍施芬, sent an ambassador to render homage to the court and to offer black salt.[91]

But the Chinese knew very little about Khorezm and its commerce,[92] apart from the fact that the Khorezmians used wagons with oxen. Khorezmian commerce, without doubt important in the western steppe, never possessed the eastern counterpart of the Sogdian commercial network.

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[89] Trans. Pellat, 1962, I, p. 162, §450.

[90] See Manylov, 1982, for a study of this network.

[91] Chavannes, 1903, pp. 145–6, *Xin Tang shu*, chap. 221, p. 6247 and Schafer, 1963, p. 217.

[92] The references to Khorezm in Schafer, 1963, are mostly drawn from Muslim sources: in fact, only deerskin, stone honey (sugar candy) and black salt (?) are cited in Chinese sources.

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In the Sogdian Commercial Sphere

Certain elements permit us to go further and to suppose the inclusion of Khorezm in the Sogdian commercial sphere from at least the 8th century.

The clearest indication is monetary: during the reign of Sāwašfan (cited above in the *Xin Tang shu* by the name Shaoshifen in 751), and lasting through the second half of the 8th century, a Khorezmian-Sogdian bilingualism is observed on the coins.[93] At the end of the century Arabic is occasionally added, producing a trilingualism.[94] The Sogdian inscriptions are only present on silver coins[95] and are absent from bronze coins issued by the same kings. The bilingual coinage was thus solely intended for important transactions, and international commerce in particular. Furthermore, no political reason can account for this adoption of the Sogdian alphabet. These monetary legends give us the identity of the merchants for whom they were destined: the Sogdians controlled international commerce in Khorezm in the middle of the 8th century, and did so for at least half a century.[96]

Christianity was established in Khorezm in the 8th century: we know of ossuaries that display crosses from the end of the 7th or the first half of the 8th century, found at Mizdaxkan, not far from Tokkala.[97] This christianity was of Sogdian origin: at Venice, Saint Cyril mentioned Sogdian and not Khorezmian in his long list of Christian liturgical languages. We know too that in Khorezm the Melkites preserved Sogdian as a liturgical language up to the 14th century, and that they also were given the name of the "Soldains."[98] Lastly, these Central Asian centers from which the Christian churches spread were located in Sogdiana since the 8th century. The Melkite catholicos

[93] Types G-V and G-VI in the classification of Vajnberg: Vajnberg, 1977, pp. 81, 152–4, 159–161.

[94] Vajnberg, 1977, p. 161, no. 1167.

[95] Aside from one exception, which is perhaps an imitation: Vajnberg, 1977, p. 154, no. 1060.

[96] See Vajnberg, 1991, for a recent brief overview of the relations of Khorezm with its neighbors on the basis of archaeological data.

[97] Grenet, 1984, pp. 141–147.

[98] Cited by the historian Het'um in 1307 in his *Flower of the Histories of the Land of the Orient*. See the text in Pelliot, 1973, p. 117, in which he writes "these 'Soldain' Christians of Khorezm, who have their language and their writing, these are Christians of the Sogdian language." See Tolstov, 1946, for a western influence among the Melkites of Khorezm.

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was at Tashkent beginning in 762 or 766, and the Nestorian metropolitan at Samarkand by 728 at the latest.[99] The Christian texts thus independently confirm the growing ascendancy of the Sogdians in Khorezm.

The power of the Sogdian milieux of the Türk Empire opened the route of the western steppe to the Sogdian merchants. But this first stage was rapidly surpassed, and the Sogdians organized a vast network of exchanges, as attested by the foundation of Sogdaia, reference to them in the *Geography* of Ananias of Širak, and the discoveries of silver plate in the northern forests that either originated in or passed through Sogdiana in transit. The only rivals who could certainly have played a large role in this area were the Khorezmians, themselves also cited by Ananias as well as in the *Tang shu*. But due to the initial diplomatic coup which enabled them to overcome their geographic handicap and subordinate their rivals, the Sogdians put themselves in a commanding position which they were able to strengthen thanks to their privileged contacts with Türk and Chinese sources of wealth, and which logically led to the inclusion of Khorezm in the Sogdian commercial area in the 8th century. The western branch of Sogdian commerce was certainly the latest to have been established. It reached its height while Sogdiana had been subjugated for half a century by the Muslim armies.

[99] Pelliot, 1973, pp. 11 and 119–120.

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PART FOUR

The Break-up of the Networks (700–1000)

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INTRODUCTION

The political dimension of large-scale Sogdian commerce gave it a role that was incommensurable with a simple trade in deluxe objects. But this political dimension, while giving it strength, was equally a source of fragility. In the first half of the 8th century the balance of military power was disrupted over the course of a few decades by the Arab conquest of Central Asia, by the expansion of the Tibetans and Uighurs, and by the Chinese retreat. A new era was beginning, one that would be disastrous for the Sogdian merchants. It is equally disastrous for our documentation. While up to approximately the year 760 plentiful data are available, issuing as much from China as from the Muslim world or even from Sogdiana, after 760 and for close to a century and a half thereafter information becomes extremely rare. In the 10th century it becomes abundant once again, but in a regional setting, making it difficult to combine what we know about Islamic Western Turkestan with the texts from Turfan and Dunhuang, which are our principal sources for the east.

The analyses that follow are organized in this documentary context. Chapter IX utilizes Arabic and Persian sources and is concerned with the 8th century as well as the possible integration of Sogdiana into the economic and social networks of the Muslim empire in the 9th century. After the documentary hiatus of the 9th century, Chapter X inquires into whether connections between Sogdiana and its old commercial empire were maintained in the 10th century, and also whether the Samanid trade was the direct inheritor of the Sogdian one.

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CHAPTER NINE

THE SOGDIANS IN THE ISLAMIC WORLD

The arrival of Islam completely overturns the foundations of my analysis. In the 8th and 9th centuries Sogdian society underwent a major evolution in every sphere. For the purpose of giving an account of this change, the Muslim Arabic sources are extremely abundant. But while the Chinese sources and business documents used until now came from areas of Sogdian expansion, those documents are abruptly replaced by sources which, though numerous, issue from what I have shown to be an area of weak Sogdian commercial presence: Iran. The point of view has been totally changed, both geographically and qualitatively.

The most important of these sources is the *Ta'rīkh al-rusul wa al-mulūk*, "The History of the Prophets and Kings," by Abū Ja'far Muḥammad ibn Jarīr al-Ṭabarī (839–923), which, in a universal history, recapitulates events to the year 915. It constitutes the major historical source for the advent and expansion of Islam as well as for the history of pre-Islamic Iran. For Central Asia, Ṭabarī is entirely dependant on al-Madā'īnī (752–840?), the author of several lost works about the conquest of Khurasan and the governors who succeeded one another there, especially in the first half of the 8th century.[1] Other sources also supply interesting information, particularly the Persian adaptation of the *History* of Ṭabarī by Bal'amī,[2] which at times gives details about Iran and Central Asia which have disappeared from the Arabic text as it as come down to us. It is also necessary to mention the other great narrative of the Arab conquest, the *Kītāb Futūḥ al-Buldān* of Balādhurī, which represents an independent tradition.[3] These authors flourished in the 10th century, with the exception of

[1] After the reference to the Arabic text, this work will be cited according to the Leiden edition by the volume number of the English translation (dir. E. Yar-Shater) followed by the page number.

[2] See Daniel, 1990, who considers the tranlation of Zotenberg to be still usable.

[3] Trans. Hitti and Murgotten. Balādhurī represents the independent tradition of Abū 'Ubayda.

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Balādhurī (d. 892, year of the Hijra AH 279). For economic history, and more precisely for that of Sogdian commerce, the data are scarce.

We are indeed much poorer in information for the Muslim period after the middle of the 8th century than, e.g., for Chinese Turkestan of the 7th–8th centuries,[4] and there is moreover a major documentary gap from the second half of the 8th century through the 9th century which is extremely difficult to fill. After the time of the conquest, the great histories are disinterested in Central Asia and content themselves with sketching its political developments with broad strokes. The first geographers (ibn Khurdādhbih, Yaʿqūbī) only partially make up for this with regard to the 9th century. Confronted with this lack of sources, historiography—which abundantly deals with Khurasan or Transoxiana, particularly due to the military role of these regions in the creation and development of the Abbasid Caliphate—has to make do with an extremely summary description of the economic situation. In the commercial sphere the work remains entirely to be done, without the certainty of even arriving at a result. In this context, an investigation into the commercial role of a particular people is a tricky matter, so that it is necessary to use all the means at our disposal.

Several paths of investigation are in line with my earlier analyses. The invasions and the disorders which they occasioned could have disturbed the smooth operation of Sogdian commerce. It is thus necessary to work with narratives of the conquest in order to assess the economic disturbances which it caused. Conversely, the inclusion of Sogdiana in a gigantic empire quite naturally leads us to inquire into the possibility of an extension of Sogdian commercial lines in the direction of Iraq.

But the specificity of the Arabic Muslim sources and their great poverty in the commercial sphere for the early period lead to consideration of other angles of attack. The history of urban society is certainly one of the areas for which the Arabic sources are the most appropriate, whether for the analysis of urban revolts or the composition of elites. The merchants played, as I have shown in Chapter VI, a great role in the Sogdian urban milieu, which formed both their social group and one of their important markets. I have therefore tried to use this angle to attempt to discover information about the milieu in which the Sogdian merchants participated, since it is not

[4] The poverty of sources for the early Muslim period has often been emphasized, see for example Lewis, 1977.

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directly accessible. A collection of sources, the local histories, can enable us to approach the matter of urban elites. This mixed genre includes texts quite close to what we would call urban histories, like the *History of Bukhara* composed in the 10th century by Narshakhī,[5] as well as texts which include, hidden behind the name of *Histories*, collections of biographies of members of the religious elite who had inhabited or frequented the town in question (for example, Samarkand or Nishapur), and which were composed at quite various dates starting in the 11th century.[6]

1. *The Troubles of the 8th Century*

Chronology

The attacks of the Bedouin Arab armies took the Sassanid Empire, like the Byzantine, by surprise, at a time when both were exhausted after several decades of more or less continuous war. After the battles of Qādisiyya (637) and Nehawend (642), the last Sassanid ruler, Yazdgird III, had to lead the resistance from the eastern borders of Iran, without ever being successful in the coordination of operations. This resistance collapsed after his death in 651 near Merv.

The period which followed in Iran was one of dispersed and regionalized power in the hands of different leaders of Arab armies, whom the Umayyad caliphs of Damascus tried to control as best they could. While the first incursion of the Arabs into Sogdiana doubtlessly took place as early as 654,[7] it was only in 681 that an Arab governor

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[5] Trans. Frye, 1954, Persian edition by Riḍawī, 1351.

[6] *History of Nishapur*: Frye, 1965 (facsimile). There is an index for the two latest texts (Jaouiche, 1984). For Samarkand, see the Arabic *Kītāb al-Qand* (ed. al-Fāryābī) and the Persian *Qandiyya* (for this we have only manuscripts and a Russian translation by Vjatkin, 1906, although Yuri Karev is preparing an edition of it). Concerning the question of relationships between the Arabic and Persian texts, see Paul, 1993, and Weinberger, 1986, who separately conclude that they are independent. Other similar texts have also been used here and there, in particular the *Topographical introduction to the History of Baghdad* of al-Khatīb al-Bagdādhī, (trans. Salmon, 1904) and the *Kītāb al-Ansāb* of Samʿānī, with the aid of Kamaliddinov, 1993.

[7] Xin Tang shu, chap. 221, p. 6247 f., trans. Chavannes, p. 144: "The country of Mi 米 is also called Mimo 彌末 or Mimohe 弭抹賀 (Mâïmargh) [. . .] The king has for his capital the town of Boxide 鉢息德. During the Yonghui period (650–655) he was defeated by the Dashi (Arabs)." A raid by al-Aḥnaf in Sogdiana after he had conquered Balkh and then led a raid against Khorezm is mentioned by Balādhurī, trans. Murgotten, p. 167.

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wintered with his troops in Transoxiana. Only some very limited pillaging raids had been made previously. The troubles which tore at the Caliphate delayed the conquest of Sogdiana by thirty years and the various Sassanid pretenders attempted to profit from this period in order to reestablish themselves in eastern Iran, with little success.

Sogdiana and Khorezm and the lands as far as Čāč and Ferghana were conquered by Qutayba b. Muslim between 705 and 715. Samarkand was taken by trickery in 712. Afterward it took the Arab governors thirty more years to consolidate their gains and to resist the counterattacks of Sogdian nobles allied with the Türgesh Türks, at whose hands they lost the whole country and who went so far as to carry the war beyond the Oxus, into Bactriana. Under the last Umayyad governor, Naṣr b. Sayyār, the front lines were finally stabilized between Samarkand and Ustrushana with the nominal submission of the countries further north.

The Abbassid revolution, launched from Merv, which put many Iranians in power along with the new dynasty, only marginally concerned Transoxiana. Abū Muslim, the dynasty's principal propagandist, nonetheless later affirmed his power in Sogdiana, by having a part of the rebellious nobility massacred and a government palace built in the upper part of Samarkand.[8] From the year 755 the revolt of An Lushan in China put an end to the Chinese presence for a millenium and left Türk, Sogdian and Arab armies to face each other. Often mentioned in general works as the cause of the Chinese retreat, the battle of Talas in 751 between Chinese and Arabs in no instance played this role. While the defeat was bitter for the Chinese, it did not prevent them from returning to the area two years later. Islamization progressed as much in the north of Khurasan as in the south of Sogdiana (Kesh, Bukhara), as evidenced by the multiple syncretistic revolts—midway between Shi'ism and Zoroastrianism—which developed during the second half of the 8th century.

The revolt of Rāfiʿ b. Layth in 806 at Samarkand, which was initially fiscal but set the whole of Sogdiana ablaze and was quelled only with difficulty from Merv under al-Maʾmūn, shows the extremely slow assimilation of Sogdiana to the Muslim empire. The Sogdian nobles formed an important part of the army's structure under the son of Hārūn al-Rashīd, al-Maʾmūn, after he had established him-

[8] Karev, 2000.

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self at Baghdad against his brother. But they were rapidly replaced in this role by Türks, who were bought on the front lines which slowly receded to the north and finally included Čāč and Ferghana.

Under the Ṭāhirids, semi-independent governors at Nishapur, the Samanids, small nobles of the region of Termez who ruled Samarkand from 819, began a discreet ascent, which enabled them to become completely independent in practice from 874, thanks to the strong personality of Ismaʿīl b. Aḥmad. He transferred the capital to Bukhara in 892, and took control of all eastern Iran and Transoxiana. During the first half of the 10th century, the golden age of the Samanids, this region was certainly the most prosperous of the Muslim world—at least this is what is suggested by the admiring testimony of the Arab geographers who travelled there. The second half of the 10th century was to the contrary more difficult, due to the dynastic quarrels in which the Türk guards of the rulers intervened to an ever greater degree. The dynasty fell in 999 against the Qarakhanids, who re-created an empire on both sides of the Tianshan and are the best representatives of the vast movement of Islamization which took place during the 10th century among the Türk peoples beyond the Samanid frontiers.[9]

Here we have in very broad strokes the principal characteristics of the political evolution of Sogdiana after the Arab conquest. Each of these points has been the object of very long historiographical discussions. It is beyond my intention to give an account of them here, since economic development is my principal interest in this work.[10]

Geographic terms evolved in tandem with the Arab conquest. Khurasan in the restricted sense corresponded to the old regions of the northeastern Sassanid Empire below the Oxus, but in the broad sense of the Muslim era it could at times also include all the Muslim regions beyond the Oxus, among which were Sogdiana and Khorezm. In the Muslim sources these regions are called Transoxiana (*Mā warāʿa al-Nahr*, "that which is beyond the river"). This term includes

[9] Concerning the Qarakhanids, see now the contributions collected in *Études Karakhanides*, 2001.

[10] One may refer to the always central text of Barthold, 1900 (1968), as well as to Gibb, 1923, and, for the 8th century, to Karev, 2000. The point which has been recently most discussed is incontestably that of the role of the Persians in the Abbasid revolution, following the book by Shaban, 1970, which made of it, wrongly, a principally Arab revolution. See Daniel, 1979; Kennedy, 1981; Sharon, 1983; Daniel, 1997; Agha, 1999; Pourshariati, 1998.

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not only ancient Sogdiana in the restricted sense (the middle valley of the Zarafshan and the Kashka Darya) but also the regions further to the north (Ustrushana, Čāč, Ferghana, even Semireč'e), as well as ancient northern Bactriana (between the Hissar mountains and the Oxus to the south). With the exception of this latter region, of Khorezm and of Ferghana, the Arabic term *Mā warāʿa al-Nahr* thus corresponds quite well to the area which Xuanzang called Sogdiana (*Suli*), in the broad sense, from Issyk Kul to Kesh. Conversely, the meaning of Sogdiana in the Arab sources was progressively restricted to the agricultural districts situated to the west of Samarkand [see the fold-out map].

The various accounts of the conquest are not appropriate sources for economic history.[11] One can nevertheless glean from them a certain amount of commercial information which can then be compared to the important, primarily Soviet, archaeological results from these areas. Two principal issues can be approached, considering the political and military character of the available sources: first, the precise impact of plundering on the Sogdian economy, and then the political role of the merchants in this unsettled context.

Conquest, Economic History and Commerce

Several episodes of the conquest bring Sogdian towns onto the scene—Samarkand, Paykent, Kesh or Panjikent—which had to ransom themselves in order to avoid pillage, or which at times were not able to escape it. These provide occasions to see the role which commerce played in the wealth of the towns.

Arab plundering certainly represented an important economic factor, at least for the plunderers . . . The wealth of the Sogdian towns obviously struck the conquerors. During the conquest of Paykent, in 706 (AH 88), a captive proposed to ransom himself for 5,000 pieces of Chinese silk and reckoned their price at one million dirhams, or 200 dirhams per piece of silk, an exorbitant price, two times the value of a brocade garment;[12] Qutayba had him killed. The melting of silver and gold wares found in the town yielded 50,000 (or 150,000)

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[11] See Spuler, 1977, for an attempt to formulate eastern economic history during the early Middle Ages. The commercial information there is very brief.

[12] See Ṭabarī, II, 1188–1189, Eng. trans. vol. XXIII, pp. 136–138. We are dealing here with Chinese raw silk (*Ḥarīra ṣīniyya*).

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mithqāl of precious metal,[13] or 220 to 660 kg. And the historian concludes:

> They acquired much at Paykand. From Paykand there came into the hands of the Muslims [booty] the like of which they had never acquired in Khurasan.[14]

This text calls for several comments. First, it is not necessary to see this as evidence of the greater wealth of the Sogdian towns in comparison to those of Khurasan. The capture of Paykent was followed by all-out pillaging after the town had massacred its Arab garrison, while no such pillaging took place in the large towns of Khurasan, which had in general benefitted from a treaty of peace. The Arab troops who participated in the capture of Paykent had in addition never taken part in the conquest of a town, as they had been completely occupied on a small scale with the internal troubles of the Caliphate. Furthermore, when Qutayba revolted in 715 and tried to win his troops to the cause, he did not fail to remind them of their poverty before launching them into the assault on Sogdiana.[15] For Sogdiana on the other hand, this text unquestionably gives evidence of great prosperity at Paykent, which was, all things considered, a medium-sized and not very agricultural town—as the Arabic and Persian sources point out, its wealth was purely commercial. That being the case, what importance to the Sogdian economy should be given to this pillaging? Narshakhī makes it possible to give a hint of an answer when he writes:

> [Qutaiba ibn Muslim] finished the conquest of Tukharistan and crossed the Oxus in the year 88/706. The inhabitants of Baikand heard of this and fortified Baikand. [. . . Captured, the town revolted after the departure of Qutayba, who retook and destroyed it . . .] The people of Baikand were merchants and most of them had gone on a trading expedition to China and elsewhere. When they returned they searched for their children, women, and relations, and they ransomed them from the Arabs and rebuilt Baikand as before. It is said there never was a city like Baikand which, having been completely destroyed and remaining empty, was then so quickly rebuilt by the hands of the same inhabitants.[16]

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[13] Ṭabarī gives the two figures; Narshakhī, p. 45 and Balʿamī, trans. Zotenberg, pp. 141–2 give the second alone; Balʿamī specifies that it was gold.

[14] Ṭabarī, II, 1189, Eng. trans. vol. XXIII, p. 137.

[15] Ṭabarī, II, 1287–8, Eng. trans. vol. XXIV, pp. 10–12, Balʿamī, trans. Zotenberg, p. 180.

[16] Narshakhī, trans. Frye, pp. 44–5.

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It is certain that the war on the southern frontier of Sogdiana was the occasion for fruitful operations by its inhabitants. Among the silver dishes and pitchers which had issued from Sassanid workshops and were found on the western piedmont of the Ural mountains, some of them, as we have seen, bear Sogdian inscriptions, and all of them were jumbled together with objects which had come from Central Asian workshops. It therefore seems that, profiting from the Sassanid debacle, the Sogdians had bought back a part of the Arabs' spoils and in particular these objects of very great worth. The Persian nobles themselves were not safe from the Sogdian merchants: Qutayba bought a granddaughter of Yazdgird III, the last Sassanid king, in Sogdiana—perhaps during the pillage of Paykent—and sent her to Iraq. She became one of the wives of the Caliph al-Walīd[17] and the mother of the Caliph Yazīd b. al-Walīd (744).[18]

In this regard, the text concerning the sack of Paykent is delightful. Ṭabarī continues his comments about the sudden wealth of the Muslims and states:

> They bought weapons and horses, and riding animals were procured for them. They competed with one another in fine attire and equipment, and they bought weapons at high prices, until the [price of a] spear reached seventy [dirhams].[19]

This notice of the sudden inflation of local prices in the travelling markets that gathered around the victorious armies shows that at least a part of the money had not been lost by the inhabitants of the region . . . One could certainly say as much about the superb head of Senmurv, in 2 kg of silver, found in 1939 on the middle course of the Ob, north of the 60th parallel. This head, a Sogdian artifact from the beginning of the 8th century, was part of the booty of Arab troops who had plundered a temple in Sogdiana and broken up its statues. It was afterward resold to the Sogdians who sold it in the north[20] [see plate VIII, ill. 1].

Apart from these several instances of plundering, the Sogdian towns in general benefitted from treaties of capitulation that fixed the financial conditions for surrender and tribute. The text of the treaty

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[17] Ṭabarī, II, 1247, Eng. trans. vol. XXIII, p. 195.
[18] Ṭabarī, II, 1874, Eng. trans. vol. XXVI, p. 243.
[19] Ṭabarī, II, 1189, Eng. trans. vol. XXIII, p. 137. A very different story in Narshakhī, trans. Frye, p. 46: the prices increased due to the scarcity of arms.
[20] Maršak and Kramarovskij, 1996, p. 71.

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of capitulation of Samarkand in 712 has been preserved in its original form by Ibn Aʿtham al-Kūfī, a little known but well informed author of the 8th century, and in Persian translation by Balʿamī.[21] The surrender was accepted for a price of two million dirhams to be payed immediately,[22] and of three thousand slaves, neither too young nor too old. The annual tribute was fixed at 200,000 dirhams. Interesting conversion rates are given afterward: 1 slave was worth 200 dirhams; 1 large garment (probably of brocade), 100 dirhams;[23] 1 small garment, 60; and 1 piece (or strip)[24] of silk,[25] 28. Lastly, 1 mithqāl of gold (4.4 g) was worth 20 dirhams. These figures provide several pieces of information. The available data concerning the price of silk show that a roll of raw silk was worth 460 bronze coins[26] at Dunhuang around 750, and that 32 bronze coins equalled 1 silver coin. A simple calculation shows that a roll of raw silk at Dunhuang was worth 14.3 silver coins. But the pieces/strips of raw silk mentioned in the treaty of surrender were certainly whole rolls of Chinese silk, much greater in length than in width.[27] The price of silk therefore doubled between Dunhuang and Samarkand, and went from 14 dirhams to 28. The very rich man from Paykent mentioned above had 5,000 rolls of silk available to him, or 140,000 dirhams, which is to say that he alone had one fourteenth of the amount which Samarkand had to pay immediately. We can see from this that the Sogdians of Samarkand should not have had too great a difficulty in collecting these sums.

At this time the Sogdian economy was fully integrated into the Chinese economic area. Silk was the principal medium for large payments. It was available in great abundance, as other episodes in Ṭabarī attest: the Türk general Kūrṣūl, operating in Sogdiana (AH 121, 738–9 CE), paid his troops in pieces of silk,[28] and during the looting

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[21] See Smirnova, 1960, for a comparison of the texts, a Russian translation and a commentary.

[22] Balʿamī gives 10 million, but this is doubtlessly a confusion between two and ten, very easily made in Persian.

[23] Balʿamī uses here the term *Jāme dībā*, brocade garment, while Ibn Aʿtham al-Kūfī speaks only of *Thawb*, garment. Smirnova, p. 73, translates as "[kusok] tkani," piece of fabric, which is inaccurate.

[24] The Arabic term is *Shuqqa*, which can signify a piece of fabric, in general, but also a strip.

[25] Ibn Aʿtham al-Kūfī uses the term *Ḥarīr*, raw silk.

[26] Trombert, 2000b, p. 118, n. 2.

[27] A *pi* measured 12 m by 0.55 m.

[28] Ṭabarī, II, 1689, Eng. trans. vol. XXVI, p. 25.

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of Kesh in 751–2 (AH 134), silk constituted the main part of the plunder.[29]

The rapid recovery of Paykent and the relatively moderate quantity of tribute demanded should be compared to the archaeological data from Panjikent. The fate of this town during the conquest is well known to us from the conjunction of three sources. The role of its ruler, Dēwāštīč, in the resistance of the Sogdian nobles against the Arabs has long been known to us, thanks to the accounts of the conquest.[30] The discovery of the documents from Mount Mugh—the archives of Dēwāštīč—have increased our information about the diplomatic, political and economic life of Panjikent and its environs during the decade after 710.[31] Finally, this town has been the location of the most developed and continuous excavations in Central Asia, enabling us to combine the information yielded with the texts from Mount Mugh.

Part of the nobility of Samarkand took refuge at Panjikent and supported the political activity of Dēwāštīč, which led him to claim the title of king of Sogdiana in 721–2. This influx of population brought about the construction of a whole noble quarter. Panjikent was devastated by the Arabs after the death of its ruler in 722.[32] Archaeological results indicate that the site was abandoned for some fifteen years until about 740, at which time important works of repair and reconstruction took place. Great houses were rebuilt, with their traditional ceremonial halls and pagan decor. One of the palaces was reestablished, but its walls never received the expected decorations. In all, the proportion of houses in the noble style dropped from 42 to 24%.[33] Thus it was an important but diminished social life that resumed at the site after 740, and for a small amount of time: from the years 760–70, the ceremonial halls and great residences were abandoned and the ruins of the former palaces were occupied by a much lower social stratum.[34] Reconstruction was therefore slow in coming and doubtlessly took place owing to a period of political

[29] Ṭabarī, III, 79–80, Eng. trans. vol. XXVII, p. 202.
[30] Ṭabarī, II, 1441, 1447–8, Eng. trans. vol. XXIV, pp. 171 and 177–8.
[31] Trans. Frejman, 1962, Livšic, 1962, Bogoljubov and Smirnova, 1963. See also Grenet, 1989.
[32] Concerning the end of the Sogdian resistance against the Arab armies, see Grenet and de la Vaissière, 2002.
[33] Raspopova, 1993, p. 24 and Raspopova, 1990, p. 189.
[34] Raspopova, 1990, p. 174 and Raspopova, 1993, pp. 24–5.

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calm. It must certainly be linked to the events of the 740s and the great prosperity which Khurasan knew during the skillful reign of Naṣr b. Sayyār, which is indicated by all the chroniclers.[35] This governor succeeded especially in making peace with the Sogdians, while accepting all their conditions,[36] and we can easily understand that this context could have enabled the reconstruction of Panjikent. It is nevertheless a fact that this reconstruction was quite slow and not very durable. I would readily interpret that fact within a framework contrasting Panjikent and Paykent. The latter, though located on the route of all the armies, was rebuilt rapidly thanks to revenues from commerce—Narshakhī is explicit on this point. The former was more isolated in a valley with rich agriculture but without major commercial links; the local nobility had to wait a generation to assemble the funds necessary for reconstruction, and it then left the town in the 760s.

The contrasting fates of Panjikent and Paykent in the face of pillaging underlines the economic importance of commerce in Sogdiana. The written sources for the conquest reveal a Sogdian commerce faithful to the image depicted by the Chinese sources. The Muslim Arabic accounts furthermore give a certain number of details about the merchants themselves.

The Sogdians as Financiers of the Arab Armies?

The destruction of the Sassanid state infrastructure and the breakup of the provinces under an extremely loose Muslim suzerainty could have benefitted the Sogdian merchants, inasmuch as they thus escaped the consequences of the Sassanid protectionist policy that I have mentioned above. But conversely, the military operations could have been a brake on commercial activities. We hardly have the means to verify this in detail; it is however possible, thanks to the accounts of the conquest, to obtain a summary of the situation. These accounts let us glimpse the establishment of an important Sogdian presence in the great ancient Sassanid fortified town of Central Asia, Merv.

A very significant passage shows the role of the Sogdians at the heart of the Arab plan of conquest. Ṭabarī in his *History* tells in detail

[35] Ṭabarī, II, 1664–5, Eng. trans. vol. XXV, pp. 192–4 and II, 1718, Eng. trans. vol. XXVI, p. 58.
[36] Ṭabarī, II, 1717–8, Eng. trans. vol. XXVI, pp. 56–7.

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the circumstances of one of the expeditions led from Merv against Bukhara in 699:

> Umayyah b. ʿAbdallāh, ʿAbd al-Malik's governor over Khurāsān, put Bukayr in charge of the campaign in Transoxiana [. . .] he again made his preparations, spending a great deal of money on horses and weapons, and going into debt with the Soghdians and their merchants. [. . .] Attāb al-Liqwah al-Ghudānī had gone into debt in order to accompany Bukayr, and when he did not go, his creditors took him and had him put in prison; Bukayr paid off his debts and he was released.[37]

The Sogdians were thus the great moneylenders in the market of Merv at the end of the 7th century. It seems that they could dare to imprison for debt a lieutenant of the general-in-chief of the expedition. They financed the latter and expected to be reimbursed with plunder. Attāb al-Liqwah at the last moment did not leave on campaign and thus broke the contract, for which they had him imprisoned. One of the very rare texts showing the role of the Sogdian merchants as financiers is also one in which we see them favoring operations that were certainly profitable but directed against Sogdiana. It is possible that the Sogdians of Merv did not come from Bukhara but from Samarkand, for other examples exist of the hostility between the populations of the two towns.

From this episode an entire commercial reading has been proposed for events in the south of Sogdiana at the turn of the 7th and 8th centuries.[38] The Sogdian merchants of Merv could have financed the conquest of Sogdiana for reasons of taxation,[39] the goal being to change commercial taxes from 10%—the rate owed by merchants from an enemy territory (*dār al-ḥarb*)—to 5%—the rate paid by merchants from conquered territories. This is quite possible, even if it implies a slightly optimistic estimation of the real control by the Arab power in these frontier regions, but nothing in the text confirms it.

Nor is it possible to affirm with certainty that the Sogdians were solidly established at Merv before the fall of the Sassanids. The delay of half a century between the death of the last ruler and the expedition of Bukayr could have provided sufficient time for the Sogdians to settle in force. Nevertheless, their position seems dominant, even

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[37] Ṭabarī, II, 1022, Eng. trans. vol. XXII, pp. 165–6.
[38] Shaban, 1970.
[39] Shaban, 1970, p. 48.

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though numerous other communities were established at Merv, which argues in favor of an earlier settlement.[40]

Two brothers, Thābit and Ḥurayth ibn Quṭba, clients of Khuzāʿa whose adventures are mentioned in Ṭabarī, were said to be the leaders of the Sogdian community at Merv at the end of the 7th century.[41] These two persons were quite well connected with the Sogdian princes, whom they were able to call to their side,[42] as much as they were with the Arabs of Merv, who entrusted them with heavy military responsibilities.[43] They might have had commercial interests. Ṭabarī puts the following words in the mouth of Thābit: "we have [some] merchants coming from Balkh."[44]

But the Arabic expression *Inna linā tujjārān kharajū min Balkh* is very ambiguous and hardly allows us to draw too precise a conclusion.[45] Besides, nothing proves that these brothers were Sogdians and leaders of the community at Merv.[46] One could note to the contrary that the members of their family, mentioned several times in the text, bear Arabic names, which seems problematic if they had come from Sogdiana, still untouched by Arab armies and Islamization. When these brothers rebelled, the governor of Merv had their possessions and family seized. Their possessions were thus located in Khurasan and not in Sogdiana, and their family did not withdraw beyond the Oxus. The reports of the equality which they maintained with the

[40] The text already cited about the merchants of Paykent can equally be used in this sense, although it is more ambiguous. Contacts existed between Merv and Paykent, since the inhabitants of the town were warned of the expedition; yet the merchants of Paykent do not seem to have principally traded with Merv, but rather overall with the East, with China. This could support the analysis which I have presented of the text of Ṭabarī concerning the establishment of merchants from eastern Sogdiana at Merv. But it could also be a matter of a simple economic question, the profits from the Chinese expedition making possible the ransom of prisoners and the reconstruction of the town.

[41] Interpretation of Shaban, 1970, pp. 58–60, based on Ṭabarī, II, 1023, 1026, 1080, and taken up with enthusiasm by Beckwith, 1987, p. 67, where Thābit and Ḥurayth become "two Sogdian merchant-princes."

[42] Ṭabarī, II, 1080–1082, 1152, Eng. trans. vol. XXIII, pp. 28–31.

[43] Ṭabarī, II, 1023–26, Eng. trans. vol. XXII, pp. 166–170.

[44] Ṭabarī, II, 1157, Eng. trans. vol. XXIII, pp. 101–2.

[45] The particle *li* can indicate a possessive relation as much as a simple aim, and one hesitates between "for we have merchants coming from Balkh" and "for merchants are coming to us from Balkh," which is also quite likely.

[46] In particular, against the interpretation of Shaban, it is nowhere mentioned that they had freed the lieutenant of Bukayr imprisoned for debt by the Sogdians: Ṭabarī, II, 1026.

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nobles of the region, as well as their military duties, favor a noble rather than merchant origin.

With the more well-known family of the Barmakids, great vizirs at Baghdad, we may have another example of people from these aristocratic circles of Khurasan who were able to achieve positions of dominance over the conquerors into whose service they had entered. After the death of Thābit, his cousin, a general in the service of the Arabs, had all of the Arabs of Termez executed in order to avenge him, while sparing the Iranians . . .[47]

The Political Role of the Sogdian Merchants

In spite of their scattered nature, these data nevertheless invite us to inquire into the possible existence of a pro-Arab party within Sogdian society, and more specifically within the merchant milieu. The hypothesis has often been proposed.[48] The fluctuating political attitude of the Sogdians could have been linked to conflicts between merchants specializing in commerce with China and merchants trading with Merv, and the financing of Arab operations in Sogdiana by Sogdian moneylenders in Merv certainly renders this idea attractive. Several texts should be examined in order to verify this.

A passage of Ṭabarī describes how the inhabitants of Samarkand strongly protested that they had enjoyed good relations with the Arabs since 719–720 (AH 101), which could reflect the existence of such a party. During this episode the pious caliph ʿUmar II, at the request of a delegation of the people of Samarkand (*'ahl Samarqand*), tried to settle the aftermath of the conquest of Samarkand, which had taken place through treachery: contrary to the treaty signed, Qutayba had instead refused to leave the town and had expelled the inhabitants. To obey the order of the caliph, the governor had a judge decide that the Arabs should be driven from the town and that the Sogdians should reclaim possession of their dwellings, on condition that a straightforward combat then take place between the two armies. Depending on the victor, either a new treaty would be signed or Samarkand would be declared a town taken by force. The people

[47] Ṭabarī, II, 1163, Eng. trans. vol. XXIII, p. 107.
[48] Gibb, 1923, p. 67 and Shaban, 1970, p. 98.

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of Sogdiana[49] preferred the *statu quo ante* to the risk of a confrontation, and in justifying their choice put forward the good relations between Arab and Sogdian populations. The episode should be understood within a political context more than a social context: if Samarkand were to be taken by force, the inhabitants would run the risk of suffering the same fate as Paykent—which Panjikent would experience before long—while a town taken by treaty would be better protected. The Sogdians, politically trapped by the governor who had made the stakes very high, hastily sounded a retreat and took refuge behind a simple excuse. That they had chosen that of the friendship and trust of the Arabs rather than another is in itself interesting, but should not be overinterpreted with reference to the complaint to ʿUmar II which had preceded it. The only opposition which it is possible to consider is that between radicals, who had lost everything in the expulsion—which is to say, the city-dwellers—and moderates, more conscious of the connections between the use of force and its eventual consequences, who were perhaps nobles with possessions in the countryside (al-Sughd) and had less to lose in the matter. No pro-Arab party is imaginable here, and certainly not in the town. No proof can be seen of the existence of two opposing merchant parties in Sogdiana, the one pro-Chinese, the other pro-Arab.[50]

A generation later, just after the Abbasid revolution, Bukhara revolted against Abū Muslim.[51] Narshakhī paints the picture of a revolt in favor of the descendants of ʿAlī, supported by the Bukharan population and suppressed thanks to an alliance of the troops of Abū Muslim with the Bukhar Khuda and neighboring nobles. While the opposition of urban and rural-noble populations is clear, it is hard to grasp the underlying issues, and the most diverse interpretations have been proposed concerning them. It is in no case a matter of a pro-Umayyad revolt: Sharīk b. Shaykh al-Mahrī, the leader of the

[49] Ṭabarī, II, 1364–5. The translation given by D. S. Powers, Eng. trans. vol. XXIV, p. 94 is misleading: he translates here *'ahl al-Sughd* by "the army of al-Sughd," while he had earlier translated *'ahl* by "people," thus inferring an urban/army opposition which is not directly found in the Arabic text. Balādhurī, who reports this episode, mentions the people of Samarkand in both cases, trans. Murgotten, p. 189.

[50] Shaban, 1970, pp. 98–9.

[51] The principal source is here Narshakhī, trans. Frye, pp. 62–4. Ṭabarī briefly mentions the episode (Ṭabarī, III, 74, Eng. trans. vol. XXVII, p. 197).

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rebellion, compared both the Umayyads and the Abbassids to illnesses which should be avoided . . .[52] It is clear that a fusion between the Arabs and the Sogdians at Bukhara was underway, but nothing allows us to isolate its specifically commercial aspects.

When all is said and done, only two episodes can be cited which highlight a specifically merchant role. When the Arab armies captured and massacred the Sogdian exiles in Ferghana, they took care to spare the merchants.[53] Ṭabarī mentions their great wealth, linked to the trade in Chinese products. One hesitates between two interpretations: this wealth is evoked either for the ransom which the Arab soldiers hoped to take from it, or, more politically, to mention an Arab policy of preservation of the merchants. However it may be, we are not dealing here with a pro-Arab merchant party, but rather at most a pro-merchant Arab party.[54] The second episode is found in Narshakhī: when Qutayba b. Muslim seized Bukhara, he expelled half of the inhabitants, among whom were the clan Kashkathān. Narshakhī comments:

> In Bukhara there was a clan which was called the Kashkathān. They were an honored group possessing power and dignity, and they enjoyed great respect among the people of Bukhara. They were not (originally) dihqāns, but of foreign origin. They were, however, a good family, traders, and rich. When Qutaiba solicited a division of their houses and possessions, they gave all of their houses and possessions to the Arabs and then constructed seven hundred villas outside the town.[55]

The continuation of this episode leaves little doubt regarding the declared hostility which existed between this group of great merchants and the Muslim power. Their dwellings long remained the center of paganism in the town and they bore open hatred for the converts to Islam, who one day captured the gates of the villas as a trophy in order to place them in the grand mosque, where they were still to be found in Narshakhī's time, with the faces scraped off.[56]

This single episode which expressly shows the political attitude of a merchant family in Sogdiana itself—nevertheless in a very good

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[52] *Contra* Daniel, 1979, p. 86 f.
[53] Ṭabarī, II, 1444–5, Eng. trans. vol. XXIV, p. 176.
[54] This is the sense given to the passage by Shaban, 1970, p. 102.
[55] Narshakhī, trans. Frye, p. 30.
[56] Narshakhī, trans. Frye, p. 31 and 49. This is thus a matter of a Central Asian variant of Zoroastrianism.

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position at Bukhara to trade with Merv—enables us in this case to conclude the existence of a great and durable hostility toward the Muslim Arab power. The Sogdians of Merv hardly seem to have had support in Sogdiana proper.[57]

Active and wealthy, the merchants, if they did not play a particularly characteristic and discernible political role in the sources concerned with the conquest, did on the other hand greatly contribute to the wealth of the Sogdian towns. Thanks to their activities, together with agricultural wealth, Sogdiana was certainly the richest land in Central Asia during the first half of the 8th century. But the Arabic sources give no more information about the great merchants than the Chinese sources. The brothers Thābit and Ḥurayth ibn Quṭba were not such merchants. At least the example of the very rich merchant from Paykent allows us to demonstrate their existence.

2. *Merchants from Central Asia in the Muslim Domain*

The Sassanid defeats and the Arab invasion partially broke down the barriers established by the protectionist policy of the Iranian sovereigns. From the second half of the 7th century, Sogdians were able to profit from this situation and advance their commercial lines to the south. Above all, with the inclusion of Sogdiana in the Arab empire, a frontier problem no longer existed. One could therefore expect to see Sogdians mentioned south of the Amu Darya.

Sogdians South of the Amu Darya

At times persons originating from Sogdiana appear in the sources. Let us note at the outset that it is often impossible, in these brief notices of people otherwise unknown, to distinguish Sogdians properly so-called from Arabs or Persians born or raised in Sogdiana after the conquest and bearing the geographical or ethnic surname (*nisba*) of

[57] Shaban must moreover ignore an explicit assertion of Ṭabarī when he claims that Naṣr b. Sayyār gave amnesty to the Sogdian exiles in 740 due to their merchant status and not due to their fighting abilities (Shaban, 1970, p. 131. See Ṭabarī, II, 1717–8, Eng. trans. vol. XXVI, p. 57). One could point out that this criticism goes beyond the uniquely Sogdian context: the article by H. Masson (Masson, 1967, pp. 198–9) on the supposed commercial role of the Arab Azd tribe at Merv contains no proof of that which he maintains.

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al-sughdī. Moreover, the use of *nisba* to determine the origin of the people in question is subject to some restrictions: together with the possibility of people born in Sogdiana to non-Sogdian immigrants, it is possible that people were given *nisba* not according to their origins—which even so remains the most frequent case—but rather according to a striking fact about their lives. For example, in the case of a distant journey, the traveller, upon returning to his native town, may be designated by a *nisba* taken from the name of the country visited. In an Egyptian source, a *sughdī* could thus be someone who had travelled to Sogdiana, and not necessarily a Sogdian.[58]

A single episode, quite early, shows a genuine Sogdian taking advantage of the collapse of the Sassanid Empire to trade with Iraq. A text by Samʿānī depicts the extremely rapid reorientation toward the west of the activities of a Sogdian merchant: in his book of *nisba*, the *Kītāb al-Ansāb*, under the name of al-Azrakyānī, Samʿānī writes that:

> This *nisba* comes from Azrakyān, the name of a Zoroastrian (*majūsī*) of the people of Bukhara; this was a merchant who left Bukhara to trade with China and then went to Baṣra.

He then met ʿAlī who converted him,[59] which makes it possible to date the episode before the death of the latter in 661. The mention of the son-in-law of the Prophet casts doubt on the evidence: a family could long after have invented an early and prestigious conversion for itself. But nonetheless it was not absurd to invent a merchant ancestor leaving for Iraq in the 7th century, which precludes a total rejection of this passage.

There are other examples of Sogdian presence in the 7th century in the centers of the nascent Arab Muslim empire. Several are connected to the military profession, another Sogdian specialty in the Chinese sources. Thus the sources agree in their description of the settlement of a sizeable group of Bukharans at Baṣra,[60] hostage archers deported by the Arab governor after one of the first sieges of Bukhara.

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[58] Concerning these questions see Sublet, 1991, pp. 104–114.

[59] Samʿānī, 1962, p. 187. Barthold has already pointed out the passage, as he so often has: Barthold, 1900 (1968), p. 255.

[60] Ibn al-Faqīh al-Hamadhānī, trans. Massé, p. 191, speaks of the establishment of 4,000 Bukharans in a *sikka bukhāriyya* by ʿUbaid Allāh ibn Ziyād (673–83); Narshakhī, trans. Frye, p. 37, speaks of their departure from Bukhara without specifying their fate.

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Even though the Sogdians seem to have first discovered engines of war with the siege of Samarkand in 712, as shown by iconography,[61] they appear several times in the texts as specialists in ballistas and other catapults. Thus, during the dramatic siege of Baghdad in 813 (AH 197), one Samarqandī particularly distinguished himself and ended up being crucified by the inhabitants, his victims.[62] A Bukharan colleague had already been in charge of the catapults at Merv during battles connected with the Abbasid revolution in 745–6 (AH 128).[63]

Some other notices of Sogdians are found widely scattered, e.g., in the entourage of Abū Ḥanīfa, the great theologian and jurist of the 8th century, founder of one of the four schools of Muslim law,[64] or with one of the old governors of Merv who brought captive Sogdian nobles with him to Medina: reduced to the condition of agricultural slaves, the nobles revolted and killed him before committing suicide.[65] But nothing here can be interpreted in commercial terms.[66]

In Ṭabarī, a Sogdian appears in 751–2 (AH 134) in Oman and provides some military counsel, without mention being made of what he was doing in that region which, though desolate, drew numerous merchants because of its production of pearls.[67] A Sogdian pearl merchant would not be surprising, given the importance of precious stones and pearls among Sogdian luxury goods. It may be worthwhile to recall here the passage from Narshakhī concerning the merchants of Paykent:

> The people of Baikand were all merchants. They traded with China and the sea and became very wealthy.[68]

If this is a reference to the Indian Ocean, one could hypothesize that Sogdian merchants took advantage of the end of Sassanid control

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[61] See the illustrations in Chuvin (dir.), 1999, p. 128.
[62] Ṭabarī, III, 871 and 936–7, Eng. trans. vol. XXXI, pp. 137, 209–10.
[63] Ṭabarī, II, 1931, Eng. trans. vol. XXVII, p. 42.
[64] Mandelung, 1982, p. 39.
[65] See Balādhurī, trans. Murgotten, p. 175; Narshakhī, trans. Frye, p. 41; Ṭabarī, II, 179, Eng. trans. vol. XVIII, p. 190.
[66] Although Abū Ḥanīfa was a silk merchant and from a family originally from Kabul. There is also an isolated notice of trading by people from Baṣra with Ferghana (see ibn al-Faqīh al-Hamadhānī, trans. Massé, p. 191), but it is possible that Ferghana is only mentioned there to indicate the farthest reaches of the Muslim world.
[67] Ṭabarī, III, 79, Eng. trans. vol. XXVII, p. 202.
[68] Narshakhī, trans. Frye, p. 18.

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by strengthening their maritime presence. The Sogdian mentioned in Oman could fit into this context.

It is necessary to mention here the sole textual tradition enabling us to give an example of a Sogdian merchant in Iraq in the 9th century. Abū Zayd, in his continuation of the *Account of China and India*—sometimes attributed to the merchant Sulayman—composed at the beginning of the 10th century (around 916?), notes the example of a man from Khurasan who, laden with goods, left his country for Iraq, from which he embarked for China.[69] But this account is also known to us from Maʿsūdī, who specifies that this man from Khurasan came from Samarkand:

> It is said that a merchant from Samarkand, a town in Transoxiana, having left his country with a rich cargo, came to Irak; from there, bearing local products, he went down to Bassora, where he embarked for Oman; then he went by sea to Kedah [. . .] And so this merchant embarked on a Chinese vessel in order to go from Kedah to the town of Canton.[70]

This episode, in both Abū Zayd and Masʿūdī, is very clearly placed before 878, the date of the sack of Canton and the massacre of the foreign communities.[71]

The Sassanid obstacle had truly disappeared, and it seems that it was not replaced by regional protectionist policies within the Muslim empire that was taking shape. For all that, while several Sogdian merchants are occasionally attested, this is not enough to allow us to read into this evidence more than a very limited presence on the route to Iraq beyond Merv, where, on the other hand, Sogdian settlement did not weaken: during the troubles of 745–6, we find mention of a palace of the Bukhar Khuda, an avenue of Sogdians and a Bukharan quarter at Merv.[72]

The results of this investigation lead us to explore other trails, in particular the toponymy of Baghdad, at the other end of the great route which joined Central Asia and Mesopotamia.

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[69] Abū Zayd, trans. Ferrand, 1922, p. 104.
[70] Masʿūdī, trans. Pellat, I, p. 127.
[71] Masʿūdī, trans. Pellat, I, pp. 124–5.
[72] Ṭabarī, II, 1921–2, and 1987, Eng. trans. vol. XXVII, pp. 32–3 and 95. In his *Kitāb al-Ansāb*, Samʿānī mentions a small Sogdian bazaar at Merv (see Kamallidinov, 1993, p. 25).

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Central Asian Merchants at Baghdad

The town of Baghdad, founded by al-Manṣūr in 762, is relatively well known thanks to the innumerable references to its quarters, streets and structure in Arabic literature. The role played by the armies of Khurasan in the Abbasid victory had moreover given rise to their settlement in the town.[73] What of the Sogdians? Only one text, to my knowledge, makes mention of a Sogdian presence which we may suppose was commercial. In his *Book of Countries*, Yaʿqūbī writes, in 889:

> The market of the Syria Gate [is a] sizeable collection of markets in which all sorts of products and provisions were sold: it stretched out, with branches to the right and left, well-supplied, provided with avenues, streets and courts. It spread out in an immense avenue, intersected by long streets which were designated by the ethnic name of origin of the people who lived on every side of these streets: thus it was everywhere up to the suburb of Ḥarb ibn ʿAbd-Allah Balkhī. There is in Baghdad today no suburb more vast, more important and better supplied with streets and markets. It is inhabited by peoples originating from Balkh, Merv, Khuttal, Bukhara, Asbīshāb, Ishtākhandj, Kābul-Shāh, Khorezm: each regional group had a military or civil leader.[74]

Further on he mentions "the concession of the Ṣughd and the house of Kharfāsh Ṣughdī."[75] The description of Yaʿqūbī corresponds to the situation in 786 at the latest.[76] This quarter existed from 762. In the beginning it was formed by the collection of military concessions given by al-Manṣūr (754–775, AH 136–158) to the warriors of Khurasan. The description of Yaʿqūbī shows clearly that the settlement of soldiers opened the way for a commercial settlement[77] from the lands of greater Khurasan, and notably from Sogdiana (Bukhara, Isfījāb, and Ishtīkhan). All of Sogdiana is represented here, in the traditional meaning of the name, from Bukhara in the west to Čāč in the northeast. Ishtīkhan owed its development largely to the fact that it was chosen as the alternative capital by the masters of

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[73] But Beckwith, 1984b on a possible Buddhist influence on the circular plan within the town, is not so reliable.

[74] Yaʿqūbī, trans. Wiet, 1937, p. 30.

[75] Yaʿqūbī, trans. Wiet, 1937, p. 31.

[76] Lassner, 1970, p. 28.

[77] A frequent phenomenon: "the concession of Rabīʿ, client of the emir of the faithful, who, having developed his concession of the region of Karkh with markets and shops . . .", Yaʿqūbī, trans. Wiet, 1937, p. 37.

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Samarkand after Qutayba b. Muslim had treacherously seized the town in 712 and expelled the inhabitants. It is interesting that in this commercial settlement medium-sized Sogdian towns should be placed on the same level as very great towns of Khurasan, such as Merv.

When al-Khatīb al-Bagdadhī[78] composed his "topographical introduction" to a history of the town in the middle of the 11th century,[79] he said not a word about contemporary Sogdians. No other text informs us of their commercial presence at Baghdad after Yaʿqūbī.[80] On the other hand, the commercial presence of other towns of Khurasan at Baghdad is better attested. Only a Sogdian military presence is well known, particularly from the reign of al-Maʾmūn (811–833, AH 195–213). Yaʿqūbī mentions both a commercial presence from non-Sogdian towns of Khurasan and a Sogdian military presence at Baghdad and Samarra, but also emphasizes that the Sogdian military presence was not only not commercial, but was indeed incompatible with commerce.[81]

3. *A Turning Point: The 9th Century*

Social Rupture: Noble Society

The Arab conquest, very gradual as it was, did not immediately shatter Sogdian society. The traditional Sogdian elites were still largely in place at the beginning of the 9th century, and continued to rebel. The military apogee of the Sogdian noble class was without doubt under al-Maʾmūn and his successor al-Muʿtaṣim (833–842, AH 218–227). Following the former's stay at Merv and his accession to the Caliphate, the Sogdian military elites formed an important part

[78] See Lassner, 1970, and the translation of Salmon, 1904.

[79] It is in fact a collection of biographies of members of the religious elite.

[80] One could nevertheless mention a passage from Narshakhī pertaining to Paykent: "Baikand is considered a city, and the people of Baikand do not like anyone to call Baikand a village. If a citizen of Baikand goes to Baghdad, and he is asked from whence he comes, he replies that he is from Baikand and not from Bukhara." Trans. Frye, p. 18; but, although Paykent is a merchant town par excellence in the Muslim texts, nothing is said here about the goal of these journeys to Baghdad.

[81] The quarters of the soldiers from Ferghana and Ustrushana and the Türk soldiers at Samarra were carefully separated from the others, and these soldiers were explicitly prohibited from all unnecessary commerce. See Yaʿqūbī, trans. Wiet, pp. 50 and 55.

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of the military infrastructure at Baghdad, on the Sogdian model of the bodyguards of the sovereign, the *Čākar*.[82] During the great expedition against Bābak, in the years 835–837 (AH 220–223), the general-in-chief of the caliphal armies was Afshīn, the heir of the throne of Ustrushana, who included among his subordinates the Bukhar Khuda, heir of the rulers of Bukhara, who commanded the troops from Transoxiana.[83] At Samarkand a descendant of the Sogdian king Ghūrak was briefly governor at the beginning of the 9th century. At Samarra, Yaʿqūbī describes the settlement of Sogdians beside Türks and Khazars[84] and, a century later, Iṣṭakhrī and Ibn Ḥawqal emphasize that, while the soldiers were often Türk, the officers were Sogdians.[85] Islamization was still very superficial if we judge it by the case of Afshīn: after his death, idols and pagan books were found in his palace in Iraq.[86] Immediately after this glorious period, it is probable that the second half of the 9th century represented a phase of social decline for the large and small noble landowners of Central Asia, the *dihqāns*. Only a few families succeeded in preserving their power, and, in the case of the Samanids, in increasing it. These latter were moreover able to do so not so much in their capacity as Iranian nobles—they were only quite a mediocre nobility—as in their function as representatives of the Caliphate in Transoxiana. Among the old families which survived the period, it is hardly possible to mention more than the rulers of Chaghāniyān, at the border of Sogdiana and Bactriana, who remained influential up to the 13th century.[87] The other families, powerful under al-Maʾmūn, seem to have spent their vital energies with their transfer to Baghdad and Samarra. Al-Muʿtaṣim clearly preferred Türk slaves bought in Transoxiana to them, and had Afshīn executed (or rather starved).[88]

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[82] See Shaban, 1976, pp. 63–6, Sharon, 1986, pp. 139–40 and the note by Bosworth (Ṭabarī, Eng. trans. vol. XXXIII, p. 49) on the composition of the armies of the Caliphate in the 9th century. Constantin Zuckerman points out to me that the Byzantine emperor during the same period assembled a guard of soldiers from Ferghana, on the Abbasid model. On the *Čākar* see de la Vaissière, forthcoming in 2005.

[83] Balʿamī, trans. Zotenberg, p. 189 says explicitly that he was at the head of the troops from Transoxiana. See Ṭabarī, III, 1197, Eng. trans. vol. XXXIII, p. 49.

[84] Yaʿqūbī, trans. Wiet, pp. 54–5.

[85] Ibn Ḥawqal, trans. Kramers and Wiet, pp. 450–1. For the role of these nobles, see Paul, 1994.

[86] Ṭabarī, III, 1318, Eng. trans. vol. XXXIII, p. 200. It is not certain if these were Buddhas, contrary to Bosworth's commentary.

[87] See Bosworth, 1981.

[88] Ṭabarī, III, 1317, Eng. trans. vol. XXXIII, p. 199.

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The dynasty of Ustrushana ended in 893.[89] The Bukhar Khudas and the nobles of Bukhara lost their power in 874[90] and their domains several years later.[91] At the beginning of the 10th century, the old Sogdian noble society was dead or at the point of dying. *Dihqān* took on its new Persian meaning of *peasant, farmer.*

The Formation of New Religious Elites

The other social group visible in the sources is that of religious elites. From these it is at once necessary to exclude non-Muslim elites: we know almost nothing of the pre-Islamic Sogdian clergy, nor of its destiny after the conquest.[92] But the development of Muslim elites in Sogdiana is in itself an interesting event. Its tempo allows us to glimpse the evolution of society. The sources can be both local and foreign. But one distinctive feature of the geography of the Iranian East is the presence of the great desert, the Dasht-e Kavir. The fact that it reduced the number of possible routes and that the pious had to make the pilgrimage to Mecca meant that all the Muslim religious elites of Sogdiana had to pass through the town of Nishapur in order to travel to the Mesopotamian and Arab heart of the Muslim empire. For this city there are three manuscripts under various titles stemming from the great *History of Nishapur* by Muḥammad b. ʿAbdallāh al-Ḥākim al-Nīsābūrī b. al-Bayyiʿ (died in 1014).[93] These are huge lists of names of pious men who had brought fame to the town of Nishapur and who had either lived there or simply passed through. The Muslim elites of Sogdiana, if they had gone to Mecca or to Baghdad, ought to have been named there, and thus a statistical survey of these manuscripts is possible. An earlier study has moreover already been partially conducted.[94] At Nishapur, the data become

[89] Barthold, 1968, p. 211.
[90] See Narshakhī, trans. Frye, p. 82.
[91] See Narshakhī, trans. Frye, pp. 11–12.
[92] We have hardly more than a few facts about the Khorezmian clergy, or rather about its massacre by Qutayba: see Bīrūnī, *Chronology*, trans. Sachau, p. 41.
[93] See Frye, 1965, p. 10 f. for the connections which unite this text, now lost, and the three manuscripts, a summary, an add-on, and a summary of the latter.
[94] Bulliet, 1970. The study by Bulliet has provided a convenient starting point but I have reexamined the manuscripts, reading them again in search of the various *nisba* of Transoxiana, in order to clarify that which Bulliet combined under the appellation of "route from Merv and from Bukhara" and which could not be deduced from the data furnished in his article.

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quantitatively analyzable from the last third of the 8th century to the first half of the 10th century. Starting with raw data, it is necessary to find the Sogdians, using the *nisba* of Transoxiana such as al-Nasafī, al-Bukhārī, al-Samarqandī . . .

For persons who died between 815 and 883 (AH 200–270),[95] who were educated during the last third of the 8th century and the first half of the 9th, the *nisba* of Samarkand are rare (3 examples out of 109, compared to 8 Bukharans). Bukhara seems to have been better integrated into Muslim circles during these years, which is doubtlessly linked to a fruitful political collaboration since the first half of the 8th century. For the following period, which corresponds to elites educated during the second third of the 9th century, we count 4 Samarqandī (out of 95—there are in comparison 27 Marwazī, 5 Bukharans, 4 Tirmidhī, 4 Čāčī): all of the towns of Transoxiana participated in the traffic, at quite a low level in comparison with Merv. It is after this that the break occurs. The integration of Bukhara continued to grow from its initially mediocre level, which testifies to the number of elites educated there in the last third of the 9th century (a single Samarqandī among 51 long-distance travellers, against 7 Bukharans, 3 Čāčī, 1 Ustrūshanī and 1 Zammī). Bukhara then trained numerous elites in the first half of the 10th century, which included 12 Bukharans, while there was no inhabitant of Samarkand among the approximately 250 religious people whose *nisba* I have examined. After the break, Samarkand was simply unable to contribute to the new Muslim elites.[96]

These tallies thus enable us to establish a very important fact: in the 10th century Samarkand was poorly integrated into the world of

[95] The periodization, according to groups of dates of death arranged in chronological order, supposed to represent as many generations passed from the Prophet, is imposed by the nature of the sources. It is then necessary to arbitrarily fix an interval between the age of education and the age at death. I have here used 15 as the age of education and 50 as the age at death, which is certainly quite subject to criticism.

[96] It goes without saying that these statistics are only very generally true and that they in no way force us to deny that Islamization was underway—rather, they allow us to perceive the rhythm of that process. Moreover, there were brilliant exceptions to the trend, such as al-Māturīdī, d. 944, who founded a local Hanifite school in Samarkand (also exemplified by Abū l-Layth al-Samarqandī, who was born in the first half of the 10th century) which the Seljuks afterward spread throughout the Muslim world (see Mandelung, 1990). Let us simply emphasize that here, too, Bukhara developed much earlier, with al-Bukhārī (810–870), the most famous of the traditionalists. The renown of al-Māturīdī followed considerably after his death.

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the Muslim religious elites. This social backwardness must have been in the making over a rather long period, due to an incapacity to adapt to the new Islamic environment and to produce the new religious elites that were then being established in Iranian towns.[97] The sources for the history of Nishapur thus show the end of the old Sogdian society in its principal stronghold and the difficulties of conversion. In this respect, the evolution of Bukhara is much closer to that of the towns of Khurasan. We should recall here that Bukhara was a recently established town in the context of Sogdian history, its foundation going back only to the 5th century on what had long been marshy land in the lower Zarafshan valley. The disintegration of Sogdian urban society at Bukhara and its rapid replacement by a Muslim model perhaps also reflects a history in which Sogdian heritage carried less weight, which was not the case at Samarkand.

A quick survey of the biographies of known people from Samarkand, such as those preserved in the *Kitāb al-Qand fī dhikr ʿulamaʾ Samarqand*, confirms these findings. The use of this text, very late and organized quite differently, is more difficult both because of its incompleteness and because of its weakness in terms of historical content. It has few dates, and fewer still for the period which concerns us here. The text is basically composed of lineages of transmission and of words of the Prophet, *hadīth*. On the whole it appears that at an early date the people cited were in general not from Samarkand and had not been taught there, but this idea ought to be confirmed by a systematic statistical analysis, which I have not conducted. It is apparently because of local patriotism and for statistical reasons that the collection includes a certain number of people having only quite distant connections with the town. The *nisba* al-Nasafī, al-Bukhārī and al-Balkhī predominate, and these names are only changed to al-Samarqandī at a second stage. In order to invent a Muslim past for itself which it did not possess, Samarkand in the 10th century endowed itself with the legend of Qutham b. ʿAbbās, cousin of the Prophet who died at Merv.[98] His tomb, raised on the site of a pre-Islamic cult—of which the cult of Qutham maintains certain features—is still the most sacred monument of the city.

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[97] See Frye, 1975, pp. 215–8. As soon as 874, we see the principal members of the religious elite at Bukhara playing a political role in support of the Samanids (Narshakhī, trans. Frye, pp. 78–9).

[98] Narshakhī, trans. Frye, p. 40.

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Sogdian Culture

Sogdian culture entered into crisis in the 9th century. When during the 10th century the new Persian culture and language developed at the Samanid court, the Sogdian inheritance, which these circumstances could have favored, seems quite limited. It is thus hardly visible in the sphere of vocabulary: Sogdian transmitted to Persian only a reduced number of words. The borrowings seem to belong to the domain which, for the Chinese, was a specialty of the Sogdians, that of the pleasures, and particularly those of the flesh: one could cite "desire," *rēž*, the same in both Persian and Sogdian, *rabūkhe* ("pleasure," from Sogdian *arpūx*), maybe *ēfude* ("frivolous," from Sogdian *āyaβdē* "adulterous").[99] Even some of these words are quite rare in Persian.

It is possible to get an idea of the date at which Sogdian ceased to be spoken by the elites. Muqaddasī in fact gives an interesting piece of information when he examines the languages of Transoxiana:

> The language of Khwārazm is incomprehensible. There is repetition in the language of the people of Bukhārā [. . .] this is the *darriyya*, the most chaste and prestigious dialect [. . .] The derivation is from *dar* referring to the fact that it is the language that is spoken at the court [. . .] The language of al-Sughd is unique to it and is approximated by the languages of the rural districts of Bukhārā, which are quite varied, but understood among them; and I witnessed the venerable Imām, Muḥammad ibn al-Fadhl speaking in it often.[100]

In the last third of the 10th century there thus continued to be bilingual Sogdian speakers in the upper classes of society, but it seems to have been a rare phenomenon. Perhaps it is in the first third of the 10th century that we must place the birth of the last urban Sogdian-speaking generation.[101] In the rural setting, of course, Sogdian must have been preserved over the centuries, and Yaghnobi, its very close relative, is still spoken today in a valley of Tadjikistan (although

[99] The number of words borrowed from Sogdian is restricted further by the progress made in the study of Bactrian, which necessitates a broad revision of the list proposed in Henning, 1939.

[100] Muqaddasī, trans. Collins, p. 296, Arabic text BGA, III, pp. 335–6.

[101] Al-Bīrūnī, who wrote at the beginning of the 11th century, must however still have met learned people who were able to read it, unless he knew it himself, for he mentions on several occasions the books of the magi of Sogdiana in his works, and even several Sogdian words (for example in his *India*, trans. Sachau, I, pp. 260–1). Sogdian writing is again mentioned, as a matter of antiquity, at the beginning of the 13th century by Fakhru 'd-Dīn Mubarak Shāh: see Gauthiot and Ross, 1913.

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it is in sharp decline, and without monolingual speakers). There are also very close connections between a painting at Panjikent and the agrarian rituals of the Tadjiks.[102] Sogdian culture continued in the rural areas. But the culture of the elites seems to have turned to shared East Iranian subjects (Rostam, Alexander . . .) rather than to those that are specifically Sogdian. Perhaps it was not a matter of chance that Narshakhī wrote his *History of Bukhara*, so little Muslim in spirit, in 943: it is possible that the knowledge of the properly Sogdian past of the town was in the process of being lost, and that he wrote it to preserve the memories before the last witnesses disappeared.

When all is said and done, the Muslim conquest, which could have made possible the enrichment and development of Sogdian commerce, was not the opportunity that it could have been for Sogdiana. Sogdians settled at Baghdad in the 760s, but this settlement does not allow us to conclude the existence of any subsequent preeminence for Sogdian merchants in the capital. Quite the contrary, they seem to have played a secondary role in comparison with their Iranian fellows on the route which led to Baghdad, and it seems to have been only for military purposes, following the adventures of al-Ma'mūn, that the Sogdians were present there in the 9th century. While Bukhara succeeded in brilliantly integrating itself into the world of the Muslim elites, Samarkand in the second half of the 9th century saw its own elites decline and struggled to form new ones. The geographical and social equilibria of Sogdian urban society underwent a radical transformation. That society became aligned with the East Iranian model of Merv or Nishapur and abandoned its specifically Sogdian features. If the absence of sources does not allow us to directly examine the health of the merchant class, we may suppose that the general development had not left it unscathed and must have affected its markets—given the depletion of the nobility—as well as its commercial routes and the balance of trade. The numerous sources of the 10th century can enable us to verify these hypotheses.

[102] See Maršak and Raspopova, 1987 and 1990b.

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CHAPTER TEN

RUPTURES AND ASSIMILATIONS

Faced with these social upheavals, what became of great Sogdian commerce? After the documentary hiatus of the 9th century, the sources are once again plentiful. While the Muslim Arabic texts relating to the 8th century speak only rarely of commerce itself, the Arab and Persian geographers,[1] from the end of the 9th to the beginning of the 11th century, give a complete overview of the routes and commercial products of Transoxiana, even if it is only rarely, alas, that they specify the exact identity of the merchants. Read in conjunction with each other, these texts enable us to draw a substantial, although not quantitative, picture of large-scale trade at the end of the period here under consideration. Although they have been much studied, they still have not been used to write the history of the commerce of a particular people, and I have returned to them once again.[2] Also quite important are the combined results of archaeology and numismatics, which furnish extremely valuable information about the commercial routes and balance of trade, owing to the role played by Samanid silver coins in the East during the 10th century.

These texts and the archaeological discoveries incontestably demonstrate the existence of a very great commerce in Transoxiana, one

[1] See Miquel, 1967–1988, and the review by Lewicki, 1979.

[2] They are translated in: Ibn Khurdādhbih (*Kitāb al-Masālik wa'l-Mamālik*, ed. and trans. De Goege, 1889), Yaʿqūbī (*Kitāb al-Buldān*, trans. G. Wiet), Ibn Ḥawqal (*Kitāb Ṣūrat al-Arḍ*, trans. J. H. Kramers and G. Wiet), Muqadassī, (*Kitāb Ahsan al-Taqāsīm fi maʿrifāt al-Aqālīm*, trans. Collins), the anonymous *Ḥudūd al-ʿĀlam* (trans. Minorsky), ibn al-Faqīh al-Hamadhānī (*Kitāb al-Buldān*, trans. H. Massé, ed. al-Hādī from a more complete manuscript), ibn Rusta (*Kitāb al-ʿAlāq al-Nāfisa*, trans. Wiet), Idrīsī (*Kitāb Nuzhat al-muštāq fi-khtirāq al-āfāq*, trans. de la Vaissière, after the Naples edition). Iṣṭakhrī's *Kitāb al-Masālik wa'l-Mamālik* has not been translated, but ibn Ḥawqal, who has, generally follows him word for word when dealing with these regions, although the small distortions between his text and Iṣṭakhrī's may be quite significant. All of the geographical texts, unless otherwise noted, have been consulted in the *Bibliotheca Geographorum Arabicorum* of De Goege (cited as BGA, followed by volume number and page). For Ibn Ḥawqal, reference is to the second edition. To the works of the geographers it is necessary to add a heterogeneous collection of works consulted for their pertinence, which I will present as reference is made to them.

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of the best known for the Muslim world. The Samanid merchants exported hundreds of thousands of silver coins to the northwest in the course of the 10th century. Were these Samanid merchants simply Islamized Sogdian merchants? Do the characteristics of this great commerce preclude us from seeing in it a direct inheritance from the pre-Islamic Sogdian period?

The texts also give a survey of connections with the East and the Tarim basin, and the Sogdian settlements in particular. But the information which they provide should be combined with data from Eastern Turkestan if we wish to establish the importance of east-west connections. These data are economic, in the business documents preserved at Dunhuang;[3] political, relating to the extension of the Uighur[4] and Tibetan[5] Empires; and also religious, as several communities originating in the West had long lived in Eastern Turkestan, and their texts, discovered during scientific expeditions at the beginning of the 20th century, attest to contacts which must be interpreted.

1. *The End of Sogdian Trade in the West*

Western Commerce in the 10th Century

After an 8th century dominated by Khorezmian and Sogdian merchants, the 9th century is certainly the period during which links between the Volga basin and Central Asia are archaeologically the least attested. From the end of the wars between the Khazars and Arabs, progressively from the year 770 and in the 9th century above all, the Caucasus was the great route which united the steppe with the Muslim world. All of the hoards of coins from the Muslim world which have been found in the fur-producing regions reflect Near Eastern rather than Central Asian monetary circulation, as is attested by the very large proportion of coins from Iraq, northern Africa and Jibal.[6] While it is possible that new publications of hoards could

[3] See Hamilton, 1986, for the Uighur documents from Dunhuang, and Sims-Williams and Hamilton, 1990, for the Turco-Sogdian documents. See Trombert, 1995, for the Chinese contracts, and Yamamoto and Ikeda, 1987, for the publication of all the economic and social texts.

[4] Mackerras, 1972, has assembled the Chinese texts. See also Moriatsu, 1981.

[5] See Beckwith, 1987, for a recent history of this empire, treated from a political point of view and in its relations with western countries.

[6] Noonan, 1980 and 1984.

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modify the picture in the future, the data available at present allow us to conclude that the Caucasian route extensively predominated[7] from the year 800 to the 870s.[8]

We have some indications of the volume of trade. The commerce started at a weak level via the Caucasus at the end of the 8th century, then increased until the 860s before declining.[9] The dirhams from this period are of Near Eastern origin. Trade resumed, but from Central Asia, at the end of the 9th century,[10] and reached its greatest height in the years 940–950, then fell and ceased around 1015.[11] The volume of commerce in the 10th century was two or three times as great as that of the Near Eastern phase of the 9th century. In all, more than a million silver coins have been found in the various hoards of Russia and northern Europe, and they represent only a part of the very considerable sums brought into circulation by these exchanges.

One of the first signs of the resumption of relations between the Volga basin and Central Asia is the conversion of the Volga Bulgars to Islam, which was established among them at the end of the 9th century. Ibn Rusta is the first to speak of their Islamization, in 912, following a slightly older source.[12] This Islam was of Central Asian origin. The testimony of Ibn Faḍlān, who accompanied an embassy among them in 921, and who gave a precise description of his travels between Bukhara and the Volga, shows that the call to prayer was the Hanafite version, widespread in Central Asia, and not the Shafiʿite, which predominated in Iraq and which Ibn Faḍlān tried to establish without success.[13] It was thus not via the Caucasus, but

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[7] Nevertheless, during at least the first half of this period, the Central Asian merchants were still active, as I have indicated in Chapter VIII. But beginning in the 840s (if one takes account of the treasure of Devitsa, buried shortly after 838, and the silk of Sens, enshrined in 853) and for a third of a century thereafter, the Caucasian route predominated almost alone.

[8] See Noonan, 1985a, p. 182 f. for an analysis of the end of trans-Caucasian commerce drawn from numismatic data: while the monetary workshops of the Near East continued to strike numerous coins in the 10th century, these no longer reached Russia.

[9] Noonan, 1992, who takes into account the collection of the hoards of dirhams found in eastern Europe and Sweden, or more than 150,000 coins. Lewicki, 1974, gives a synthesis of the data and a bibliography for Poland, which may be completed by the data from the most recent articles by Noonan.

[10] From the beginning of the century, the Polish hoard of Klukowicz is almost entirely composed of Samanid coins (890s and 900s): Noonan, 1985a, p. 185 and 198.

[11] Noonan, 1992, p. 249.

[12] Ibn Rusta, trans. Wiet, p. 159, see also Hrbek, 1975, p. 1347.

[13] See Hrbek, 1975, p. 1347. Trans. Charles-Dominique, p. 47.

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indeed through Central Asia that Islam was transmitted to them.

From the year 910, the Samanids were capable of offering a significant quantity of furs to the caliph at Baghdad.[14] Ibn Faḍlān travelled with a very large caravan which left Khorezm at the end of winter and headed for the land of the Bulgars. The other Arab travellers or geographers give us lists of products of the forest zone which were exported across Khorezm to the rest of the Muslim world.

Al-Muqaddasī, in 985–986, gives the following list:

> From Khwārazm: sable, squirrel, white weasel, fennec and its fur, fox, beaver, hare pelts variously coloured, goatskin, wax, arrows, cork; cowls [headgear], fish glue, fishbones, castoreum oil [of beavers], amber, [a skin called] al-kaymakht, honey, hazelnuts, falcons, swords, armour, khalanj wood, slaves from among the Slavs, sheep and cattle—all of this from the territory of the Bulghār.[15]

And Ibn Ḥawqal, with regard to the Khorezmians, points out that:

> The fortune of the inhabitants comes from their commerce with the Türks and the raising of livestock. To them come slaves from the lands of the Slavs, Khazars and neighboring regions, as well as of the Türks, furs, like fennec, sable, fox, hare, and other skins; these are stored among them and the slaves are housed. Their merchants enter into the lands of Gog and Magog to there obtain beaver pelts and furs.[16]

From the Sogdians to the Khorezmians

While commerce in the 10th century resumed to the northwest, and with a scope never before attained, the only merchants who are ever mentioned on these routes are the Khorezmians. Between the first third of the 9th century, the time of the last period of Sogdian commerce in the northwest, and the end of the 9th century, the Khorezmians had substituted themselves for the Sogdians and had taken control of this commercial route, doubtlessly owing to its decline in the middle of the 9th century, which left a clear space for the people in the most advantageous geographical position.

A passage from al-Iṣṭakhrī provides an important piece of information. From data gathered between 910 and 930, this author pre-

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[14] See Shaban, 1976, p. 148, citing Ibn al-Athīr, VIII, p. 67.
[15] Trans. Collins, p. 264. Text BGA, III, pp. 324–5.
[16] Trans. Kramers and Wiet, p. 463.

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sents the most complete of the geographical works about the Muslim East, composed at the latest in 933. Ibn Ḥawqal, who visited Transoxiana in 969, had the ambition of adding information about the West to that work, while repeating it in most of his eastern chapters.[17] Thus, Iṣṭakhrī and Ibn Ḥawqal, who copies him, state:

> Within the population of Khurasan, it is they [the inhabitants of Khorezm] who emigrate most often to just about everywhere and travel much; there is hardly a town in Khurasan in which a large proportion of people originating from Khorezm are not settled. Their language is a speech apart and none of the tongues of Khurasan resemble it. The inhabitants dress in short tunics and they wear hats whose rolls are made after traditional models. Their character is eccentric according to the Khurasanians.[18]

The characteristics—even to the hat—which had over the centuries belonged to the Sogdians are henceforth attributed to the Khorezmians by the Arab geographers. While I have been at pains to find Arabic Muslim texts since the time of the conquest specifically devoted to the Sogdian merchants in a context other than that of their connections to China, here these characteristics are applied to those who had doubtlessly long been their auxiliaries on the western route. The implications of this passage seem to widely exceed the trade in furs alone.

The text from al-Iṣṭakhrī is the only one in Muslim geographical literature to give any specifics about the identity of the merchants. For all that, must we deduce from it a Khorezmian control over the whole of the commerce of Khurasan and Transoxiana? The Khorezmians certainly dominated the most spectacular of the trading activities of the Samanid Empire, which are also the best known thanks to the mutual confirmation of numismatics and textual evidence. This control enabled them to secure a part of the distribution of these products to Khurasan, and al-Iṣṭakhrī has noted the presence of these strangers, so bizarrely dressed, speaking an incomprehensible language, yet Muslims all the same. This should not make us forget the multiple references to merchants contained in the works of the geographers, particularly in Transoxiana. That these merchants are not ethnically identified while the Khorezmians are does not permit the

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[17] See Miquel, 1967, pp. 292–309.

[18] Ibn Ḥawqal, trans. Kramers and Wiet, p. 463. Arabic text of Iṣṭakhrī: BGA, I, p. 304.

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conclusion that the former did not exist. The Khorezmians were only the most mobile and exotic,[19] while the ethnic identity of the others goes without saying.

Western Commerce and Economic Balances

The blossoming of the Khorezmian route and the social upheaval which took place in Sogdiana at the end of the 9th century had immediate consequences in terms of the geography of power and wealth. I have attempted to show that the developments both of noble and religious elites and of culture allow us to place the turning point of socio-cultural evolution in Transoxiana in the second half of the 9th century. Sogdiana then became only *Mā warāʿa al-Nahr*, the Muslim "land beyond the river," more rapidly and easily at Bukhara, while with greater difficulty at Samarkand. This social and cultural development was quickly translated into the political sphere with the transfer of the Samanid capital, made official in 892, to Bukhara at the expense of Samarkand. Behind the emblematic figure of the Samanid Ismaʿīl, who is often regarded by historians as the founder of the dynasty (although it had been established in Transoxiana since the beginning of the century), a profound change in the equilibrium of the country is concealed.

The 8th century had already seen the decline of a certain number of middle-sized towns, which were the basis of the Sogdian urban network. Maymurgh, Kabūdan, Kharghankath, spoken of in the Chinese sources as small kingdoms among many, are no more than rural districts in the Arab descriptions of the 10th century. But the 9th century saw a dramatic change of even greater breadth, which affected the whole of the Zarafshan valley. The urban growth of Bukhara was extremely rapid at that time.[20] Samarkand did not decline in absolute size, and its surface area grew on the whole, but it also knew periods of shrinkage.[21] After the erection of several palaces in the upper town

[19] On the merchant colonies in the Iranian towns from the 9th to the 12th century, see Beradze, 1980.

[20] See Belenickij, Bentovič and Bolšakov, 1973, p. 232 f., who estimate that the surface area of the town was increased by a factor of 5 between the beginning of the 8th century and the middle of the 9th century (p. 239), and this growth would intensify again at the end of the 9th century (p. 240 f.). See the maps of the oasis of Bukhara in Šiškin, 1963.

[21] Belenickij, Bentovič and Bolšakov, 1973, p. 219 f. See also Grenet and Rapin,

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as a result of the Arab conquest, the end of the 8th century was a difficult time for the town, which is attested by the mediocre quality of the buildings that replaced the rich Sogdian houses. In the course of the 9th century, urban growth densified on the southern part of the plateau of Afrasiab, which was more sparsely populated before Islam and at the end of the 9th century. The convalescence was over, and the potters' districts were all located in the southern part, beyond the third wall. While it was still in the 10th century the most highly populated of the towns in Transoxiana,[22] it was not the most dynamic.

The Samanids, governors of Samarkand, took their first opportunity to establish themselves further to the west. The caliph gave them control of Bukhara only in 875, and the capital was transferred in a few years. From Bukhara they dominated the whole of eastern Khurasan, and Merv was drained of its substance and its elites.[23] But above all the transfer of the capital corresponds to a repositioning of the Samanid dynasty at the heart of the most promising area: there was a very illuminating rivalry, with Bukhara as its object, between Ismaʿīl and Ḥusayn b. Ṭāhir, the last representative of the Tahirid dynasty, who attempted several times to sieze Bukhara, operating from Merv and Khorezm.[24] The Samanids established their capital at the crossroads of the old Merv-Samarkand route and the new dominant commercial highway, Khorezm-Bukhara-Nishapur.

The realm of numismatics also illustrates this very conscious intention to enact a large-scale commercial policy. Having hardly arrived at Bukhara, Ismaʿīl decided to organize an abundant minting of silver dirhams of good quality. But we know from Narshakhī and Muqaddasī that in Central Asia such coins were intended for export: the Bukharans demanded, at the beginning of the 9th century, a

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1998; Shishkina and Pavchinskaja, 1992a and b; Šiškina, 1973, pp. 117–120. See equally Tskitishvili, 1971, for a translation of the Mashhad manuscript of Ibn al-Faqīh al-Hamadanī on the structure and the area of Samarkand.

[22] See the analysis by Muqaddasī on the notion of metropolis, trans. Collins, p. 242, BGA, III, p. 270. See also the remark by Ibn Ḥawqal on the fact that Bukhara was the most densely populated of the towns of Transoxiana, which he glosses: "more populated, taking into account its area" (trans. Kramers and Wiet, p. 464, BGA, I, p. 483), which leaves the primacy to Samarkand.

[23] On the other hand, eastern Khurasan escaped them economically and socially, although not politically, and structured itself around Nishapur. The ancient domain of Merv was divided between two poles.

[24] Narshakhī, trans. Frye, pp. 78–82.

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coinage without intrinsic value, on the model of Sogdian coins.[25] Ismaʿīl adopted the Sassanid use of a coinage of prestige in silver, aided in this purpose by operation of the mine of Čāč at full capacity.[26] The immediate consequence was a drain of silver to the northwest. There again it was a new economic practice, not Sogdian, that the dynasty organized.[27]

Even so, this same practice reveals that Samarkand, in spite of the flowering of the Khorezmian route and the transfer of the capital, remained the most important town in the economy of Transoxiana. Indeed, these silver coins were at the beginning struck only at Samarkand and at the silver mine, in Čāč. It was only later that the mint at Bukhara was added, and a comparison of the texts of Iṣṭakhrī, dating before 933, and of Ibn Ḥawqal (who generally copied him for the East and wrote in 969) is interesting: Ibn Ḥawqal adds Bukhara where Iṣṭakhrī says there are only two mints in Transoxiana.[28] In the hoards discovered in Russia, the coins from Bukhara appear only from the 940s, and in quantity remain in third position after those of Čāč and Samarkand.[29]

The economic domination of Samarkand, still appreciable at the beginning of the 10th century, diminished after that time. The emergence of the mint at Bukhara is an early indication of this, while the text of Ibn Ḥawqal furnishes other such indications. While Iṣṭakhrī writes regarding Samarkand:

> It is the warehouse of Transoxiana and the gathering place of the merchants. The majority of the goods of Transoxiana are sent to Samarkand and are then disseminated among all the districts.[30]

Ibn Ḥawqal copies him without including the second sentence. Both of them emphasize that a part of the wealth of the town belonged to the past:

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[25] See above, chapter V, p. 169 the passage from Narshakhī. We find the same idea expressed for Khorezm by Muqaddasī, BGA, III, p. 286.

[26] See Burjakov and Dudakov, 1994, and Burjakov, 1974, notably pp. 102–111.

[27] Davidovič, 1996 analyzes in detail the characteristics of monetary circulation within the Samanid empire.

[28] Compare al-Iṣṭakhrī, BGA, I, p. 333 and Ibn Ḥawqal, trans. Kramers and Wiet, p. 487, BGA, II, p. 510.

[29] My sincere thanks to professors Noonan, Kočnev and Ataxoždajev for their kindness in clarifying these matters for me. See also Davidovič, 1966, p. 112.

[30] Iṣṭakhrī, BGA, I, p. 318.

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> The inhabitants are endowed with fine qualities: formerly they prided themselves on their display of knightly courage, did not shrink from any expense and engaged in business ventures more than most other inhabitants of Khurasan, so that their fortunes have decreased in volume.[31]

Even faced with the growth of Bukhara, the old metropolis without doubt remained dominant. But the relative decline of eastern Sogdiana in the economic equilibrium of the country is undeniable. It is in this overall framework that we must understand the geographers' descriptions of commerce in Transoxiana. A shift in the economic and geographic balance toward the west had taken place. Samanid commerce had Bukhara as its principal center. It was based on silver coins of good worth, and its primary direction was to the northwest. All of these are features which clearly differentiate it from the commerce of the Sogdian merchants of the 8th century.

2. *The Commercial Economy in Transoxiana*

Geographical Descriptions

Several texts enable us to obtain a rather precise idea of the commercial geography of Transoxiana and of its exports.

Comparison of the data provided by the geographers concerning the commerce of Transoxiana is a complicated matter because of their mutual borrowings. It is difficult to know who saw what, for the founding works of the discipline either have not been preserved (al-Balkhī, Jayhānī), or are extant only in an abridged form (Ibn Khurdādhbih, Iṣṭakhrī). In other words, an original description in the anonymous *Ḥudūd al-ʿĀlam* could in fact belong to a lost passage of Iṣṭakhrī, who could himself have borrowed it from al-Balkhī or Jayhānī, who for their part possibly depended on the complete text of Ibn Khurdādhbih. At one end of the chain, the information could date from 982, at the other from 846.

The example of the description of Samarkand in the *Ḥudūd* shows the difficulty:

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[31] Ibn Ḥawqal, trans. Kramers and Wiet, p. 474, text BGA, II, p. 494. The correction of present to past, attested in certain manuscripts, is made necessary in the context of a vanished past. The text of Iṣṭakhrī (BGA, I, p. 318) is nearly identical.

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> Samarqand, a large, prosperous, and very pleasant town. It is the resort of merchants from all over the world [. . .] In Samarqand stands the monastery of the Manicheans who are called nighūshāk. Samarqand produces paper which is exported all over the world, and hemp cords.[32]

Certain information is taken from Iṣṭakhrī, such as merchants from all over the world resorting there,[33] while other information is from the second half of the 10th century, such as the reference to a Manichaean monastery.

Overall, there are two distinct geographic traditions. Cross-checking them allows us to draw a rough picture of the commercial economy of Transoxiana. The first is represented by the line Balkhī (lost)—Iṣṭakhrī (incomplete)—Ibn Ḥawqal—*Ḥudūd al-ʿĀlam*. The second consists of Muqaddasī, who also depends on Balkhī, but who has widely supplemented the text of the latter with his personal observations and gives a rather detailed list of the products of Transoxiana and Khurasan.

In the Balkhī—Iṣṭakhrī—Ibn Ḥawqal—*Ḥudūd al-ʿĀlam* tradition, the principal export products of the region of Bukhara seem to have been cotton fabric and woolen carpets.[34] Ibn Ḥawqal provides a more detailed list of them than Iṣṭakhrī. The *Ḥudūd* mentions woolen goods and saltpeter.[35] Ibn Ḥawqal indicates the presence of a slave market among the numerous markets of Bukhara:

> Beyond the wall, markets extend continuously, with fairs that are held at a specific time each month, where the crowds of customers are considerable; there they sell livestock, fabrics, slaves, all sorts of brass and copper objects, vases and various utensils which the population habitually buys. Bukhara and its environs manufacture various products which are exported to Iraq and other countries, the so-called Bukharan fabrics, heavy cotton materials with thick threads solidly woven, highly prized by the Arabs, or again carpets, woolen hangings of genuine beauty for furnishing, cushions, prayer rugs with patterns of mihrabs.[36]

He also mentions the fair of Ṭawāwīs. For Kesh, salt and mules are named, exported throughout Khurasan. Near Samarkand, Widhār was a great center for the production of light cotton fabrics of very

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[32] *Ḥudūd*, trans. Minorsky, p. 113, and commentary p. 352.
[33] Iṣṭakhrī, BGA, I, pp. 317–8.
[34] Ibn Ḥawqal, trans. Kramers and Wiet, p. 470, BGA, II, p. 490.
[35] *Ḥudūd*, trans. Minorsky, p. 112.
[36] Ibn Ḥawqal, trans. Kramers and Wiet, p. 470, BGA, II, p. 490.

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good quality with which all the great people of Khurasan clothed themselves. With regard to Samarkand, Ibn Ḥawqal mentions trade in slaves, but he says nothing about paper (which, on the other hand, he cites in his praise of Transoxiana),[37] which the *Ḥudūd* expressly attributes to Samarkand along with hemp cords.[38] For Ustrushana he gives ammonia from the mountains of Buttam, exported throughout the world, and the iron implements of Marsmanda, which were found as far as Iraq and were the object of an important fair.[39] Ferghana produced various minerals (gold, silver, mercury . . .), as well as vitriol, ammonia and tarragon, of which the seeds were exported. Regarding Čāč, the *Ḥudūd* and Ibn Ḥawqal agree in according it the status of a great place of commerce where numerous merchants gathered, but neither the one nor the other are very specific about the products exchanged.[40] We may suppose that at least a part of the musk, cited at the beginning of the passages about Transoxiana, entered the country through that region, because among the commodities supplied by Transoxiana we find Kirghiz musk. Furs also passed in transit there: they are frequently mentioned among the products of the Türk peoples to the north and east of Čāč.[41]

Al-Muqaddasī very methodically gives a long list of merchandise and products:

> From Bukhārā: fine clothing; dried dates; rugs; carpeting for inns; copper-coloured candelabra; hangings; horse girths woven in prisons; cloth of [the type made in] Al-Ashmūnayn; the tallow and hides of sheep; ointment. From Karmīniya, kerchiefs. From Dabūsiya and Widhār, *Widhāriyya* cloth, which is a cloth of plain colour, and I heard a ruler in Baghdād call it "the silk brocade of Khurāsān." From Rabinjan: shawls for the winter, of red felt; dried dates; round drinking cups of an alloy of silver and lead; hides; hempen ropes; sulphur. [. . .] From Samarqand are exported: silver-coloured cloths, and cloths called Samarqandī; large copper pans; excellent long-necked bottles; casks;

[37] Ibn Ḥawqal, trans. Kramers and Wiet, Ṭawāwīs: p. 469, BGA, II, p. 489; Kesh: pp. 480–1, BGA, II, p. 502; Widhār: p. 497, BGA, II, p. 520; Samarkand: p. 474, BGA, II, p. 494; praise p. 447, BGA, II, p. 464.

[38] *Ḥudūd*, trans. Minorsky, p. 113.

[39] Ibn Ḥawqal, trans. Kramers and Wiet, pp. 483–5, BGA, II, pp. 505–7. The *Ḥudūd* (p. 115) gives the figure of 100,000 dinars in transactions, and equally mentions ammonia. Ferghana: Ibn Ḥawqal, trans. Kramers and Wiet, pp. 492–3, BGA, II, p. 515.

[40] Apart from the mention of bows in the *Ḥudūd*, trans. Minorsky, p. 118.

[41] *Ḥudūd*, trans. Minorsky, pp. 94–100.

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> stirrups; bits; girths. From Dīzak: felts the finest, and aqbiya [sing: qabāʿ—outer long-sleeved garment] of felt. From Binākath: Turkistān garments. From al-Shāsh: saddles made of [a skin called] *al-kaymakht*, of excellent quality; quivers; casks; pelts purchased from the Turks, and dyed; shawls; dried dates; leather cloaks; cottonseed [oil]; very fine arrows; needles of inferior quality; and cotton and scissors are sold to the Turks. From Samarqand, also, silk brocade is sold to the Turks, and red cloths called *mumarjal; sīnīz* [cloth made in Sīnīz or Shīnīz]; silk aplenty, and garments made of it; hazelnuts; walnuts [. . .] From Farghānā and Isbījāb: slaves from among the Turks; white cloths; engines of war; swords; copper; iron. From Tarāz: goatskins. From Shiljī: silver. From Turkistān to these places are exported horses and mules.[42]

A little further on he mentions the mines of Ferghana and Ilaq. These long lists are interesting inasmuch as a cross-check of them enables us to get a rather precise idea of the different levels of local, regional and long-distance commerce. Archaeology confirms some of the information given: for instance, glass floods the Islamic layers at Samarkand in the 10th century. Others are still currently found in modern Uzbekistan (melons from Bukhara . . .). The majority of the products cited above belong to regional trade, which is to say within Transoxiana, Čāč and Khurasan. This is particularly the case with the majority of fabrics and handicraft objects, as well as the minerals, with the exception it seems of ammonia. The silk of Samarkand, mentioned by Muqaddasī, obviously served to balance certain exchanges with the Türks of the north. It is not even certain that it was of local origin. The cotton fabrics are much more representative of the products of Transoxiana, and there is no equivalent to the silk fabrics of Merv and Nishapur beyond the Oxus. I have already dealt with the problem of the *Zandanījī* and the reference to it in the *History of Bukhara*: these fabrics fit into that context.[43] Some regional products could have been sent as far as Iraq, whose markets it was necessary to supply, but the texts do not speak of this probable situation. The products belonging properly to the sphere of long-distance trade are fewer in number, apart from the fabrics and the slaves. For those, it is enough to compare these texts with those which the writers of Iraq have left to us.

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[42] Al-Muqaddasī, trans. Collins, pp. 264–5, BGA, III, p. 325.
[43] See above, pp. 239–40.

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The Diffusion of Sogdian Products

Certain products were always considered specifically Sogdian in the Arabic and Persian sources composed far from Central Asia.

The first, and the most obvious, is paper: Chinese taken prisoner at the battle of Talas (751) might have taught the secrets of its production at Samarkand. In fact, paper was known in Sasanid Iran, although it remained exceptional there.[44] The Arabic and Persian sources indeed consider it the product par excellence of Samarkand. Thus pseudo-Jāḥiz[45] makes a detailed list of the deluxe products which he was able to find at Baghdad in the 9th century, and mentions among their number the paper of Samarkand.[46] In the 10th century, paper replaced papyrus throughout the Muslim world.[47] But while it is credited to the artisans of Samarkand, there is nevertheless no assurance that the merchants themselves were Sogdians. It is plausible, but in the absence of any texts it cannot be confirmed.

Another product allows for more convincing conclusions. Musk was a commodity much used at the court of the caliphs. Yaʿqūbī, a particularly interesting author inasmuch as his information dates from the 9th century, furnishes several recipes for perfume based on musk, and devotes a whole exposition to the origins of this product and the comparative qualities of its different varieties:

> The best type of musk is the musk of Tibet; then comes the musk of Sughd, then that of China [he then describes the maritime routes of the latter]. The musk of Sughd is bought in Tibet by the merchants of Khurasan: it is carried on the backs of men to Khurasan, from whence it is exported to various points of the globe.[48]

Since the time of the *Ancient Letters*, musk was a commodity traded by the Sogdians. They maintained a sufficiently important place in this type of trade for a variety of musk to carry their name, although there were no musk-bearing deer in Sogdiana: this fact probably

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[44] See Laufer, 1919, pp. 557–9.

[45] Attributed to Jāḥiz (d. 869), this text, the *Kītāb at-tabaṣṣur bi-t-tijāra*, has been edited and translated by Ch. Pellat (Pellat, 1954), who strongly doubts this attribution. One should nevertheless note that Thaʿālibī at the beginning of the 11th century mentions it in the *Laṭā'if* as a text of Jāḥiz (trans. Bosworth, 1968, p. 142). Various elements of the text allow it to be dated to the 9th century.

[46] Pellat, 1954, p. 159.

[47] Thaʿālibī, trans. Bosworth, p. 140.

[48] Yaʿqūbī, trans. Wiet, 1937, p. 235.

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indicates that the Sogdians had secured the marketing of musk. Ibn Ḥawqal shows that this commerce was pursued in the 10th century, still by Sogdiana, and a passage from Abū Zayd recalls a Sogdian merchant and his bag of musk, although on the Chinese routes.[49] The control of Samarkand over musk persisted longer still: Benjamin de Tudela, in the 12th century, still mentions the route leading from Sogdiana to the land of musk, Tibet.[50] Musk lent itself perfectly to long-distance transport, on account of its excellent weight-to-price ratio. At Turfan, near the zones of production, 1 g of musk was worth 1.7 g of gold. The price at Baghdad must have been still higher.

A third article of trade could reveal the presence of Sogdian merchants. Yaʿqūbī again writes:

> Here is the account which Dja'far Khushshakī gave to me: "Muʿtaṣim sent me, during the reign of Ma'mūn, to Samarkand, to Nūḥ ibn Asad, to buy Turks: I brought him a certain number of them every year, and during the reign of Ma'mūn already some 3,000 page boys had been gathered. When the Caliphate fell to him, he pursued this recruitment with persistence."[51]

Of great importance for later Muslim history, this recruitment was thus at first regularly made among the slave merchants of Samarkand.[52] The *Pand-name*—supposedly composed by Sebüktegin himself, the founder of the Ghaznavid dynasty, which in the 11th century dominated eastern Iran and conquered northern India—gives several pieces of information about its origins. Born at Barskhān, near the lake Issyk Kul, Sebüktegin was abducted by the Tukhsī Türks and sold as a child to a slave merchant of Čāč. He then received his education as a page (*ghulām*) at Nasaf, the large town of southern Sogdiana,[53] before passing into the service of Alptegin and succeeding to power at Ghazna. For want of more abundant sources on the traffic in slaves, the case of Sebüktegin at least supplies an example of what must have been the fate of numerous Türk warriors in the service of the Abbasid, Samanid or Ghaznavid sovereigns, being

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[49] Abū Zayd, trans. Ferrand, p. 109, text cited below, pp. 316–317.
[50] Tardieu, 1996, and the translation of Signer-Asher, 1987.
[51] Yaʿqūbī, trans. Wiet, 1937, p. 45.
[52] The problem of Türk soldiers in the Muslim area has stirred up numerous debates. See Beckwith, 1984a, for a point of view acquainted with the Central Asian origin of the institution. The earlier bibliography may also be found there. See also de la Vaissière, 2005, forthcoming.
[53] See Bosworth, 1963, pp. 39–41, and 1998, pp. 125–6.

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abducted as children and sold to merchants settled in the Sogdo-Türk villages and towns of Semireč'e and Čāč. In consequence, this example allows us to point out that the trade in slaves was probably one of the last activities of the Sogdians.

It is certain that this commerce played a large role in the economic activity of Transoxiana. It continued throughout the 10th century. Ibn Ḥawqal notably indicates that:

> The slaves are recruited among the Turks who surround the province [Transoxiana]; the inhabitants have more of them than they wish and re-export them to other countries; these are the best slaves, the most agile, the most beautiful of those found in the Orient, and also the most expensive.[54]

But Muqaddasī, who gives information about the taxes in Samanid territory, specifies on his part that:

> The imposts are light; but they are heavy on the slaves at the bank of the Jayhūn River. One may not send a male slave (ghulām) across without a permit from the ruler; and with a permit one may take from seventy to a hundred. Similarly, in the case of women slaves without a permit, if they are Turks, an impost is levied from twenty to thirty dirhams on each woman. On a camel it is two dirhams.[55]

One sees from this that not only did the Samanids strictly control the trade in slaves, they also drew significant revenues from it. But Samarkand continued to dominate this market:

> Samarkand is the concentration point of the slaves of Transoxiana, and the best slaves are those who have received their education at Samarkand.[56]

Paradoxically, it seems that the stronger support given at Samarkand to the old Sogdian culture, which caused the town to lose its cultural and political primacy as well as the favor of the new elites, was in this sphere able to be beneficial for the town. The education given to the young slaves, whether they were warriors or destined to amuse or charm the courts, was doubtlessly quite close to the old aristocratic culture, warlike and refined, of Sogdiana. To put it another way, it was not expected for a Türk slave to be a good specialist in *fiqh*, but

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[54] Ibn Ḥawqal, trans. Kramers and Wiet, p. 447.
[55] Muqaddasī, trans. Colins, p. 300, BGA, III, p. 340.
[56] Ibn Ḥawqal, trans. Kramers and Wiet, p. 474.

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rather that he should inherit the qualities of Afshīn, or those slightly murky qualities described by the rare Persian borrowings from Sogdian.

On the whole, behind the abundant descriptions of the geographers, and once the products of Khorezmian commerce have been set aside, Sogdian commerce of a wide radius was limited to a reduced number of commodities. The long list of Muqaddasī, seen from Baghdad, has shrunk. For the several remaining products, one can indeed imagine that the Sogdians themselves sold them at Baghdad and in the other towns of the empire. The Sogdians were able to preserve some niche markets for themselves. But the textual proof of this is lacking.

In the single instance which mentions it, silk served to balance exchanges with the Türks. Silk no longer came from China but, to the contrary, from the west. The products traded from that time on came from a reduced area in comparison with that of the Sogdian period: the Türk hinterland for slaves and Khotan for musk sufficed to supply them with everything. What then remained of the connections with the eastern Sogdian communities?

3. *The Hinterland of Turkestan*

The repeated reference to these products, and particularly to musk and slaves, proves that a part of the old Sogdian hinterland still existed in the 10th century. After the catastrophes of the 8th century, certain connections had therefore been renewed.

Sogdian Commerce, Uighur Commerce

Beginning with the 760s, a large part of the central portion of the Sogdian commercial highway, as I have described it in Chapter IV, was directly or indirectly both under Tibetan control—between Chang'an and the Tarim basin—and under more fluctuating Uighur control—in the Tarim basin and at times in Semireč'e. This abrupt political fragmentation, at the same time that the Sogdian milieux in northern China sought the protection of the Uighur Empire after 763, must be considered as one of the major events in the history of Sogdian commerce. Several facts indeed converge upon the idea that the traditional and well-defined Gansu route had been abandoned in favor of a much longer Uighur route, due to Tibetan depredations.

We were able to outline the Tang economy of the preceding

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period as an economy centered on redistribution of the grain and silk surpluses of North China to the profit of a very centralized state, a major participant in economic life—an economy which was oriented toward military expansion to the Northwest and which allowed the foreign merchants to play a great role. Every one of the terms of this outline was reversed in the course of the second half of the 8th century. In addition to the colonial empire of the Northwest, the state lost all control over vast regions of North China, in particular over the very large silk-producing regions of Hebei, Shandong and Henan, which ceased to send tribute. Only the South remained under control, which acquired a place it had never before held in the economic life of the country, together with the maritime commerce of the Persians. Silk and bronze coins declined as monetary media in favor of silver coins cast in the South by private silversmiths. The Chinese merchants benefitted from the disruption of societal points of reference by playing a growing and increasingly accepted social role, which led to the merchant civilization of the Song in the 11th century.[57] The foundations upon which the economic balances of Sogdian trade had been built for two centuries were thus completely disrupted.

After the 760s, in Gansu and the southern Tarim basin, the Chinese garrisons over a major portion of the principal commercial route fell one after another into the hands of the Tibetans. For the thirty years between 756 and 786 the court was entirely unaware of the fate of the last Chinese garrisons of the Tianshan.[58] In a few years the economy at Dunhuang was once again based on barter. Coins disappeared from contracts.[59] During the second half of the 8th century, commercial economy of the Sogdian type certainly experienced a very difficult period. We may quite reasonably suppose that at that time large-scale commerce must have significantly diminished, over one or two generations at least.

This is the context in which it is necessary to understand the connections established between Sogdian commerce and Uighur policy. Several texts attest to their importance:

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[57] See Twitchett, 1963, p. 34 f. for taxes, p. 76 f. for coinage and p. 109 f. for administrative aspects. See equally Twitchett, 1968 for a discussion of merchants, in particular pp. 74–78.

[58] Mackerras, 1972, p. 103 citing the *Xin Tang shu* 217A, p. 6124.

[59] Trombert, 1995, pp. 26–7.

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> Before all this, whenever the Uighurs had arrived in the Central State, they constantly had with them some Sogdians, who frequently stayed behind in the capital. In the course of time the number approched 1,000. They [continued to] live there, their property flourished and they accumulated a very large amount of capital.[60]

A caravan of Uighur officials entered the country in 780. It was composed of several thousand beasts of burden (camels and horses), on which rode Uighurs, Sogdians (*hu* with nine names) and their Chinese concubines. They had more than 100,000 rolls of silk with them.[61] A Chinese official proposed to massacre them and declared:

> The Uighurs are not basically strong, but they are helped by the Sogdians.[62]

We know moreover that several people of very high status and ambassadors from the Uighur Empire who were in China during and after this period bore Sogdian names.[63] Numerous Manichaeans served as ambassadors from 807 and did not refrain from trading at Chang'an.[64] The Sogdians in the Uighur Empire thus occupied a role analogous to that which they had played in the first Türk Empire.[65] But, even more than during the Türk period, the Uighurs benefitted from considerable tribute in silk resulting from the Chinese purchase of huge numbers of horses at high price (38 to 40 pieces of silk per horse compared to 25 formerly),[66] under the threat of a reversal of alliance.[67] Despite the collapse of the Chinese state system, the trade in horses made it possible for significant quantities of silk to depart for the Uighur capital. The texts are hardly more systematic than those of earlier periods, but over some dozens of years the Uighurs regularly sent thousands of horses to the capital at a median price of 38 rolls of silk.[68] On average, the Tang bought 7,500 horses from the Uighurs

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[60] *Xin Tang shu*, chap. 217A, p. 6121, trans. in Mackerras, 1972, p. 89.
[61] *Xin Tang shu, ibid.*, trans. in Mackerras, 1972, pp. 89–91.
[62] *Xin Tang shu, ibid.*, trans. in Mackerras, 1972, p. 91.
[63] Mackerras, 1972, pp. 151–2, n. 145 and p. 166, n. 212.
[64] Mackerras, 1972, p. 109 citing the *Xin Tang shu*, chap. 217A, p. 6126.
[65] One could here object that we are dealing with a preconceived pattern in Chinese historiography, which repeated for the Uighurs what had already been said about the Türks. Sogdian vocabulary in the Uighur language, as well as the already mentioned inscriptions of Qarabalghasun and Šine Usu, show at the very least that this repetition had a very real basis.
[66] Beckwith, 1991, p. 187.
[67] This tribute disguised in the form of commerce has been well studied. See Mackerras, 1969, for the texts and Beckwith, 1991, for the economic impact.
[68] Mackerras, 1969, pp. 238–9, and Beckwith, 1991, p. 192.

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per year, for 300,000 rolls of raw silk. The emperors desperately tried to limit this flow of wealth by reducing their purchases of horses, most often in vain: the Chinese sources are full of lamentations over what they considered to be a veritable racket.[69]

For my subject the central question is the following: was the silk from the trade in horses able to compensate for the rupture of traditional connections due to political troubles? One could indeed imagine that a parallel Sogdian circuit, via Qarabalghasun and a route north of the Tianshan, had undertaken the redistribution of this silk in Sogdiana or points beyond, on the model of events in 568. The volume of silk was entirely compatible, if not greater.

It is tempting to suppose that the Sogdians of the eastern settlements were able to regain an important place in large-scale trade, thanks to these massive economic exchanges. But no commercial document permits us to affirm the existence of a redistribution to the west or to analyze the connections between the Uighur Empire and Sogdiana. The only texts available are of a diplomatic or military nature. The Chinese authors knew hardly anything about what was happening to the west, and the Arab authors are practically silent about Central Asia in the second half of the 8th century. It also seems improbable that the Sogdians could have been able to reconstitute their commercial lines before the end of the 8th century, even with such quantities of silk at their disposal. Indeed, between 780 and 790 their ascendancy over the Uighurs experienced a check.[70] While the following decade saw their return to business, it also witnessed great battles between Tibetans and Uighurs for control of the oases of the northern Tarim basin. In the region of Turfan and Kucha, it seems that the struggle between the two powers had been particularly severe, and that it finally turned to the advantage of the Uighurs.[71]

The 9th Century: Political Contacts

It was otherwise in the 9th century. Several texts attest to a resumption of contacts between the East and Sogdiana. Some of them are diplomatic, others religious. None are commercial.

On a collection of rocks in Ladakh, near Tankse, a group of Sogdian inscriptions accompanied by Nestorian crosses has been found. One

[69] Beckwith, 1991, p. 188.
[70] See above, pp. 224–225.
[71] Moriatsu, 1981.

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of these inscriptions, the longest, is particularly interesting because its writing is from the 9th or 10th century and it includes a date, 210. Its text still presents serious problems of reading and interpretation.[72] Only the following elements are certain:

> During the year 210 [. . .] the man from Samarkand [. . .] Nōsh-farn [. . .] messenger to the Tibetan Qaghan

The era is not specified, but it could be the era of Yazdgird III, which would give 841–2. Several Sogdian inscriptions, notably in Khirghizia, are known to be dated in this way. Another possibility could be the era of the Hijra, then in use in Muslim Sogdiana, which would give 825–6.

On the same group of rocks are found a Buddhist name, a Manichaean name, Manichaean, Christian or Muslim inscriptions mentioning the formula *pr βgy n'm* (the exact equivalent in Sogdian of *bismilla*, but also of Christian formulae),[73] and Nestorian crosses.

The location of these rocks leads to the supposition that the messenger or messengers arrived from the west and were bound for central Tibet, since the inscriptions were made at the end of a long valley leading to Gilgit. The route chosen corresponds well with the Tibetan route found in the Muslim geographical texts of the 10th century.

The most diverse interpretations of these data have been proposed. Generally scholars want to see in them an embassy from the Uighur qaghan to the Tibetan qaghan. But historically this hypothesis seems hardly acceptable: there was no longer an Uighur qaghan in 841–2, and a messenger charged with appealing for aid before the destruction of the qaghanate by the Kirghiz would certainly not take such a roundabout route, since the Tibetans were the immediate neighbors of the Uighurs in Gansu. On the contrary, several clues point to a diplomatic mission from Samarkand: reference to the town as the place of origin of one of the messengers, in addition to the route selected, lead one to think that they had come from the west. In

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[72] See Sims-Williams, 1993. Nicholas Sims-Williams gives a Buddhist interpretation to this text by reading on the one hand a Sanskrit name (C'ytr') before "the man from Samarkand," and on the other hand "the Buddhist monk" (*šmny*) before Nōsh-farn. Attentive examination of the different inscriptions does not allow us to read *šmny* with any certainty (Livšic has moreover read this small group of extremely cramped letters in an entirely different way).

[73] Sims-Williams and Hamilton, 1990, pp. 39–40.

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this case a date in the era of the Hijra would be possible. During the same period, in Ustrushana, in Čāč or in Ferghana, the pre-Islamic religions of Central Asia still survived: the trial of al-Afshīn, for instance, is a very clear proof of this. Buddhism survived in Semireč'e until the 10th century.[74]

Sogdians from Samarkand or perhaps from regions immediately to the north thus served as ambassadors to the Qaghan of Tibet in the second quarter of the 9th century. There is a second account, better known, of an embassy between the East and the West at the same period of time.

This passage is the description of the embassy led by Tamīn b. Baḥr in 821 (?) to Qarabalghasun, the Uighur capital.[75] While the political reasons for this embassy remain unclear, the account at least allows us to see that contacts existed, that the Uighurs at that time controlled all the steppe north of the Tianshan as far as Čāč, and above all that they had established some relays and a postal system there.[76]

There are several other pieces of evidence about the involvement of the Uighur qaghanate in western Central Asia in the first quarter of the 9th century. In 821 also, an Uighur army was present in Ustrushana, a few days' journey from Samarkand.[77] Thirteen years earlier, during the great revolt of Rāfiʿ b. Layth—which set all of Transoxiana ablaze as far as Khorezm and part of Tukharistan[78]—the Uighurs are mentioned among the allies who furnished troops to Rāfiʿ.[79] At the same time, al-Maʾmūn, in rebellion against his brother, considered taking refuge with the Uighur qaghan.[80]

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[74] Even if the Buddhist readings of N. Sims-Williams are accepted, a western origin would not be excluded.

[75] See the edition and translation of the most complete version of this account in Minorsky, 1948. The route and its variations are commented upon in detail.

[76] Minorsky, 1948, p. 283 and commentary pp. 292–4.

[77] Ṭabarī, III, 1044, Eng. trans. vol. XXXII, p. 107. The commentary by Bosworth (n. 340), which here follows the interpretation of Barthold (Barthold, 1968, p. 201) and interprets Toghuz-Oghuz as the Ghuzz of the Aral Sea, is incorrect: these were in fact the Uighurs, who were rapidly expanding at the time. T. Moriyasu has pointed out to me that the text of the inscription of Qarabalghasun, which mentions an expedition as far as the Syr Darya (column 17 of the Chinese text), cannot be used here: this raid must be placed several years earlier, at the time of the revolt of Rāfiʿ b. Layth.

[78] Yaʿqūbī, *Tārīkh*, II, p. 465.

[79] Yaʿqūbī, *Tārīkh*, II, p. 465.

[80] The transformation in Beckwith, 1987, p. 159, of the text of Ṭabarī, III, 815, "with the qaghan, king of the Türks" to "with the qaghan, king of Tibet" is pure hypothesis with no justification. The Uighurs were at that time in the process of

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This period of strong Uighur involvement in the West was also that of the greatest Sogdian influence within the qaghanate, as attested by the role played by the Manichaeans among the Uighur ambassadors. It was also the period of the last convulsions of Sogdian independence half a century after the decimation of the Sogdian elites under Abū Muslim. We have no explicit proof of any connections among these three phenomena, but it is tempting to consider that the Sogdian elites perhaps believed—given the Uighur victory over the Tibetans in the East and the troubles within the Caliphate—that the golden age could return with a Sogdiana oriented toward Eastern Turkestan. If there was a connection, could it have had an economic root? Other quite indirect indications make it possible to show that these renewed contacts were not only political.

Diplomatic and Religious Travellers

In order to show this, it is necessary once again to plunge into the complex study of the intratextual relations of the Arabic and Persian authors, this time in connection with their various descriptions of China.

The following idea is often found in historiography: continuous commercial contacts allowed the Arabic and Persian geographers to have a rather accurate idea of Eastern Turkestan. In fact, only four authors partially describe the areas situated beyond the frontiers of Islam: Ibn Khurdādhbih, the anonymous author of the *Ḥudūd*, Marvazī and Gardīzī, from the 11th century. Ibn Khurdādhbih owes his information on the Uighurs and Kimaks to the embassy of Ṭamīn b. Baḥr,[81] while the *Ḥudūd*, Marvazī and Gardīzī owe their information primarily to the lost work of Jayhānī, composed from statements of travellers at the beginning of the 10th century.[82] Marvazī and Gardīzī expand the text of Jayhānī thanks to the account of a

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subjugating the Qarluqs to the north of Transoxiana and were perfectly able to receive a royal refugee.

[81] See Minorsky, 1948: a more complete extract of the text of Ṭamīn b. Baḥr found in the Mashhad manuscript of Ibn al-Faqīh makes it possible to demonstrate this.

[82] Minorsky, 1970, p. li. The cross-checks are precise and Jayhānī has been cited several times as a source in those very passages which match up from text to text. From Marvazī, Minorsky has edited and translated the passages concerning China, the Türks and India (Minorsky, 1942). For the influence of Jayhānī, see pp. 6–9 and 61 f. Minorsky analyzes the parallels with the text of the *Ḥudūd* and that of Gardīzī. For an edition and translation of the latter, see Martinez, 1982.

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Khitan embassy to the court of Maḥmūd of Ghazna in 1027.[83]

For the 9th and the beginning of the 10th centuries we thus have only the text of Ibn Khurdādhbih, which is limited to information from Ṭamīn b. Baḥr, and the lost text of Jayhānī. That the latter was informed by travellers proves that contacts existed at the beginning of the 10th century and were thus resumed after the catastrophes of the 8th century. If we wish to try to date the resumption of these connections, the period of the expansion of the Uighur Empire at the beginning of the 9th century is certainly the most appropriate. But it is possible to go further. We find in the passages drawn from Jayhānī a presentation of the political and commercial situation of the towns of Gansu and the Tarim basin which cannot be later than 840, due to the role attributed to Manichaeism and the Tibetans in these descriptions. This presentation is not taken from the account of Ṭamīn b. Baḥr, who knew little about China. Jayhānī therefore used a source otherwise totally unknown, of commercial origin—as reference is made to commercial details—and dating from the first half of the 9th century.[84] The hypothesis of a resumption of commercial contacts is thus confirmed, even if it remains impossible to further specify the date of these exchanges.

Other documentary collections can contribute to this question. Several details of the history of the Manichaean church at Turfan are known to us from the 8th and 9th centuries. The Manichaean documents recovered from the expeditions at the beginning of the 20th century enable us to form a preliminary idea of the structure and life of the community. The available documents show a maintenance of connections with the West up to the 9th century.

This is particularly the case with two fragmentary Manichaean letters:[85] the accusations borne against the "Syrians" and the reference

[83] Minorsky, 1942, pp. 5, 76 f.

[84] Minorsky has not clarified this precise point: in his commentary on the *Ḥudūd* (p. 227), he specifies that a part of the data concerning Gansu is from the first half of the 9th century and moreover proposes in his introduction (p. li), with great reservations, that Ṭamīn b. Baḥr may be the source. The hypothesis is in fact not tenable, for none of the known versions of the latter's account give any information about Gansu, which was neither on his route from Sogdiana to Qarabalghasun nor on that from Qarabalghasun to China.

[85] See Henning, 1936. They have been edited, translated and commented upon in Sundermann, 1984; the dating is given on p. 300. This is extended to the whole of the century (and even to the end of the 8th century in Sundermann, 1992). For their attribution to Turfan (Qočo) see Sundermann, 1991, pp. 285–6.

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to the Mihrīya/Miqlāṣīya schism within the Manichaean church, a schism which lasted from the first half of the 8th century to around 880, indicate that these letters can be clearly dated to the 9th century, and that the connections with the western "Syrian" (or rather Babylonian) Manichaean communities existed throughout this period.

Furthermore, two poetic fragments in Manichaean script have been found at Turfan. Composed in a Persian very close to Middle Persian, they come from western Iran and probably date from the end of the 9th century or from the 10th century, as they include several Arabic words.[86]

In the *Fihrist*, his great catalogue of works available at Baghdad in the 10th century, al-Nadīm mentions the following episode in connection with the Manichaeans:

> About five hundred of their men assembled at Samarqand, but when their movement became known, the ruler of Khurasan wished to kill them. Then the king of China, who I suppose was the lord of the Tughuzghuz, sent to him, saying, "There are more Muslims in my country than there are people of my faith in your land." He also swore to him that if he [the ruler of Khurasan] should kill one of them [the Manichaeans], he [the king of China] would slaughter the whole community [of Muslims] who were with him, and would also destroy the mosques and appoint spies among the Muslims in the country as a whole, so as to slay them. So the ruler of Khurasan left them alone except for exacting tribute from them.[87]

The episode is not dated, but the reference several lines earlier to the persecutions perpetrated by al-Muqtadir at the beginning of the 10th century, in addition to that of the ruler of Khurasan, no doubt a Samanid, seems to justify its attribution to the same period. The *Ḥudūd* still points out the existence of a Manichaean monastery at Samarkand at the end of the century.

The rare available data relating to the Nestorian sphere show a maintenance of religious links between the West and the communities of the Tarim basin up to the 10th century. Among the Christian fragments discovered in the ruins of a monastery at Bulayïq, near Turfan, is a bilingual Syriac-Persian psalter. At another monastery at Toyoq was found a fragmentary text of a pharmacological character,

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[86] See Henning, 1962.
[87] Trans. Dodge, 1970, pp. 802–3.

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in Persian but written in Syriac script.[88] As with Manichaeism, the existence of texts in Persian, but also their rarity, mark the first decades of the 10th century as the last period of contacts with the West.

In the documents issued by the Nestorian church of Mesopotamia, we find no trace of contacts with the region beyond the 10th century.[89] It is perhaps significant that the patriarch Theodosius I (853–858) excused the metropolitans of the exterior from coming every four years to the Catholicos: from that time forward a letter every six years was considered sufficient.[90] When at the end of the century, in 987, the Catholicos wished to renew the interrupted connections with the communities in China, the monks that he sent travelled by sea and were completely unaware of the fate of the communities of the Tarim basin.[91]

One text has nevertheless been occasionally quoted in favor of the maintenance of contacts with the West—and even distant Byzantium—at a late period.[92] A Syriac letter from Turfan (Bulayïq) has been identified.[93] It is addressed to a Byzantine dignitary and follows a model usual in official Syriac letters in the Byzantine Empire of the 10th or 11th century. It could therefore be a very striking evidence of the maintenance of such contacts. But a more attentive examination shows that this letter—in which the name of the sender is indicated by the Syriac equivalent of "Mr. X," and on the back of which proverbs were copied—was never sent, and that it was intended to serve as a model. In reality it was part of an anthology, in which examples of proverbs were also given. As often occurred in the Middle Ages, a real and specific letter was recopied in formulary books. There is therefore no reason to imagine a correspondence between Byzantium and Turfan, but at the most the introduction of a Syriac book containing epistolary and literary models, readily conceivable at the beginning of the 10th century.

The passage from the *Fihrist* cited above, while it concerns the beginning of the 10th century and not the beginning of the 9th, reports mosques and Muslims in Eastern Turkestan. We have at least one example in the mystic al-Hajjāj of a Muslim preaching so far to the

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[88] Sims-Williams, 1992a, p. 51.
[89] See Dauvillier, 1948, p. 285 f.
[90] *Ibid.*, pp. 271–2.
[91] Al-Nadīm, trans. Dodge, p. 837.
[92] Sims-Williams, 1992a, p. 47, n. 15.
[93] See Maróth, 1985 for an edition, translation and commentary.

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east at that time. When he gave a quick summary of the peregrinations of his father, the son of al-Hajjāj declared:

> He departed and I knew what he had done: he had gone to India, then to Khurâsân for the second time; he had entered Mâwarâlnahr, Turkestan and as far as Mâ Sîn, calling these peoples to God, composing for them works which have not reached me.[94]

This travel occurred around 898. Turkestan designates the region of Bālāsāghūn and Mâ Sîn that of Bešbalik.[95]

So, the religious literature carries proof of contacts maintained up to the beginning of the 10th century.

Concerning Jayhānī: The 10th Century

A certain number of other Arabic Muslim texts also carry such proof, and some are commercial.

We have seen in the preceding chapter that Abū Zayd, and with him Masʿūdī, mentions an inhabitant of Samarkand travelling as far as China via Iraq, Oman and then the sea. The text continues, narrating how this merchant did not hesitate to go all the way to the Chinese capital, to the emperor, to obtain justice against a functionary who had wronged him. It is probably not a coincidence that the anecdote presents a merchant from Samarkand, who was doubtlessly quite conversant, because of his family history, with the customs and methods of redress in China.

But Abū Zayd also relates a second episode which equally presents an inhabitant of Samarkand, travelling this time by way of land:

> With regard to Khurasan, it borders on China. This latter is a two-month journey from Sogdiana. The two lands are separated from each other by an impassable desert and sands succeeding each other in which no watering place is found, nor rivers, nor inhabitants. It is these natural defenses which have protected China against attack from the people of Khurasan [. . .] We have met one of those who have made the journey to China. He told us that he had seen a man carrying on his back musk contained in a skin. He had left Samarkand

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[94] Trans. Massignon, 1975, p. 51.

[95] Massignon, 1975, pp. 227–234. Also Chinese paper lined with brocade was found among the disciples of al-Hajjāj, which, it is true, could have travelled by sea (Massignon, 1975, p. 230). Massignon further points out the strong Hajjājian devotion of the Central Asian Türks.

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> on foot, and going from one to the next, he had travelled by way of the towns of China as far as Khānfū, which is the port at which the merchants from Sīrāf meet.[96]

For his part, Masʿūdī writes in the 930s:

> The distance from Khurasan to China, following the route of which he spoke, is around 40 days' journey, across countries alternately cultivated and desert, of soft and sandy soils. There is another route, accessible to beasts of burden, which takes about four months, but the travellers there are under the protection of several Türk tribes. I have met at Balkh a fine old man, distinguished as much for his judgment as for his mind, who had several times made the journey to China, without ever having taken the sea route; I also knew in Khurasan several people who had gone from Sogdiana to Tibet and into China, travelling by way of the mountains of ammonia.[97]

Sogdian peddling thus still existed at the beginning of the 10th century. As in *Ancient Letter II*, musk was still a preferred product, as light as it was costly.

These Sogdian merchants travelling by land were clearly uncommon figures to the eyes of Muslim merchants who had come to China by sea. If Masʿūdī's insistence on the advanced age of his witness is perhaps only a rather habitual means of guaranteeing objectivity,[98] it is nevertheless also possible that this is a means of indicating the bygone character of these expeditions to China. Maritime commerce was the norm from that time on, and the land route the exception. Since the time of the spice merchant Cosmas, the situation had become exactly the reverse of that which had prevailed in his day.

In the 10th and 11th centuries, two stages in the elaboration of Muslim knowledge about the terrestrial route to China are known. Only the information assembled by Jayhānī at the beginning of the 10th century is in part commercial. The later works do not add to these data prior to the embassy of the Khitans. To draw conclusions from the geographical knowledge of Muslim authors in order to defend the idea of a large-scale commerce in the 10th century is quite simply incorrect. Texts such as that of Masʿūdī, mentioned above, attest to the presence of merchants travelling as far as China at the beginning of the century, at the time when Jayhānī was actually collecting their

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[96] Abū Zayd, trans. Ferrand, p. 109 [see plate IV, ill. 3].
[97] Masʿūdī, trans. Pellat, I, p. 142.
[98] My thanks to Mme. Françoise Micheau for suggesting this point to me.

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accounts, but nothing for the period after that can be deduced from Muslim geographical writings. And certain works, like the first *risāla* of Abū Dulaf, are literary fantasies.[99]

On the other hand, for the beginning of the 10th century, the information derived from Jayhānī is truly essential: the Sogdians are mentioned and the toponymy used is Sogdian. The *Ḥudūd* states the following with regard to the Uighur territory:

> The village of Bek-Tegin consist of five villages belonging to the Soghdians. In them live Christians (*tarsāyān*), Zoroastrians (*gabrakān*), and heathens (? *ṣābiyān*).[100]

Earlier in the text, Qočo is called by its Sogdian name of Čīnānčkath ("Town of the Chinese"), and Bešbaliq ("Five Towns") by its Sogdian translation, Panjīkath.[101] A little further on, in the context of the land of Tukhsī (between Lake Balkash and the Issyk Kul), the toponym Bīglīligh is commented upon in the following terms:

> Bīglīligh, a large village, called in Soghdian S.m.k.nā.[102]

The examples could be multiplied.[103] The text of Jayhānī and those depending on it give a rather precise picture of what a late Sogdian geographical treatise might have looked like, extensively permeated by Turkic toponyms. Contact with the distant communities of the western end of the Tianshan and the Tarim was not only maintained in the first quarter of the 10th century, it also remained culturally Sogdian.

A more detailed analysis of the sources used by Jayhānī makes it possible to cast light on a very significant phenomenon. One notes that the information in the texts derived from Jayhānī about the Uighur kingdom of Bešbalik and Turfan (Qočo) is accurate and from

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[99] His travel narrative corresponds to no known or even possible itinerary. He juxtaposes notices of Türk peoples and puts them in the form of an itinerary. The Chinese embassy which formed the pretext for this exercise had perhaps taken place, around 939. See Abū Dulaf, trans. Ferrand, 1913, p. 208 f., Marquart, 1903, pp. 74–95, and Bosworth, 1969, p. 8.

[100] Trans. Minorsky, p. 95.

[101] Trans. Minorsky, p. 94, commentary p. 271.

[102] Trans. Minorsky, p. 99.

[103] For instance, in the Pamirs, the village of Samarqandaq (p. 121), or in China, the town of Navījkath (p. 86: see the commentary of Minorsky pp. 234–5 about the meaning to be given to *daryā*, river, the Tarim in this instance), or the Sogdian toponymy in *-kath* of certain Qarluq villages (p. 98).

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the beginning of the 10th century. On the other hand, the data concerning Gansu are confused and mix remarks already noted from the first third of the 9th century with others from the time of Jayhānī: thus in the *Ḥudūd* the Tibetans and Chinese are still fighting for power there, whereas at the beginning of the 10th century the Uighurs had long since supplanted these two rivals.[104] Inversely, one finds mention in Marvazī of the ephemeral name of the western capital of the Song, Luoyang, called Yongzhou between 907 and 923, which Marvazī/Jayhānī transcribe as Y.njūr. In other words, the Sogdian milieu of Qočo only partially played its traditional role as an interface with the next stage of the route, the Gansu corridor. The merchants from Samarkand interviewed by Jayhānī were not able to bring all of their knowledge up to date. Jayhānī could cite only one eyewitness for China[105] and had to resort to Ibn Khurdādhbih for the rest. It is moreover possible that Masʿūdī used this same witness, as the "fine old man, distinguished as much for his judgment as for his mind" curiously recalls the "clever man" of Jayhānī/Marvazī, aged by a few years at the time that Masʿūdī interviewed him (in the 930s). In the first third of the 10th century contact with China was at the point of being broken, and only what I have shown to be the central core of Sogdian commerce survived.

Archaeological Tracers

The results of excavations entirely confirm this development. As I have pointed out several times in the course of this study, archaeological tracers of the course of large-scale commerce are rarely available to us. Yet because of the uniqueness of Chinese ceramics, and still more so of porcelains, trade with China is subject to archaeological analysis. Numerous studies have made it possible to take stock of the diffusion of Chinese ceramic and porcelain along the commercial routes. At Samarkand, excavations do not reveal the presence of porcelain shards before the middle of the 10th century—and even then it is only an isolated shard.[106]

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[104] See Minorsky, 1970, p. II, and text p. 85.

[105] "I met a clever man who had been to China and traded with Chinese in their goods. He said that the city which is their capital is called Y.njūr." Marvazī, trans. Minorsky, 1942, p. 15.

[106] Šiškina, 1979, p. 63, and Sokolovskaia and Rougeulle, 1992, p. 95.

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The situation is quite different for the areas in contact with the maritime route. From the end of the Sassanid period, Chinese stoneware jars were imported at Ṣuḥār, on the coast of Oman;[107] more generally, in the Abbasid period Chinese porcelain was well distributed throughout all the important Near Eastern coastal sites, as is evidenced by the presence of thousands of shards.[108]

We also have available, for the 10th century at least, a tracer in the opposite direction, that of Samanid coins. The contrast is striking between the Samanid route to the northwest (Bukhara—Khorezm—Volga) and the old Sogdian route (Samarkand—Semireč'e—Gansu): Samanid coins are completely unknown on the present territory of China. Excavations have not yielded any,[109] and the Uighur texts, particularly the business documents from Dunhuang, do not mention them. Exchanges took place in the form of barter to the east of the Tarim basin (in the region of Turfan—Dunhuang—western Gansu), using cotton as well as woolen cloth (*raγzi*), either raw or dyed red, to balance exchanges.[110] At Dunhuang, from the last third of the 8th century to the beginning of the 10th century, the Chinese contracts were in grain;[111] they were thereafter replaced by contracts in cloth, both wool and silk.[112]

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[107] Kervran, 1994, p. 335.

[108] See especially Rougeulle, 1991. See also Mikami, 1988 and Gyllensvärd, 1973 for Egypt, and Whitehouse, 1988. The historian Bayhaqī (a member of the diplomatic bureau of the Ghaznavid state, born 995, died 1077, see Bosworth, 1963, p. 10), who without doubt worked with the unabridged version of Ṭabarī, mentions porcelain and pearls among the gifts made to Hārūn al-Rashīd in 805 (AH 189) by ʿAlī b. ʿIsā, the governor of Khurasan, during the caliph's journey to Rayy: "3 million pearls and 200 large dishes and goblets of porcelain from Ċhina [. . .] and 2000 other cups and large chalices of porcelain" (Bayhaqī, ed. Ġanī and Fyāḍ, p. 417). This could be a counter-example, but the early date of this royal gift precludes us from concluding anything at all from it regarding the existence of Sogdian commerce in the 10th century. At the very most, the episode shows that the Sogdian merchants could still have been quite well-stocked at the beginning of the 9th century, at least if ʿAlī had had recourse to their services, and if the porcelain in question had not come by sea, with the pearls . . .

[109] My heartfelt thanks to Mr. François Thierry for having communicated this valuable information.

[110] For the Uighur and Sogdo-Uighur documents of the 9th and 10th centuries from Dunhuang, see Hamilton, 1986, pp. 79, 167–8, 174, and Sims-Williams and Hamilton, 1990, pp. 24–5, 42, 77.

[111] Trombert, 1995, p. 25 and chapter II.

[112] See Trombert, 1995, p. 108 f.; the role of wool fabrics is detailed on pp. 114–5. Éric Trombert supports the idea of a monetary circulation at Dunhuang that was relatively limited in comparison with the great commercial town of Turfan. On

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Taken together, the available facts thus point to the following state of affairs: Sogdian commerce suffered a violent crisis in the second half of the 8th century. The immense wealth of the Uighur Empire together with its expansion enabled a resumption of contacts at the beginning of the 9th century. Diplomatic, religious and commercial connections were attested at that time. But the end of the Uighur Empire in 840, and of the enormous trade in horses it had made possible, reduce this period to the status of a relatively brief improvement, the precise commercial impact of which is unknown. While commercial and religious contacts had certainly taken place once more, at least up to the first third of the 10th century, they had hardly any economic importance and diminished again after the years 930–940. The few traces of continued contact—mainly the Neo-Persian texts from Turfan—do not allow us to speak of sustained contacts of any economic importance with the lands east of the Tianshan after this time.[113] Only the town of Khotan, to which both Muslim merchants and Buddhist pilgrims travelled, was still able to serve as a meeting place, and it was doubtlessly by way of this town that the Qarakhanids, who took it in 1006, were able to supply musk and silk to the Ghaznavids.[114] When the Khitans proposed it to him in 1027, Maḥmūd of Ghazna, then master of Muslim Central Asia, was quite astonished that one could consider commerce with such distant regions.

Contacts were only really renewed in the second half of the 11th century. Maḥmūd of Kashgar wrote his *Dīwān Lughāt at-Turk*, or

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the other hand, documentation is lacking for Turfan after the 8th century: all of the known contracts from Turfan, some of which mention silver coins, antedate the year 720 (Trombert, 1995, p. 25, and Yamamoto and Ikeda, 1987). The fate of monetary circulation at Turfan is thus unknown, and only the absence of coins in excavations allows us to supply a partial answer.

[113] An embassy of Persians and Uighurs visited the Song capital in 984: *Song shi*, chap. 4, p. 72, cited by Schafer, 1951, p. 403. The association of Persians and Uighurs makes a continental route very probable. This isolated embassy would not be sufficient to prove the maintenance of sustained connections. With the embassies in 939, 984 and 1027, it is as if the states at both extremes of the old route were content to assure themselves of each other's existence once per generation.

[114] Several Khotanese documents testify to the international contacts of the town in the 10th century. Thus, a Khotanese itinerary from 925 describes the route to China, and there is an example of a small elementary Khotanese-Chinese travellers' manual, as well as a Khotanese-Sanskrit exercise of the same type: see Hamilton, 1958 for the itinerary from the Staël-Holstein manuscript, and Emmerick, 1992, p. 48, for the bilingual guides. On the Qarakhanid gifts, see Barthold, 1968, p. 272 and 284.

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Compendium of the Turkish Dialects, at Baghdad in 1076–7. Originally from the eastern Qarakhanid kingdom, born to a father who was a native of Barskhān—at the eastern end of the Issyk Kul, it was the last town to have been in contact with the eastern Tarim basin[115]—he is the first to once again mention the existence of important caravans connecting the eastern and western Tarim basin[116] and to offer a good-quality map of eastern Asia.

4. *Problems of Assimilation*

The gradual weakening of Sogdian ascendancy was accompanied by the end of a regular flow of travellers—merchants, soldiers, farmers or priests—from the home country to the expatriate communities. At the same time Sogdian culture was dying in the land of its origin during the 10th century, as I have shown in the preceding chapter, so that the Sogdians beyond the mountains progressively melted into the local populations. The simultaneity of these processes leads one to wonder about the assimilation of Sogdian culture, particularly in its commercial aspects, within the new syntheses taking place in the 10th century.

Sogdians, Chinese and Uighurs

The texts already mentioned regarding relations with the home country show a progressive fusion and absorption within the Turkic- and Chinese-speaking populations. As I have already pointed out, the process is nearly as old as the Sogdian settlements and shows that the Sogdians adopted Chinese as well as Türk characteristics.

We may suppose that each wave of immigration let to a progressive integration of its members into local society, and that this integration became permanent only after migration had come to an end, as it was no longer counterbalanced by human and cultural contributions from Sogdiana. In the 8th century, Sogdian commerce continued to reign supreme. All the elements of a socially complex

[115] *Ḥudūd*, trans. Minorsky, p. 98.

[116] Maḥmūd of Kashgar, II, pp. 176–7: "YUKURK'AN yügürgän. Name of a courier (*barīd*) who goes out in advance of the merchants of Sin towards the lands of Islam, and brings news of them and their communications."

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Sogdian emigration existed, with the emigrant communities integrating themselves into local societies while being periodically reinforced from Sogdiana. It seems to have been only after the revolt of An Lushan, followed by the end of the Uighur qaghanate of the Orkhon, that the momentum of integration was no longer counterbalanced by new immigrants.

Within China, the xenophobia which prevailed after the fall of the Uighur qaghanate of the Orkhon in 840 made survival difficult for socially identified Sogdian populations.[117] Moreover, from the 8th century onward the arrival of Persian-speaking Muslims by sea completely changed the ethnic and religious landscape of the foreign communities. Nevertheless, a certain number of late texts attest to the existence of cults in 11th century China which were characteristic of Sogdian merchants. This was notably the case at Kaifeng, where in 1093 there still existed a *xian* 祆 cult, which was however in the process of being absorbed by the surrounding Buddhism. In a work about painting from the beginning of the 12th century, Dong You presents the iconography of this cult, which he identifies with Maheśvara/Śiva—in Sogdian iconographic terms, Wēšparkar, god of the atmosphere, whose iconography was modelled on that of Śiva.[118] But it is difficult to know if the believers of these cults were not more or less totally Chinese.

At Dunhuang, on the other hand, abundant documentation concerning the Sogdian populations of the region has been preserved. What is striking here is not the disintegration of the Sogdian communities, but to the contrary, their continuation right into the 10th century even in the absence of any migratory phenomenon. While the first name is often no longer usable as an indicator, such was the degree of sinicization, on the other hand the study of marriages or the concentrations of Sogdian names in various documents and branches of activity is instructive. Thus, it seems that the Sogdians in the districts of Conghua were in part under the protection of the Buddhist monasteries of the town, for a register of corvées performed by the families of semi-serfs of the different monasteries of Dunhuang during the years 818–823—which for the most part were composed of farmers, but also several artisans—shows that a number of them were of

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[117] See chapter VII above, p. 223.

[118] See Waley, 1956, p. 126 citing the *Guangchuan Huaba* 廣川畫跋 of Dong You 董逌.

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Sogdian origin. These Sogdians indeed seem to have continued to marry among each other.[119] There are other examples of Sogdian presence in the lower classes of the population at a late period: thus the circular of an association from 973, which arranges for a meeting of its members at the inn of the Cao family for the end-of-the-year banquet. A third of its 15 members are from families named An or Cao, as well as the head of the association and its assessor.[120]

We also have numerous examples of persons bearing Sogdian names integrated into the administration. Under the Tibetans (787–848), we find Sogdian names among the functionaries of the Tibetan territorial administration or in the Buddhist clergy. A little while afterward, the over-representation of persons of Sogdian origin in ambassadorial circles is certain. About 874/879, a mission was sent to China, and while the two titular ambassadors indeed bore Chinese names, we find four Sogdians among the managerial officers.[121] At Khotan as at Turfan we also find traces of ambassadors from Sogdian families or using Sogdian as a lingua franca.[122] Lastly, one of the secular Sogdian texts preserved in the grotto at Dunhuang is a letter written around 884 by a sovereign to a Christian ecclesiastic to inform him of the latest diplomatic developments at Ganzhou.[123]

Geographically, we find in the documents from Dunhuang a concentration of Sogdian functionaries of every rank at Changle, which is no other than Guiji, the native town of An Lushan's ancestors, and the place of origin from which numerous Sogdians in the interior of China sought to separate themselves, as I have indicated. Taking into account the slight quantity of information which the manuscripts give us, the concentration of Sogdians in the same area leads one to postulate a settlement which was still structured by connections of solidarity. The hypothesis is confirmed by one of the Sogdian documents of the grotto. This account for pieces of woolen fabric shows a Sogdian merchant trading in the region and notably at Čanglaγ, the Changle of the Chinese texts.[124]

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[119] For the particulars, see de la Vaissière and Trombert, 2004.

[120] S. 2894 V° 2, ed. in Rong, 2001, pp. 270–1.

[121] Kang Wensheng 康文勝, Kang Shuda 康叔達, Cao Guangjin 曹光進 and An Zaisheng 安再晟. P 3547 R°. Cited in Rong Xinjiang, 2001, p. 264.

[122] Thus the Chinese man in the service of Khotan who was sent on a mission to Dunhuang, and who offered between 967 and 977 a sutra in Khotanese, the colophon of which is signed in Sogdian. Bailey, 1944.

[123] Sims-Williams and Hamilton, 1990, p. 63 f.

[124] Details in de la Vaissière and Trombert, 2004.

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These Sogdian milieux therefore maintained some of their coherence, while being completely integrated into the society of Dunhuang. A final piece of evidence of this state of affairs is found in documents mentioning a Sogdian temple: the Chinese administration regularly supplied it with commodities, among which were alcohol and sheets of drawing paper, probably intended for images carried in procession.[125] By so doing, the administration was acting in its traditional role as director of religious activities, and the Sogdian cult was in the same situation as numerous other thoroughly Chinese cults.

Sogdians and Uighurs

In the Türk sphere, the close connections between Sogdians and Uighurs have often been pointed out, and I have shown their political and economic origins. A complete study would necessitate a parallel examination of Sogdian and Uighur vocabulary, as well as the use of all the data supplied by the religious documents from Dunhuang,[126] followed up by the Uighur business documents. Such is not my goal here. The Uighur bibliography is very important, and will not now concern us further:[127] the Sogdian network gave way to a regional Uighur network, from China to the eastern Tianshan, which is in itself a subject worthy of historical study.[128] What matters here is to show that this Uighur network was built on Sogdian sociological and commercial foundations.

Very precise examples can be mentioned. One of the rare Uighur commercial documents recovered at Dunhuang is a letter from an Uighur merchant, probably from the 10th century.[129] The person addressed, from whom the merchant requests commercial instructions, was a Sogdian and a member of his family. In the corpus of Uighur documents from Dunhuang, interlocutors and merchants whose names seem like they should be interpreted as Sogdian are mentioned several times.[130] More generally, an important percentage

[125] Grenet and Zhang Guangda, 1996, pp. 175–186.
[126] Bibliography in Sims-Williams and Hamilton, 1990.
[127] But see Moriyasu, 1997, an article pointed out to me by Yutaka Yoshida.
[128] For the material aspects of life at Qočo, see von Gabain, 1973. For commerce, see Maljavkin, 1983, p. 224 f.; Zieme, 1976; Pinks, 1968.
[129] Hamilton, 1986, pp. 126–7.
[130] Hamilton, 1986, p. 176. Hamilton further makes the hypothesis (p. 177) that certain Uighur merchants were in fact Sogdians who were more turkicized than others.

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of Uighur ambassadors in the various Chinese courts in the 10th and 11th centuries bore "Sogdian" family names: among 53 names of Uighur ambassadors travelling to China between 907 and 960 (the Five Dynasties period), 14 are "Sogdian," 16 Türk, and 19 Chinese.[131] The turkicized descendants of the Sogdians preserved a very important place in international relations in Gansu, and this well after the disappearance of the Sogdian cultural reality. The Sogdians thus played to the end the role of diplomatic negotiators that had been theirs during the first Türk Empire.

The process of turkicization had a familial basis, via intermarriage, and is well known thanks to the studies of philologists. Certain Sogdian Nestorian texts must have been written by bilingual scribes, more and more accustomed to thinking in the Türk language.[132] A group of business documents has even been called "Turco-Sogdian" by its editors in order to emphasize the degree of integration of the two languages, which are blended in the texts.[133] Among these documents are some letters and commercial accounts which in no way differ from their Uighur equivalents. In the Uighur texts, it is significant that the writer sometimes mentions commercial orders that had been given in the Türk language, which attests to a possible alternative.[134]

The eastern settlements continued to trade with China on a reduced scale. But contacts with the Islamized Sogdian world disappeared. They would only be renewed in the 11th century.

The Land of Argu

The fate of the other large area of Sogdian settlement, Semireč'e, from Taraz to the Issyk Kul, was altogether different. Quite close to Muslim Transoxiana, it espoused the same political and religious destiny.

Politically, the region situated to the north of Isfījāb, at the northern limit of the Samanid Empire, was a buffer zone between the Türk tribes and that empire. It paid moreover only a symbolic tribute to Bukhara.[135] The sovereigns to the south contented themselves with

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[131] Maljavkin, 1983, p. 240 f.

[132] Sims-Williams, 1992a.

[133] Sims-Williams and Hamilton, 1990: see notably p. 10. See also Yoshida, 1993a, who cites several examples of bilingualism, gives a bibliography of the subject, and makes a comparison with creole societies.

[134] Hamilton, 1986, p. 117.

[135] Muqaddasī, trans. Collins, pp. 299–300, and Ibn Ḥawqal, trans. Kramers and Wiet, p. 488. The sources are collected and translated (into Russian) in Volin, 1960.

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periodically launching raids beyond the sedentary territories, and favored the settlement of soldiers of the faith (*ghāzī*) to avoid all nomadic surprises.[136] The last political links with the East doubtlessly disappeared at the beginning of the 10th century: the *Ḥudūd*—again following Jayhānī—mentions the Uighur claims on Barskhān, the town from which caravans departed at the eastern end of the Issyk Kul.[137] In a parallel fashion, certain Türk tribes converted to Islam and set themselves up to trade in the vicinity of the Samanid points of control. Religiously, we have here the first area in which Islam was propagated by means other than conquest. Merchants on the one hand, and travelling preachers on the other—about whom we know very little, but for whom al-Hajjāj may supply a model—there disseminated an Islam that was very rudimentary and strongly permeated by Shi'ism. Yet it was a very orthodox Sunnism that the Qarakhanids proclaimed after taking possession of Transoxiana, with the goal, perhaps, of better conciliating the urban elites. We do not know at what date Buddhism disappeared from Semireč'e. Certain temples may still have been in use in the 9th century, and perhaps at the beginning of the 10th century.[138] But Nestorianism, despite several references to the transformation of churches into mosques,[139] developed there in parallel with Islam[140] and remained alive at least until the 14th century, as numerous tombstones attest.[141] From an economic point of view, the connections with sedentary Transoxiana were highly developed, as much for the food-producing economy—cereals in exchange for livestock—as for handicrafts. I have already mentioned the principal commerce, that of slaves,[142] but the connections were many and also included money: Samanid copper coins (*fals*) have been found at Bālāsāghūn. They were all pierced in the middle with a square hole in the Chinese manner, a last evidence of the ancient connections of the region.[143] While the ties with Sogdiana

[136] See Paul, 1994, p. 13 f.

[137] Hamilton, 1986, p. XVI is mistaken when he wishes to make the Qarluqs vassals of the Uighurs in the second half of the 10th century.

[138] See Staviskij, 1998, for a recent synthesis: Semireč'e is treated on pp. 111–133, 152–5 and 165–6.

[139] Thus Ismaʿīl during his raid on Taraz in 893, see Narshakhī, trans. Frye, pp. 86–7, and also Muqaddasī, trans. Collins, p. 246, BGA, III, p. 275 for Mīrkī.

[140] The metropolis of the Türks was created around 782 (Dauvillier, 1948, p. 285).

[141] Dauvillier, 1948, p. 285 f.; Livšic, 1981, p. 78; Klein, 2000.

[142] For the northern routes, see Axinžanov, 1969.

[143] Many thanks to Anvar Ataxoždajev for this information.

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relating to the production of ceramics slackened from the end of the 8th to the end of the 9th centuries, they were renewed from the 10th century.[144] Finally, the process of urbanization was strengthened[145] and spread from the traditional zone of Sogdian colonization over the piedmont north of the Alatau to the east and northeast, toward Lake Balkash.

In this context of constant interaction with a Sogdiana in the process of disappearance into the Muslim cultural area, the question of assimilation of the Sogdian communities arises only in terms of its rate and the time-lag involved in comparison with the home country. Several texts are available which confirm the results of epigraphy and archaeology, and the collation of these gives a precise idea of the linguistic conditions of this assimilation.

Maḥmūd of Kashgar gives invaluable information concerning the assimilation of the Sogdian population of Semireč'e. Notably, he writes:

> The most elegant of the dialects belongs to those who know only one language, who do not mix with Persians, and who do not customarily settle in other lands. Those who have two languages and who mix with the populace of the cities have a certain slurring (*rikka*) in their utterances—for example, Sogdāq, Känčāk and Argu [. . .] The people of Bālāsāgūn speak both Soghdian and Turkic. The same is true of the people of Ṭirāz (Talas) and the people of Madīnat al-Bayḍā' (Isbījāb). There is a slurring (*rikka*) in the speech of the people of the entire country of Argu, which is considered to extend from Isbījāb to Bālāsāgūn.[146]

Then:

> SUΓ˙DA'Q sogdā A people who have settled in Bālāsāgūn. They are from Sogd which is between Bukhara and Samarqand, but their dress and manner is that of Turks.[147]

In the middle of the 11th century, Sogdian was thus still a living language in Semireč'e, but bilingualism, a fatal condition for languages in decline, was already present throughout the area.[148]

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[144] Raspopova, 1960.

[145] For the example of Taraz see Senigova, 1972; for that of Krasnaja Rečka see Navaket, *Krasnaja Rečka i Burana*, 1989. More generally, consult Bajpakov, 1986, pp. 128–160, updated in Bajpakov, 1992.

[146] Trans. Dankoff and Kelly, 1982, pp. 83–4.

[147] *Ibid.*, p. 352.

[148] See Livšic, 1981 and Krippes, 1991.

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Epigraphic and archaeological evidence also points to this state of affairs. Like the Sogdian caravaneers at Gilgit, their successors in Semireč'e left graffiti in the gorges carved by the tributaries on the right bank of the Talas river on the southern slopes of the Kirghiz Alatau (Terek saj, Kulan saj). The language is Sogdian, the script is close to late Sogdian cursive, but the names are Türk. The inscriptions, which are few in number, are occasionally dated by the era of the last Sassanid, Yazdgird III, and were written over an interval of time from the beginning of the 10th century to the beginning of the 11th century. The last is from February-March 1026. Moreover, we have a certain number of ceramics bearing inscriptions in a late script, perhaps from the 11th century.[149]

Two centuries after Maḥmūd of Kashgar had collected his information, the Franciscan friar William of Rubruck, the envoy of Saint Louis to the court of the Great Khan Mangu, made the long journey by steppe to Qaraqorum and stayed at Cailac from the 18th to the 30th of November, 1253:

> We did come upon one large town here, called Cailac, containing a bazaar [forum] to which merchants resorted in large numbers. [. . .] This country used to be known as Organum and to have its own language and script; but by this time it was entirely occupied by Turcomans. Its script and language were habitually used by the Nestorians of these parts for their services and for writing their books.[150]

Cailac, the Qayāligh of Persian authors,[151] and the old Qarluq capital, was situated east-southeast of Lake Balkash[152] in an area with a strong Sogdian presence.[153] Pelliot mobilized his vast erudition to attempt to link the name *Organum* to the old capital of Khorezm, Ürgänč.[154] The solution is without doubt different and is found in

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[149] On these inscriptions see Livšic, 1981, pp. 80–3. Date corrected according to the reading of Y. Yoshida.

[150] William of Rubruck, trans. Jackson, p. 148.

[151] See Barthold, 1968, p. 403, and Bajpakov, 1986, p. 36.

[152] Map and plan of the site in Bajpakov, 1986, pp. 130–1. See also the discussion in Minorsky's commentary on the *Ḥudūd*, p. 277.

[153] Although this presence was to the north of the central zone of Sogdian colonization, which Rubruck, who travelled by the steppe between Lake Balkash and those towns, did not see. The Sogdian presence is however indicated at least by the name given in the *Ḥudūd* to the stage of the journey preceding Cailac in the itinerary of Rubruck: Equius, a Latin disguise of Iki-ögüz, which in the *Ḥudūd*, p. 95, appears in the sogdianized form of Īrgūzgūkath.

[154] Pelliot, 1973, pp. 115–7.

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Maḥmūd of Kashgar. *Organum* is certainly the land of Argu, located just to the south of Maḥmūd, and which William of Rubruck skirted on his journey. Rather than the Khorezmian proposed by Pelliot, which was never attested either in these areas or as a Nestorian liturgical language—in Khorezm the Nestorians used Sogdian—the old Nestorian liturgical language and the ancient language which had disappeared from the land was Sogdian, supplanted by Turkic dialects. The presence of numerous Sogdian terms in the Nestorian epitaphs of Semireč'e confirms this.[155] Since the time of Maḥmūd, the complete assimilation of the Sogdian populations had taken place, but the memory of them was still preserved in the 13th century. To the north of the Samanid Empire, in different political and cultural conditions, the land of Argu remained a Sogdo-Türk bastion, the breeding ground for the commerce in Türk slaves and the womb from which the Qarakhanid state was born.

All things considered, the resistance of the Sogdian language was strikingly long. Quite a long time after Jayhānī used the services of the last Sogdian merchants, their language was still living in the land of Argu, probably up to the 12th century, and perhaps as a liturgical language until the beginning of the 13th century. The process of assimilation had taken place much earlier in the home country.

The assessment which it is possible to draw up from the diverse data that I have assembled is the following:

All of the indicators show that certain tenuous links between the home country and the Sogdian settlements, notably those to the east of the Tianshan, in Uighur territory, still existed around 930. In spite of the defeat of their machinations in China, and of their champion An Lushan, in the second half of the 8th century and the beginning of the 9th century the Sogdians still widely controlled Uighur commerce, and they benefitted from the annual tribute of Chinese silk. It is furthermore possible that they succeeded in renewing the contacts between the Uighur steppe and the home country in the first third of the 9th century. But the prodigious growth of the maritime route and the continual warfare in the heart of their old commercial area nevertheless made their position perilous. Between 800 and 840, the volume of commerce certainly represented only a fraction

[155] Livšic, 1981, p. 78. Kljaštornyj, 1964, pp. 130–1 makes the same analysis.

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of that before the revolt of An Lushan, and it dropped again thereafter: the end of the Chinese tribute reduced the commercial potential of the eastern Sogdian settlements to local products alone, among which musk and slaves no doubt played a preponderant role. From that time on, silk was carried only by sea, or was produced in Iran. There followed a period of transition during which the commerce of Sogdiana was reoriented with difficulty both toward the route of Khorezm, to the benefit of Bukhara, and, for Samarkand, toward the Turkic-speaking steppes of the northeast. In the first third of the 10th century, Jayhānī was still well-informed about the Tarim basin and Turkestan thanks to the merchants, and he explicitly cites the Sogdian variants of toponyms, together with their Turkic equivalents. The text of Abū Zayd presents a "classic" Sogdian merchant in China at the same time, and Mas'ūdī also encountered such merchants during this period. The Uighur qaghan might have intervened on behalf of his coreligionists and he mentions numerous Muslims on his territory. Finally, Neo-Persian texts still reached Chinese Turkestan, while remaining rare. It is not certain that these contacts still had any economic importance. However that may be, they ceased shortly thereafter.

The hinterland of Samarkand, according to the image of it given by the sources of the 10th and 11th centuries, was essentially constituted by the territories of the western Tarim (as far as Khotan) and the Türk areas to the west of the Tianshan (Yagma, Qarluq, Tukhsī . . .). The trade in slaves, important for the Muslim economy since the beginning of the 9th century, was together with musk the only remainder of ancient Sogdian commercial wealth—the two are attested throughout Sogdian commercial history. The slaves were bought in Čāč or Ferghana and came from the neighboring Türk tribes whose federation would form the Qarakhanid state. The commercial area had contracted. The outlying settlements were abandoned to their fate after the 930s and were assimilated, while the communities in proximity to Islamized Sogdiana adopted its characteristics after a period of delay. The great Sogdian commerce had disappeared.

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GENERAL CONCLUSION

It is now possible to summarize the results of this investigation. The chronology, geographical extent, and economic and cultural importance of long-distance Sogdian commerce are henceforth better known. We can follow quite well, step by step, the passage from small- to large-scale commerce. Nothing allows us to speak of a Sogdian commerce of more than local importance before the 2nd century BCE. Over the course of three centuries, Chinese silk—first in the form of diplomatic gifts, then as a commercial product imported by Indian and Bactrian merchants—created a demand and a circulation of merchandise which stimulated economic activity. We note that lapis lazuli, disseminated until that time exclusively to the south, probably by the Bactrians, appeared north of the Black Sea. This phenomenon could perhaps reflect the birth of a Sogdian commerce on a slightly larger scale. Following their Bactrian teachers, the Sogdians traded between India and China, and expatriate communities formed progressively in the Kushan Empire as well as in the Tarim basin, Gansu and the Chinese capitals. The invasions and wars of the 4th and 5th centuries, which ruined commerce between India and China and ravaged Bactriana in particular, left the field open for the Sogdians. Sogdiana became the principal center of population and consumption in Central Asia and the Sogdian merchants changed the commercial routes for their benefit in the 5th and 6th centuries. This was the time of their greatest commercial dynamism, although the following period was not one of decline for Sogdian commerce. The economic conditions of the expansion were, however, radically modified, first by the effect of the windfall which the Chinese tribute to the Türk Empire represented, of which the Sogdian merchants secured control, then by the Chinese military expansion into Central Asia, which made the dominant position of Sogdian traders in the Tarim basin a source of immense profits. The Sogdians supplied the Chinese army and functionaries with deluxe products and were paid in silk. Blocked to the south by the Sassanid protectionist policy, they were also able to create an opening to Byzantium, thanks to the political protection first of the Türks and then the Khazars. The Sogdian commercial expansion of this period was thus closely

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dependent on precise political conditions and on the ascendancy which the Turco-Sogdian societies succeeded in maintaining over the conduct of business in the successive Türk empires and China. Consequently, the changes in the political balances, connected first to the fall of the Sassanid Empire and the gradual conquest of Sogdiana by the Arab armies, and then to the great rebellion of An Lushan in China, delivered a mortal blow to a great commerce based on such fragile foundations. The Persian merchants were able, during the same period, to develop their maritime trade and to seize the ascendant over their Sogdian rivals once and for all in the 8th century. The end of large-scale Sogdian commerce was slow, however: it may have recovered somewhat at the beginning of the 9th century, to collapse permanently thereafter. The last contacts with China are attested around 930.

In its widest geographical extension, Sogdian commerce embraced the whole of the Eurasian steppe from the Crimea to Korea. Texts everywhere prove the presence of Sogdian merchants. These were both the bearers of east-west commerce and the principal intermediaries between nomadic and sedentary peoples over an area which far surpassed the geographical limits of Central Asia. In this latter role, the Sogdians went beyond their specialization in precious goods, securing all the trade, great and small, between the two economic areas. Their participation in the horse trade placed them at the center of one of the major economic phenomena of the early Middle Ages in East Asia. They were also the precursors of the other great commercial activity linking the steppe and the sedentary world, the trade in furs and slaves during the Muslim era. Slaves and musk were the last long-distance specialties which Samarkand still retained in the 10th century. Central Asia would not subsequently regain such an economic and cultural role. In the Mongol Empire, as in that of Tamerlane, important commercial exchanges would be made by way of Central Asia, but silk would no longer have the price in the Near East that it had possessed in the 7th century.

For all that, the history of the Sogdian merchants as it appears at the conclusion of this investigation is far from complete. The lacunae in the documentation leave many shadowy areas, and several logical key points of my argument have had to use indications rather than proofs. While large-scale Sogdian commerce is indeed a historical reality, its exact origin remains mysterious. I have clarified the context of its birth, but I still do not know what pushed the

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Sogdians to persist in their enterprises. While the economic reasons for the emigration of Sogdian merchants to Kushan India and China can be pieced together, the Sogdian social structure remains unknown at its root. This gap in our knowledge limits my work throughout. Also lacking, for the final phase of Sogdian commerce, is all information of a social nature which would enable us to follow the evolution of the merchant class in the new Muslim society. For the Sogdians' greatest years, the hazards of documentation give us economic and social information within Sogdiana only for Panjikent, a town tucked away in the Zarafshan valley. The reasons for merchant emigration, as well as the ways in which it was carried out, remain the great unknowns of the history of Sogdian commerce. Their absence has constrained me to speak of commerce and Sogdian merchants, rather than, for example, of commercial networks, which would certainly be more precise: aside from *Ancient Letter II*, no document from the great years of Sogdian commerce formally proves that we are dealing with networks rather than the trading activities of individual merchants, even if this seems immensely probable due to the distances involved. Knowledge of the systematic interactions of great and small merchants would make it possible to prove this, but this knowledge largely escapes us. From the texts, we are acquainted on the one hand with small merchants, and on the other with a Sogdo-Türk political structure, as well as certain connections between the two, in the entourage of An Lushan or of Sizabul. A social group of great merchants, on the model of the wealthy man mentioned at Paykent, must also have existed, but the chance preservation of documents has left it in the shadows.

In spite of these lacunae, my initial hypothesis—the existence of this historical object, a great commerce maintained by the Sogdian merchants—seems to me to be entirely verified: over several centuries it is possible to follow the developments of an economic and social structure corresponding to this appellation. Few other historical objects in the commercial domain of the early Middle Ages could be defined and studied in this way, for want of sources. The history of Sogdian commerce narrowly escapes such a danger. Across the centuries, Kang Seng hui, Nanai-vandak, Maniakh, and An Lushan belong indeed to the same *history*.

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