

**NEW WORK ON THE SOGDIANS, THE MOST
IMPORTANT TRADERS ON THE SILK ROAD,
A.D. 500-1000**

BY

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DE LA VAISSIÈRE, Étienne, *Histoire des marchands sogdiens*. Paris, Collège de France, Institut des Hautes Études Chinoises, Bibliothèque de l'Institut des Hautes Études Chinoises, Vol. XXXII, 2002. 413 pp. Bibliography, name index, concepts index, and index of authors and works cited.

RONG Xinjiang 榮新江. *Zhonggu Zhongguo yu wailai wenming* 中古中國與外來文明 (Middle-period China and outside cultures). Beijing, Shenghuo dushu xinzhi Sanlian shudian, 2001. 490 pp. Index.

The publication of these two fine books marks a breakthrough in the study of the Sogdians, the most important group of traders on the Silk Road. First mentioned in Persian inscriptions of the sixth century B.C., the region of Sogdiana (which spans modern-day Uzbekistan and Tajikistan) contained important city states like Samarkand, Bukhara, and Panjikent. Then, starting in A.D. 300 or so, the Sogdians began to expand east, first to Chāch (modern-day Tashkent) and Semirech'e (eastern Uzbekistan), and then beyond into China. Of clear importance to anyone who seeks to understand Central Asian or Chinese history, they offer a thought-provoking counter-example to world historians studying the empires of the past. Although never politically united, and never in possession of their own military force (but sometimes wealthy enough to hire mercenaries), they were able to form a commercial empire spanning most of Eurasia. The Sogdians dominated Central Asian trade from 500 to 1000. How did they do it?

The analyst seeking to understand the history of the Sogdians immediately encounters a formidable barrier: the paucity of Sogdian-language materials. The Sogdians spoke and wrote Sogdian, an Iranian language like Middle Persian, of which perhaps twenty scholars in the world today can claim a genuine understanding. Since the early twentieth century scholars have known about the eight letters (five intact, three fragmentary) that Aurel Stein's workmen unearthed in a watchtower near Loulan as well as a group of over one thousand Manichean, Christian, and Buddhist texts in Sogdian found at Turfan. The discovery of a corpus of some one hundred shorter texts at Mount Mugh (outside Panjikent, Tajikistan) followed in 1933. Since then other isolated materials have turned up: various coins; an important contract dated 639 found at Turfan (see the Appendix below for Yoshida Yutaka's translation); some Sogdian graffiti on the Karakorum highway, occasional inscriptions giving the weight of silver bowls or the length of silk textiles.

In short, Sogdian-language materials are surprisingly few, and not all pertain to commerce. Fortunately, the various peoples who encountered the Sogdians, particularly the Chinese, wrote about them. In addition, a team of Soviet archaeologists led by Boris Marshak has excavated Panjikent for over fifty years, providing an extraordinarily well-documented example of settlement archaeology in a field dominated by tomb excavations. Chinese archaeologists have also unearthed several different tombs of deceased Sogdian exatriates during the past decade.¹

Of course, such a variegated sourcebase poses considerable difficulties. Few can read all the primary sources in Sogdian, classical Chinese, and Arabic along with the voluminous secondary literature (including site reports) in Russian, modern Chinese, German, French, English, and Japanese. Yet the authors of these two studies have extraordinary linguistic reach. De la Vaissière draws on materials in Greek, Arabic, Russian, and Sogdian, and he handles the secondary literature in European languages with ease. In addition, he can handle Chinese materials, with the occasional assistance of his colleague, Éric Trombert, who checked all the translations from Chinese. The book is a revised version of his doctoral thesis, submitted to the *École Pratique des Hautes Études*, Section des sciences historiques et philologiques, where he is now *Maître de conférences*. Rong Xinjiang, a professor of Chinese history at Pe-

king University, possesses unparalleled knowledge of classical Chinese sources from the first millennium, and, like a handful of first-rate young Chinese scholars, he is also conversant with secondary materials in English, French, German, and Japanese.

The two books under review complement each other so perfectly that it is hard to believe that their authors did not agree to a prior division of labor. Focusing on the Sogdians in Sogdiana, de la Vaissière traces the history of the Sogdians from their first mention in Achaemenid sources to their decline in the tenth and eleventh centuries. Rong Xinjiang introduces some of the materials in Sogdian, which he does not read, to a Chinese audience, but his genuine contribution lies in a comprehensive survey of Chinese materials. He documents the Sogdian presence in almost every important Chinese city, whether on the Silk Road or in the interior of north China.

This review essay will introduce the major findings of the two monographs, highlighting their contributions to our understanding of Sogdian history. Several questions guide the following discussion. What conditions made it possible for the Sogdians to expand into other regions? What was the nature of their empire? Finally, what contributed to their decline?

The recorded history of the Sogdians begins with Aurel Stein's discovery of an abandoned mailbag with eight Sogdian letters ninety kilometers northwest of Dunhuang, on the way to Loulan. De la Vaissière provides a wonderfully clear map [facing p. 66] that shows the find-spot of the letters plus all the place names they mention: Samarkand, Dunhuang, Jiuquan, Wuwei, Lanzhou, Chang'an, and Luoyang. His second chapter (pp. 48-76) does a masterful job of teasing out the full implications of these fascinating documents. Some of the letters were local (the first and third letters were from the same woman, a resident of Dunhuang, to her mother and her husband); the second letter was from a merchant named Nanai vandak to his business partner and relative in Samarkand about trade in woolen goods, linen, and musk. Other letters mention gold, wine, peppers, silver, ceruse (a cosmetic with white lead), camphor, and possibly rice. Nanai-vandak's letter describes a community of freemen from Samarkand in one locality (unfortunately illegible but possibly Dunhuang) and forty in another.²

¹ For a list of these discoveries, see Rong p. 114, notes 1-6.

² Nicholas Sims-Williams, "Sogdian Ancient Letter 2," in Annette L. Juliano

The dating of the letters has spawned considerable controversy because the only dates in them are the reign years of otherwise-unknown rulers. Stein's workmen found them in a rubbish-filled passageway at the base of a watchtower along with some Chinese documents from Wang Mang's reign (A.D. 9-23) and a piece of silk with Kharoṣṭhī script on it, probably dating to before A.D. 400. The letters mention the sack of Luoyang, which occurred in 190, 311, or 535, and de la Vaisière, like most experts, prefers the date of 311, as established by Walter Henning, when the emperor fled the famine-torn city.

Writing the history of the Sogdians without the Sogdian letters is almost unthinkable. De la Vaisière's first chapter does a noble, thorough job of tracing all the mentions of the Sogdians in various Persian, Greek, and Chinese sources. Very few of these sources name the Sogdians specifically, so de la Vaisière provides an overall sketch of Central Asian trade, suggesting that three different routes (through Bactria, Syr Daria, and Sogdiana) coexisted. He raises the possibility that the Sogdians, along with others, were involved in long-distance lapis lazuli trade. Archaeologists have found no coins in Samarkand from this early period, an indication that, in the second century B.C., before Zhang Qian's famed journey to Central Asia, Samarkand's economy was primarily agricultural.

Various Chinese sources mention individual Sogdians, some merchants, some early Buddhist translators, who moved to China in the third and fourth centuries. Equally tantalizing are the 650 Sogdian-language inscriptions found along the Karakorum Highway, 550 of which were found at Shatal. Dating perhaps to the third to fifth centuries, they provide almost no information except the name of the traveler, his father, and possibly the grandfather as well. These scattered materials reveal that Sogdians were on the move, but they do not provide sufficient information to determine either the exact patterns of migration or the Sogdians' trade routes.

The political history of Central Asia between 350 and 500 saw several changes of ruling dynasty, with rule first by the Kidarites and then by the Hephthalites. Archeological evidence suggests that,

and Judith Lerner (eds.), *Monks and Merchants: Silk Road Treasures from Northwest China*. New York: Harry N. Abrams with The Asia Society, 2001, pp. 47-49. A full English translation of the fifth letter has also been published: Frantz Grenet, Nicholas Sims-Williams, and Etienne de la Vaisière, "The Sogdian Ancient Letter V," in *Alexander's Legacy in the East: Studies in Honor of Paul Bernard* (*Bulletin of the Asia Institute* 12), 2001, pp. 91-104.

during this time, the Sogdians were able to settle farther east into Chach and Semirech'e. Before 500 neither region had been within the Sogdian world, but after 500 both became entirely so. The Sogdians brought new irrigation techniques, orchards, coins, and bigger cities. De la Vaisière brilliantly synthesizes scattered Soviet-era archeological reports into a coherent narrative that explains why, when Chinese visitors like Xuanzang came to these regions in the seventh century, they simply assumed they were as Sogdian in the core areas of Samarkand and Bukhara.

The seventh and eighth centuries mark the fullest extent of the Sogdian expansion and are the best-documented. In Sogdian we have the 639 contract for the purchase of a slave girl by a *smay* (the Sogdian rendering of the Sanskrit *śramana*, conventionally translated as monk) in Turfan as well as the cache of documents found at Mount Mugh, which date to the early eighth century. De la Vaisière offers a full translation of the 639 contract (pp. 165-166), which has previously been published only in a fully annotated translation into Japanese by Yoshida Yutaka. Professor Yoshida has very graciously agreed to prepare an English translation, with some modifications from his earlier readings, as an appendix to this review.

De la Vaisière devotes only a page of text to its analysis. Similarly brief is his discussion of the documents from Mount Mugh, which include but a single mention of "merchants" (p. 157). It is a rare experience for the reader of a monograph over 300 pages to wish for more, but one cannot help thinking that de la Vaisière could have used his considerable analytic skills to portray the Sogdians' legal system, however tentatively, on the basis of this admittedly tiny body of contracts. Even if the Sogdians' legal code is no longer extant, we may surmise that their legal system facilitated their dramatic expansion because of the protections it offered for Sogdian commercial activity.

Before Rong Xinjiang published his influential article, no one realized how extensive the Sogdians' expansion into China was.³

³ The article, entitled "Beihao Sui Tang Sute ren zhi qianxi ji qi jinhao" 北朝隋唐粟特人之遷徙及其居落, first appeared in *Gaouxue yanjiu* 國學研究 6 (1999): 27-86, and is contained in Rong's book, pp. 37-110. It was subsequently translated into English by Bruce Doar, "The Migrations and Settlements of the Sogdians in the Northern Dynasties, Sui and Tang", and appeared in the December 2000 issue of *China Archaeology and Art Digest* 4 (December 2000): 117-163. This review gives the page numbers first to Doar's fine translation and then to Rong's book.

The article opens with a cartographically stark map entitled "Map Showing Sogdian Migration Routes and Settlements in 6th-9th Century China." From their homeland in the Samarkand region the Sogdians spread into the northern and southern silk routes of the Tarm Basin, the Gansu corridor, and the twin capitals of Chang'an and Luoyang. More surprising, still, is their presence in north China—in the Ordos valley of modern-day Inner Mongolia, in Hebei, and even as far as Yingzhou 營州 (Chaoyang, Liaoning), the childhood home of the famous Sogdian rebel An Lushan.

Rong's article proceeds geographically, place-by-place. As a result, he presents far more coverage of Sogdian presence in the capital cities of Luoyang and Chang'an than for other localities, like those in Hebei, which are mentioned only once in a single epitaph. A tour-de-force in terms of raw research, Rong's careful study of the newly published series of epitaphs has allowed him to identify individual Sogdians in many different communities, and he has artfully drawn on excavated epitaphs from Guyuan, Ningxia, to flesh out his picture of the many Sogdians active in China.

Although the article is organized geographically, Rong's argument emerges clearly: Sogdians came to China for a host of reasons, each specific to a given locality, but as a group the Sogdians formed the most visible and the most influential of the non-Chinese groups resident in China during the Six Dynasties and Tang periods. While some may still conceive of traditional China as a society closed to foreigners, Tang China absorbed immigrants with extraordinary ease, allowing them to assume all the responsibilities and benefits of tax-payers. Tang officials listed Sogdians on household registers with no indication that they were foreign, awarded them land under the equal-field system, and granted them access to a legal system that even supplied interpreters for those who did not speak Chinese.

The Sogdian community of Chang'an included a wide variety of groups. Sogdians came to Chang'an early; one source mentions a single family of 3,000 Sogdians named Kang moving from Chang'an to Xiangyang 襄陽 (Xiangfan, Hubei) sometime between 420 and 422. The evidence from epitaphs permits Rong to identify 26 individuals (including An Lushan) who lived in Chang'an before 850 and 27 in Luoyang before 757; he provides maps of both Luoyang and Chang'an showing where these individuals lived. Not surprisingly they clustered around Chang'an's Western Market and

Luoyang's Southern Market, as the distribution of Zoroastrian temples confirms.

Several sources, both in Arabic and Chinese, describe whole communities of Sogdians moving to China with the support of merchants, but the names of specific merchants rarely survive, unless in documents from Turfan⁴ or Dunhuang. In 679 the Tang government also forcibly resettled Sogdians who had sided with the Turks into six prefectures in Inner Mongolia.⁵ De la Vaisière notes other examples where Chinese officials encouraged Sogdian merchants to settle in northern towns, including An Lushan's hometown of Yingzhou, so that they could supply the Chinese army with goods.

As anyone familiar with pre-modern Chinese sources might predict, we know much more about the Sogdians who held office—envoys in particular—than we do about ordinary people. Particularly informative are two tombs recently discovered in Taiyuan and Xi'an because they each contained an epitaph for the deceased: the Yu Hong 虜弘 (d. 592) tomb in Taiyuan was disturbed at the time of excavation while that of An Jia 安伽 (d. 579) in Chang'an was not. Yu Hong's epitaph identifies him as a native of Yuguo 魚國 (literally, the country of fishes), a place not mentioned in any contemporary source. A former envoy of the Persians, the Tuyuhun 吐谷渾, and the Yuezhi 月氏, he settled in Taiyuan as the leader of the foreign community (*sabao* 薩寶). *Sabao* is the Chinese rendering of the Sogdian word, *s'rb'w'*, itself probably a loanword (via Bactrian?) from the Sanskrit *sārabhava*, or caravan leader. An Jia, on the other hand, was a true Sogdian, bearing the last name An, given to those from Bukhara, and he settled in Chang'an, where he served as a *sabao*, when his ancestors moved there from Gansu.

Rong mines these and other Sogdian tombs for what they reveal about the life of a *sabao* in the Tang dynasty. His close reading of these tomb images can occasionally be forced when he assumes that they depict real-life scenes, such as banquets where the Sogdian

⁴ Wu Zhen 武震, "Asitana Halahezhuo gumuqun kaogu ziliao zhong suojian de huren" 阿斯塔那—哈拉和卓古墓群考古資料中所見的胡人, *Dunhuang Tulufan yanjiu* 敦煌吐魯番研究 4 (1999): 245-264; English translation by Valerie Hansen and Zhang Guangda: "Hu Non-Chinese as They Appear in the Materials from the Astana Graveyard at Turfan," *Sino-Platonic Papers* #119, Summer 2002.

⁵ E. G. Pulleyblank, "A Sogdian Colony in Inner Mongolia," *T'oung Pao* 41 (1952): 317-356.

swirl was performed or meetings between Sogdians and Turks. He does not consider the possibility that the artist idealized such scenes, perhaps with the aim of depicting the afterlife. Yet his analysis of these envoys' tombs stands as the most thorough to date, and his illustrations, particularly the black-and-white drawings from the An Jia tomb, are far clearer than anything published in the archeological journals.

Written documents give some data about the total number of Sogdian envoys in China during the Tang. In 787, with the fall of Qinghai and Gansu to Tibet, the prime minister Li Mi 李泌 made a decision to cut off government subsidies for all those foreign envoys who owned land in the capital because he was "aware that many of these Central Asians were long-term residents, some having been in the capital for more than forty years, that they had all married, purchased land and housing and made other investments on which they earned interest, and that they had no intention of ever returning to their homelands".⁶ Most of these Central Asians were, in fact, Sogdians. While Li Mi put the number of envoys in the capital at 4,000, Rong correctly points out that many envoys would have left the capital after the An Lushan rebellion of 755-763, so even more had lived there before 755.

Rong has unearthed extraordinarily detailed information about the Zoroastrian religion the Sogdians practiced in China. As soon as a community of Sogdian exiles reached a certain size—perhaps only a hundred households—it would name a *sabao* and build a Zoroastrian temple. Much ink has been devoted to the question of whether the *sabao* exercised exclusively religious *or* only political authority, yet de la Vaissière and Rong prudently concur that he must have exercised both. The flexibility of the *sabao* system facilitated Sogdian expansion: the formation of a small social unit of Sogdians, headed by a *sabao*, allowed Sogdians to continue their religious practices and maintain their group identity even after moving to a new place.

Chinese reports about Sogdian religion range from the magical to the ethnographically more reliable. In his miscellaneous notes, the Tang scholar Zhang Zhuo 張鷟 describes a Zoroastrian priest who drives nails into his body, flies to another Zoroastrian temple (in Zhangye, Gansu?) and then returns, which may reflect what a

devotee actually told the author (Doar p. 133; Rong p. 68). In contrast, the official history of the Tang reports more plausibly that one thousand dogs picked the bones of the dead clean in the outskirts of Taiyuan (Doar p. 147; Rong p. 97). This was, of course, because the Zoroastrians thought the flesh of the dead polluting, so the bones of the deceased had to be cleaned before burial.

The tumultuous An Lushan rebellion (755-763) marks the beginning of the decline of the Sogdians. Born to a Turkish mother and a Sogdian father, An Lushan grew up in a Sogdian community and earned his living supplying goods to the Chinese army. An oft-cited passage from *The history of An Lushan* (An Lushan shiji 安祿山事跡) describes him receiving merchants:

Concealed among the other Sogdian traders in every circuit when he did business, he annually traded hundreds of thousands in rare goods from exotic places. Whenever merchants came to him, Lushan would be dressed in Sogdian garb and seated on a large couch. Incense would be burning and the treasures laid out before him. More than one hundred Sogdian servants attended him and all Sogdians paid homage to him and solicited blessings from heaven. Lushan had animals laid out to be sacrificed and magi (zhan 占巫) would strike drums and perform dances and sing songs. The performance continued until dawn and then the gathering would disperse.⁷

Rong argues persuasively that this type of gathering was not purely a commercial event but rather a religious ceremony, and that An portrayed himself as a spiritual leader in order to gain the loyalty of the Sogdian community.

The name Lushan 祿山, itself the Chinese transcription for the Sogdian word *roxšan* (luminous), suggests to Rong that An portrayed himself as a light-bearing god to his followers. The recent excavation of the tomb of Shi Siming 史思明, the second in command to An, in Beijing reinforces Rong's reading. Shi's epitaph referred to him with the title Zhaowu Huangdi 昭武皇帝, which Rong understands as the emperor of the Sogdians, because the Sogdians were often referred to in Chinese by the blanket term, the *Zhaowu jinxing* 昭武九姓 (the nine surnames of Zhaowu) (Doar p. 150; Rong p. 109). De la Vaissière offers a different, more persuasive analysis of the term based on the research of the Soviet scholar Olga Ivanovna Smirnova: *zhaowu* was the Chinese transcription of the Sogdian word *jamuk*, or jewel, so Shi Siming claimed to be the Jeweled Emperor. Accordingly, the nine surnames of Zhaowu can

⁶ Pp. 138-139 in English translation; pp. 79-80 in Chinese. Sima Guang, *Zizhi tongjian* (Beijing: Guji chubanshe, 1957), *juan* 232, p. 7493.

⁷ Doar p. 150; Rong p. 107.

best be understood as the “nine jeweled surnames,” a general term for the Sogdian community (p. 216).

Given that at the beginning of the eighth century the Sogdians commanded the most influence of any non-Chinese group in Tang society, what contributed to their almost total disappearance by the Song dynasty? Here, the analyses of de la Vaissière and Rong vary slightly. De la Vaissière sees the suppression of the An Lushan rebellion as leading directly to the decline of the Sogdians. He cites a chilling ninth-century description of the orders a Tang general (himself originally Korean) gave to his men who had recovered the city of Beijing from the rebel armies:

Gao Juren ordered that those who killed *hu* 胡 (Western Asians) would be richly rewarded. As a result, the *jielu* 羯胡 were completely exterminated. Small children were tossed in the air and caught on lances. Those who had big noses like the Western Asians and those who were killed by mistake for this reason were extremely numerous (p. 217).⁸

If similar pogrom-like attacks on Sogdians occurred in other Chinese cities, we can easily understand why Sogdians might have fled to Uighur-ruled areas like Turfan or simply gone underground within China.

Rong, in contrast, sees the Sogdians as more resilient and taking action to distance themselves from the rebels. Even after the fall of the Tang in 910, the Sogdians remained influential, he notes, particularly in Hebei. It is possible, of course, that both de la Vaissière and Rong are correct: Sogdians in Beijing and other places may have been persecuted while those in other regions managed to evade harm.

One might expect that, following the An Lushan rebellion, Sogdian merchants would have retreated to their homeland around Samarkand and continued much as before, but de la Vaissière draws on Arabic geographies to trace the decline of the Sogdians. He suggests that Samarkand was not as dynamic as earlier, and that the number of goods the Sogdians traded shrank; but the reader cannot help wondering if Arab sources offer sufficient evidence to support his views. True, people from Samarkand do seem to play a smaller

role in the Abbasid empire, perhaps because many adopted Muslim names, thus obscuring their background. The people of Sogdiana put up prolonged opposition to the caliphate's armies in the eighth century and resisted Islamicization for a long time even after the fall of Samarkand in 712. Several tenth-century rosters of pious Muslims resident in or simply passing through Nishapur list almost no Sogdians (p. 285).

Whether or not one accepts this depiction of the economic decline of Samarkand, it is undeniable that, by the tenth and eleventh centuries, Sogdian had almost entirely ceased to be spoken. In the second half of the eleventh century Mahmūd of Kashgar noticed widespread bilingualism in the Semirechi'e region: Sogdian was spoken only as a second language by families who also spoke Turkish (p. 329). At this point, with the death of their language, the history of the Sogdians comes to end.

Like any summary, this review cannot convey the full richness of the two books examined. Both deserve to be read in their entirety because they are lucidly written and completely accessible to someone new to Central Asian history. Each is copiously annotated; simply following up on the exhaustive footnotes provides a genuinely pleasurable education. In short, these books by de la Vaissière and Rong Xinjiang have elevated the study of the Sogdians to a higher plateau, and those of us in Chinese, Central Asian, and European history are all the richer for it.

APPENDIX

TRANSLATION OF THE CONTRACT FOR THE PURCHASE OF A SLAVE
GIRL FOUND AT TURFAN AND DATED 639

BY

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Recto

[1. 1] As to the year, it was the year 16 of divine and great Heberking [by the name] of Yanchyu, [the ruler] of Gaochang, in the fifth [1. 2] month [of the] Chinese [calendar], [while] it is called the Kshumsafich month in Sogdian, in the year of pig, on the twenty-seventh [day].

⁸ Des Rotours, *Histoire de Nagan Lou-chan* (Nagan Lou-chan che tsai), Paris, Collège de France, Institut des Hautes Études Chinoises, Bibliothèque de l'Institut des Hautes Études Chinoises, vol. XVIII, p. 346. The exact meaning of *jie* is not clear, although it clearly denotes a sub-group within the larger category of *hu*, and it was sometimes used to indicate those claiming descent from the Xiongnu.

[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 Wakhshuvirt, son of Tudhakk originating from Samarqand, [l. 6] for [the price of] 120 drachms [coins which are] very pure [and were] minted in [Sasanian] 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] unapproachable permanent possession [of] his sons, grandsons, family, and descendants [as well]. Accordingly, [l. 9] the monk Yansyan himself and his sons, grandsons, 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 drachm.

[Accordingly,] as regards this female slave [named] [l. 14] Upach, Wakhshuvirt 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 and is persuasive (?), and effective and authorized for all the people, [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 Maymargh, 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 Wakhshuvirt, 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.

Commentary

I have slightly modified my original translation because of subsequent studies and discoveries. For a photograph of the contract, the Sogdian transcription, and a fully annotated translation into Japanese, see Yoshida Yutaka 吉田豊, Moriyasu Takao 森安孝夫, Xinjiang Uighur Autonomous Museum, "Kikushi Kōshōkoku jidai Sogudobun onna dorei baibai monjo" 麹氏高昌國時代ソグド女奴隷買賣文書 (A Sogdian contract of a female slave from the period of the Gaochang kingdom under the rule of the Qu clan), *Nairiku Ajia gengo no kenkyū* (Studies on the Inner Asian Languages) 4 (1988): 1-50. The line-numbering below refers to the original document.

line 1: Chinanchkanth (Cyn'ncnθ), which literally means "Chinese-town," is rendered here as "Gaochang," which denotes both the kingdom and the city of Gaochang. Ilteber is a title given by the Western Turks to kings under their rule.

line 2: The Chinese luni-solar month did not correspond one to one with that of the Sogdian solar calendar.

line 2: Yansyan of the Chan family is now to be tentatively identified with Zhang Yanxiang 張延相, encountered in *Tubysfan chutu wenstu* vol. 3, p. 163 and *Tubysfan chutu wenstu* vol. 4, p. 130.

line 5: Samarqandch, an adjective denoting the originating oasis should refer to Wakhshuvirt. Cf. also similar adjectives found in lines 19-21.

line 8: -šn consists of an enclitic pronoun -š and a hypothetical particle -n. Cf. also -šn in line 11.

line 14: The text uses a third-person singular form although one would expect the third-person plural.

line 15: šym'k "effective," *pm'n* "having authority."

line 16: These adjectives seem to describe the legitimate or full possession on the part of the purchaser, and "born on one's side" is to be taken in such a context; partial possession is known to have existed in Sasanian Persia.

line 17: The meaning of some words remains uncertain, but the context seems to be clear in that we have a statement that Wakhshuvirt no longer has any right to the female slave.

Verso

One finds the letter δ which is almost certainly short for $\delta y p e s t h$, "female slave contract".