

“SOGDIA NS IN CHINA: A PHENOMENON IN HISTORY AND CULTURE IN MEDIEVAL CHINA”

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ABSTRACT:

The basis of the existence of any state, nation, people is language, culture and customs, the expression of which is their own national history, writing, culture. Despite the complex history of the written culture of Sogdian civilization, it played a huge interconnecting and culturally transforming role in the existing communities and made a real significant contribution to the history of international relations of the Sogdian people, which over its long history created its own distinctive writing and its culture. An analysis of the disclosure of writing shows that in the early nomadic states a new cultural and historical foundation began to be created for subsequent development. The problem of the laws of historical development, taking into account local options, cannot be considered fully resolved until the history of the peoples inhabiting ancient Uzbekistan and Central Asia is consecrated. The role played by these peoples in the history of mankind has been enormously noted, so far only in connection with the history of neighboring countries: China in the east, Iran in the south, Byzantium in the west and Turkic kaganate in the north. In the early Middle Ages, micro-oases existed in Central Asia, the inhabitants of which formed distinctive cultures, maintaining close ties with the population of neighboring regions and surrounding nomadic tribes. During this period of its brilliant development, a culture created by the inhabitants of the Zarafshan valley - Sogdians - reached. An integral component of Sogdian culture was the innovation introduced directly or indirectly by Turkic tribes.

Keywords:

Central Asia, China, Sogdians, Samarkand, Dunhuang, Uzbekistan, Silk Road, Afrasiab, Turkestan, India.

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INTRODUCTION

In the Tang period, representatives of different Iranian-speaking peoples arrived in China, both from faraway Iran (Persians) and neighboring East Turkestan (Khotanians and others), but the Sogdians from Central Asia were the largest and most influential group. The center of Sogd (Sogdiana) was the district of Samarkand and the oases adjacent to it. The earliest contacts of Iranian-speaking Sogdians with China date back to the 3rd century. BC, to the beginning of the Sogdian colonization of Central Asia. The penetration of the Sogdians into Central Asia was caused by the invasion of the Greco-Macedonian army of Alexander the Great in Sogdiana in the 4th century. BC, accompanied by the destruction of their settlements and the mass destruction of the population. Sogdians, forced to leave their

country, settled mainly along the routes of the Great Silk Road, along which international trade was carried out between the countries of the Far East and West. First of all, they moved to the neighboring oasis states of East Turkestan, from where they continued their advance further north and east. [1]

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Central Asia was a gathering place and transit route for merchants from many countries. Our historical sources are insufficient to document a continuous story about the trade and cultural interaction in Central Asia from 500 to 1500 BC. However, we know a lot about cities and trade during this period. Briefly commenting on the geography and routes, we will turn to the activities of the inhabitants of Central Asia, known as

Sogdians, who played an important role in bringing Western goods and culture to China. They will be replaced when, with the spread of Islam in the seventh and eighth centuries, Muslim merchants became very important throughout Eurasia. Later, in the thirteenth century, the most striking event was the creation of the Mongol Empire. When the Mongols controlled all of Eurasia, land trade routes and cultural exchange flourished more than ever. After the onset of the decline of the Mongols, that land trade through Central Asia also continued and was often important right up to the present. Trade in Central Asia passed through a complex network of routes running in all directions. First of all, these were East-West routes connecting Europe with China, important routes ran between the North and the South. For example, India has always been very closely connected with Central Asia culturally and economically. One of the impressive facts about trade in Central Asia is how aggressively traders overcame what today may seem impossible to travel. To reach the great oasis cities, such as Samarkand and Bukhara (Uzbekistan), caravans had to cross-deserts, where you could easily get lost forever in a sandstorm or die from a lack of water. Routes also crossed high mountains; passes often exceeded 5,000 meters.

Merchants of these land trade routes rarely traveled the entire distance from the place of origin of the goods to their final destination. For this reason, trade diasporas, sedentary communities of traders located at various points along the trade routes at some distance from the homes of individuals - played an important role in trade. They organized caravans, hired agents, bought and sold in local markets, talked about financing and procurement, and possibly sent some of their representatives along with caravans on trips. [2]

Interest in the study of trade routes connecting East and West, the contribution of Sogdians and other peoples on the Great Silk Road arose in antiquity. When silk and other exotic goods reached the Mediterranean, Greco-

Roman scholars began to collect data on distant lands and their routes. Then the first works on trade routes and their directions began to appear. [3] Information on the cultural and commercial exchange between Central Asia and China is also given in Chinese chronicles starting from the 1st century. BC. on the VII-VIII centuries. However, a real scientific interest in the international trade route appeared in the XIX century.

The term "Great Silk Road" was first used in the second half of the XIV century. by the famous German geographer Ferdinand Von Richthofen to describe the trade routes along which already at the beginning of the 2nd century. BC. versatile ties of Central Asia and China began. Noting the importance of starting contacts, exchanging goods and achievements, even then this German researcher, as well as other scientists - K. Ritter, V. Tomaszek and G. Bretschneider pointed to the role of Sogdians in the beginning of a new form of cooperation between peoples. [4]

The end of the XIX and the beginning of the XX century were marked by extremely scientifically important and sensational archaeological discoveries in Central Asia, in particular in Xinjiang. Expeditions of Russian, English and German scientists actively worked here (S.F. Oldenburg, A. Stein, A. Grünwedel, A. Lekok). Among the finds of remarkable examples of art, numerous manuscripts and objects of material culture there were many materials indicating the activities of Sogdians on the trade routes of Khotan and Western China. In 1907, in one of the towers of the Great Wall of China, west of Dunhuang, A. Stein discovered Sogdian documents, known in science as "Old Letters". Documents belonging to the local Sogdian community were dated 311-313. The "Old Letters" became an invaluable source and were used in the research of many scholars who studied the history of Sogd and the Great Silk Road (VB Hening, G.O. Halun, etc.).

The next important stage already from China to Sogdian research began in the 1930s; its

pace accelerated in the 1990s, and it shows no signs of slowing, as evidenced by numerous books and articles published in China and several conferences dedicated to Sogdians in their homeland, but especially in China and Xinjiang [5]

In the III centuries. BC. the scale of Sogdian trade activity reached East Turkestan and China, where trade colonies arose. Gradually, on the territory of Central Asia and East Turkestan, a single ethnocultural space was formed that determined the nature of Sogdian-Chinese relations. So, in the era of the Northern Wei dynasty (386-550) and Sui (581-618), the Chinese ambassadors (Wang Enshen, Hei Wang, Tue Yuan, Shao Ming, Zhejiba, Wei Jie) visited Sogd, and in the era of the Tang dynasty (618- 907) in 627-647 years. 9 ambassadorial missions were sent from Sogd to China. [6]

Sogdians held leading positions in Gansu and Ordos. The governor (duhufu) of the Bei-en district was the Samarkand - Kang Su-mi, and the ruler of Weizhou district was the Bukhara - An Tu-khan. The authority of the Sogdians also increased in the cities of Shazhou (Dunhuang), Guazhou (Ansi), Suzhou (Zhuyuan), Ganzhou (Zhangye), Langzhou (Uwei) and Lanzhou (the center of Gansu). The Chinese government announced that "zhaowu shin hu hu" - "hu (sogdians) from nine lands" were exempted from various harassment, that the Hesi corridor was considered very beneficial for trade. Chinese historians Wang Zhengya and Guang Liangzhi praised the activities of the Sogdians on the Great Silk Road of the period 5 century BC - 10th century AD [7]

Part of the documents of the II-IV centuries., Referred to as "Old Letters", as well as the message of 639 [8] dedicated to the sale of a slave woman named Upachakh from Turkestan, testify that the Sogdians maintained permanent contact with their metropolis - Sogd.

According to document B-27 from the archive from Mount Mug, in the 7th-8th centuries. in Sogd, Chinese-style bronze coins were minted -

"pan (s)" or "pung" and. In general, Sino-Sogdian relations went through a multifaceted and, at the same time, complex process.

Zoroastrianism also strengthened its position in the Sogdian colonies, where temple structures - "vagnyas" were erected everywhere, in which priests - "vagnpati" performed their services. Zoroastrian monasteries were built in Dunhuang and Luoyang, the capital of North Wei. Elements of Zoroastrianism had an impact on the fine arts of China.

Central Asia also played an important role in the spread of Buddhism in China. In particular, Central Asian missionaries (Kang Mengxiang, Kang Juhai) directly participated in its distribution. In turn, Buddhist monks from China (Xuan Zang, Zhang Chiang, Ban Chao) visited Central Asia for various purposes.

Sogdian missionaries also contributed to the spread of Buddhism among the Turks in the territory of Orkhon and Turpan.

The spread of Christianity in Central Asia falls on the period II-III century. In the appearance of Christian communities in the cities of Semirechye and Kashgar in the IV-VII centuries. Sogdian missionaries played a large role. This is evidenced by the translated religious literature found in Turpan and Boulayik (East Turkestan), executed by Syrian script in Sogdian. [9]

One of the most famous diasporas that have been operating throughout Asia for several centuries was the Sogdians, whose homeland was in the region now called southern Uzbekistan and western Tajikistan. Sogdians were active in China as early as the fourth century, and we know that they traveled through the mountain valleys of northern Pakistan to trade with South and Southeast Asia. Although they never created powerful states, their cities such as Samarkand and Panjakent flourished until the Arab conquests in Central Asia at the beginning of the eighth century. Persian-speaking, the Sogdians were obviously heavily influenced by the culture of Sassanian Persia, the state that dominated the Middle East until it was conquered by the Arabs.

Sassanid silver coins were one of the important trading currencies in Central Asia. Where we find evidence of the Sogdian colonies in China, we also find Sassanid coins.

Although Chinese trade with Central Asia began much earlier, under the Tang Dynasty (618-906), it flourished more than ever. Great popularity was enjoyed not only by the Central Asian horses, so valued for the army, but also by various Central Asian luxuries. Products included spices and minerals that were widely used in medicine: precious and semiprecious stones, furs, metal products, exotic fruits, and, very importantly, people. Musicians and dancers from Central Asia were highly appreciated, as we know from the paintings and statues depicting Afrasiab whole orchestras and figures performing the "Sogdian whirlwind". In return, China exported silk, ceramics, spices, and minerals not available in Central Asia. When the Sogdians adorned one of their palaces in Samarkand in the middle of the 7th century, various embassies, including the Chinese, were depicted. For at least a short period, the ruler of Sogdiana took over the political power of Emperor Tang. [10]

Sogdians played a significant historical role on the Silk Road. Traveling the world as leaders of caravans organized in retail chains, they settled in Byzantium and in the heart of China. Sogdian was the lingua franca The Silk Road for several hundred years, and the Sogdians acted as mediators in the courts and were outstanding translators of Buddhist texts. Fire temples were erected in Chinese capitals, and people brought in exotic products that they imported.

Moritz Huber's socio-historical study provides a translation of the transmitted Chinese records of Sogdians in Sogdiana and China and combines them with archaeological data to present a differentiated picture of their presence in China from the 3rd to the 10th century CE. In addition to transcribing and translating all Sogdian epitaphs from the archaeological context, used to tell their interconnected biographies, as well as a detailed

discussion of their political organization in China under the auspices of sabao 保保 / 薩寶, this publication also includes a case study of Shi families in Guyuan Province, Ningxia Province. [11]

Sogdians, the indigenous people of the country of Shod, whose name is mentioned in inscriptions first belonging to the Persian Empire, was the most important Iranian language in terms of intercultural contacts and commercial activities in the region, which today was called Central Asia during the periods of early and late antiquity. Although their capital is located around Samarkand, the Sogdians, in which there are colonies in almost all major shopping centers on the historic Silk Road from Crimea to Western China and even to India, preferred trade rather than war in transporting religious and cultural wealth in these regions. They played an important role in their transmission, thus mixing languages, religions and cultures. The Sogdians, who are the main participants in the interaction between China and Central Asia, India and Central Asia, also include Zoroastrianism, Buddhism, Manichaeism, Christianity, Nestorianism; they were sincere missionaries of religions.

After the invasion of Persia, the invasion of Alexander the Great, and then the Greeks and Ephtalites, respectively, in the second half of the sixth century BC, in the Sogdian country, in which the Ottoman Turkey dominated in the sixth century BC, weakly vassal governments ruled, which in general were politically connected with a great power.

Sogdians could not resist the attacks of Muslim Arab armies in the first half of the eighth century in their homeland, and Samarkand and the surrounding Arabs, included in this geography by the Arabs, were called "Maveraunnehir" (across the river). After the assassination of Devashtich, the last king of Penjikent, who remains today on the borders of Tajikistan on Mount Mug, they completed their missions with concrete and abstract cultural

material that they left earlier. Sogdians became Muslims shortly after the conquest of the Arab-Islamic armies, and in the twelfth century they were completely withdrawn from the historical scene, mixed with other Iranian peoples and partially Turkized. Sogd, one of the historical East Iranian languages such as Sakaka and Harezme, has been a dead language for almost nine centuries. [12]

The main reason for the flourishing of Sogdian research was, on the one hand, the improvement of communication between the involved experts, and, on the other hand, random discoveries in China, which added a new angle to the perception of the historical role of Sogdian.

Sogdiana and Sogdians were most attractive because of their historical role as intermediaries on the Silk Road, and also because of their particularly refined artistic culture.

Another decisive factor in the development of Sogdian studies was the recent recognition of the Sogdian influx as the main factor in the cultural history of China during the periods of Wei, Qi, Song and the early Tang Dynasty (fifth to eighth centuries) after many years of indifference or actual denial by Chinese scholars. Commercial records in Turkish-Sogdian and Chinese, discovered in Turfan and Dunhuang, shed new light on the integration of Sogdian colonies into the social structure of early medieval China. At the same time, the impressive discovery of several sets of funerary reliefs commissioned by the Sogdians in the second half of the sixth century revealed a fully developed secular iconography in Sogdiana itself for this early period, of which almost no records have been preserved. At present, Sogdians are very popular among Chinese archaeologists and historians, and this trend can only be liked, even if it is sometimes accompanied by some excessive interpretation of the data. [13]

Representatives of different Iranian-speaking peoples settled in China, for example, Hotanians from East Turkestan, but the Sogdians were the largest group, whose place and role in

the internal life of the Celestial Empire is hardly comparable to those of other related groups.

The main stages in the formation of Turkic and Sogdian communities in China were associated with political conflicts in the steppe, which led to migrations to the Middle State of Turkic tribes and Sogdians living among them. The position of the Turks and Sogdians in the Tang Empire was different at different stages of its history. During the reign of the first three emperors - Gao Tzu (618-626 gg.), Taizong (627-649 gg.) And Gao Zong (650-683 gg.), When the Tang power carried out expansion, expanding the borders of the empire, Turkic cavalry were involved in military campaigns of the Tang army in the west, north and northeast of the country.

Iranian-speaking peoples constituted one of the main ethnic substrates of the population of Central Asia in ancient times. They played an important role in the history not only of Central Asia and the regions adjacent to it, but also of distant countries, including China.

Already in the first centuries A.D. Sogdians began to explore one of the most important cities on the Great Silk Road - Dunhuang, located in the western part of the modern Chinese province of Gansu. According to written monuments, the number of Sogdian population in Dunhuang at the beginning of the 4th century AD amounted to about one thousand people. Dunhuang Sogdians conducted major trade operations in the oases of East Turkestan and maintained contacts with merchants from Samarkand.

Speaking about the earliest contacts of the Sogdians with the Chinese, it should be noted that the Chinese did not get acquainted with the Sogdian culture in China, but in Central Asia. It was here that the Chinese merchants recognized their culture, religion and borrowed many words from the Sogdian language. The most intense Sogdian-Chinese contacts became in the Revolutionary era, when the Sogdian colonies appeared on the territory of China. It was previously believed that Sogdians came to China as a result of the collapse of the East Turkic and

West Turkic Khaganates in the 7th century. The discoveries of recent decades have corrected this view. We are talking about new epitaphs (Chinese style) found in burials in China. These epitaphs, unlike tombstones, were not installed outside, but inside tombs. After the capital of North Wei (386-534) was transferred to the city of Luoyang, a tradition was established to record the name of the deceased and information from his life on stone slabs. Currently, more than ten epitaphs have been found for noble Sogdians. These include epitaphs for members of the Shi family from Guyuan, a small town in the northwestern part of the present Ningxia Hui Autonomous Region of the PRC. The study of the information of these epitaphs allowed researchers to establish family relations between seven Sogdians who came from the Tashkent region and belonged to two clans: a) Shi Sheu, Shi Hetyan, Shi Daolo, Shi Teban; b) Shi Soyan and his wife, as well as Shi Daode. The Shi clan was connected by marriage with the An families from Bukhara and Kan from Samarkand. The epitaphs mention twenty-one names of related people and testimony in 610, during the rule of the Sui dynasty (581-618). It reports that the ancestors of the deceased arrived from the West, his grandfather and great-grandfather served as "sabao", and his father lost this post. Regarding the term "sabao" there are many studies of Japanese and Chinese scientists. This term goes back to the Sogdian *sartpau*, meaning "the head of the caravan", and in China it was applied to the head of the Zoroastrian community.

Being skilled farmers and traders, bearers of culture and preachers of different religions, Sogdians gained great influence in Turkic society. The position of the Sogdians in the Tang Empire, as well as other foreigners, was different at different periods of its history. Their involvement in internal events in China depended not only on the policy of the Tang emperors regarding the "internal" foreigners, but also on the relationship of the Tang dynasty with its northern neighbors - the Turkic and Uigur Khaganates, in which the Sogdians played an extremely

important role. The role of the Sogdians in the Tang Empire was not limited to trade (there is an opinion that all trade in the country was concentrated in the hands of the Sogdians and other Iranian-speaking peoples of Central Asia). Sogdians held high military administrative posts in the provinces, were engaged in agricultural management, served as translators at the imperial court and at the headquarters of local military commanders and governors, carried out diplomatic missions and were good soldiers.

Undoubtedly, not all Sogdians in China came from the Khaganates, many came here directly from Sogdiana. This was discovered in 2003. in the city of Xi'an (formerly Chang'an) the burial of a noble Sogdian who lived during the reign of the Northern Zhou Dynasty. Tombstones in Chinese and Sogdian languages in the cemetery allow dating the burial to 579, members of the Sogdian family, who came from Tashkent and arrived in China from East Turkestan, were buried in the grave.

Sources record the existence of the Zoroastrian community in China in the III-IV centuries. The religion of fire-worshippers came here from the Sassanid empire, where it had the status of a state. Zoroastrian priests in China were called *sabao* or *safu*, which in Persian meant "head / head of the caravan." They were also the heads of the Sogdian communities in the Middle State.

In the Late Tang period, a significant part of the Sogdians joined the Chateau-Turks and Uyghurs. The above examples indicate that at least part of the Sogdians, immigrants from the Turkic and Uigur Khaganates, identified themselves as Turks, and it is often very difficult to determine their ethnic origin from the texts. The analysis of information about Sogdians in Tang China allowed Japanese scientists to put forward the concept of "Turkic Sogdians." [14]

In addition to practicing trade itself, one of the most important functions of the colony's population was to provide hospitality to visiting merchants, protect their interests as intermediaries

or guarantors, and also maintain contacts with trading "firms" in Sogd, and especially in its capital Samarkand and Bukhara. The Sogdian "Old Letters", as was noted, make it possible to get an idea of the activities of Sogdian merchants and sales agents, the nature of their operations and the vast areas of their activity. It can be assumed that in the middle of the VIII century. n e. the trading operations of the Sogdians living in the Dunhuang area were quite extensive. The fact that the ties of the Sogdians living in the colonies of East Turkestan with the territory of Sogd in the VIII century, and even later, were as strong as in the IV century. n e. (the time of the "Old Letters", some of which are addressed to Samarkand), testifies, among other things, to the fact that the gradual change of the Sogdian language by Persian-Tajik, taking place on the territory of Sogd in the 8th – 10th centuries, also took place in the Sogdian diaspora. This is indicated by texts in Persian written in Manichean script and originating from the same Sogdian Manichean communities of East Turkestan as the Sogdian-Manichean monuments. It should be borne in mind that officially the Tang authorities prevented the conclusion of trade transactions between the Chinese and foreigners. Existing rules forbade the latter to communicate with the population along the way, and local officials monitored this ban to avoid incidents. So, at the outposts, strict control over entry into the country was established - it is enough to recall the difficulties with which the outposts at Dunhuang Xuan Zang overcame, heading to the 7th century. to India. Trade in the border areas was strictly regulated by the authorities, which determined the places and terms of transactions. Merchants from the border regions were divided into two categories: "Sinke" and "Sinhu." The former meant the Chinese merchants, and the "Sinha" - foreign merchants.

Apparently, it is impossible to establish the exact time of the formation of the Sogdian colony in Tsonghuasiang. In addition to the "Old Letters", the existence of a colony of Iranian-speaking population in Dunhuang is indicated by the

already mentioned geographical description of Shchzhou dudufu 152 tujing, drawn up around the middle of the VIII century .3, in which there are such lines: "Temple of worshipers of the god of fire. Is it located one east of the city wall [Sha] zhou (ie, Dunhuang). It consists of a room inside which images of deities are painted; In total there are 20 cases. The sanctuary [in radius] is 100 bu (about 150 m) surrounded by a courtyard. " Tsonghuasyan as the name of the Sogdian settlement first appears in official Chinese documents of 698–705. This gives, it would seem, reason to believe that the colony was formed at the end of the VII century. However, it should be borne in mind that in the documents there is no indication that until the end of the VII century. this colony did not exist. A demographic analysis of the data of the Book of Obligations indicates a possible earlier migration from Sogd to the borders of China. So, in the census, the oldest Sogdian with a Chinese name is 66-year-old Kang Nu-tzu. Of the 20 people over 55, there were two people with Chinese names, 16 people had Sogdian names; the definition of the other two names is not established. Since Chinese names could only be given after moving to China, the 66-year-old Kang Nu-tzu, a native of Samarkand, born at the end of the 7th century. (c. 685), received this name in Dunhuang County.

Apparently, the difficult political situation in the middle of the VII century. in Sogdiana itself, as well as the weakening of China's position in Central Asia and the invasion of the Tibetans contributed to the fact that in the second half of the VIII century. the colony broke up. The most powerful families either returned to their homeland or dispersed within the territory under the Uyghur influence, and some of their descendants, once in Chinese Buddhist monasteries, eventually disappeared among the Chinese.

At first, the Sogdians, apparently, relatively well preserved their customs, language and beliefs, lived separately and within the same village. It is significant that out of 620 people who

are registered in the “Book of Duties” for four other villages of Dunhuang County, only three of them had Sogdian “surnames” (An, Kang, etc.). Sogdian surnames are very rare in other documents of this period, in particular in the courtyard lists. In the documents of the end of the VIII - the first half of the IX century, concerning other villages of the county, Sogdian surnames are found quite often, but the vast majority of their carriers already have only Chinese names. This, apparently, is that part of the inhabitants of the colony in Tsonghuasyan, which dispersed in the second half of the VIII century. in the Chinese villages of the county [15]

CONCLUSION

However, in all these studies, the sources and problems of the scientific study of the Sogdian diaspora on the Great Silk Road, in fact, its discoveries for science, questions of periodization, the importance of its revival at the end of the 20th century and the beginning of the 21st century, are only partially addressed. In addition, in these works the human factor was practically not reflected in the study of the Silk Road, despite the fact that since the second half of the 19th century, researchers and experts from different countries took part in the study of the Great Silk Road.

Thus, a study of the information of the Tang sources shows that people from the steppe - Turkic tribes and Iranian-speaking peoples, having entered the territory of Tang China, continued to maintain close relations with each other, which took the form of symbiosis. The Sogdian population of North and North-East China in the Late Tan period was completely incorporated into the composition of the Turkic population of the border regions of the country.

In general, the political, trade and economic activities of the Sogdians contributed to the creation of a political, socio-economic and ethnocultural basis for the Sogdian colonization of the Great Silk Road.

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A fragment of the image of the Sogdian ambassadors



Sogdian wall paintings found at the archaeological site of Afrasiab. Photograph by Torsten Greve.