

**Moritz Huber. *Lives of Sogdians in Medieval China*. Asiatische Forschungen 160. Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz Verlag, 2020. xvi + 350 pp. Appendices online ([http://www.harrassowitz-verlag.de/verlag.de/titel\\_6520.ahtml](http://www.harrassowitz-verlag.de/verlag.de/titel_6520.ahtml)), 475 pp.**

This new addition to the burgeoning field of Sogdian studies is Moritz Huber's 2020 dissertation completed at the Ludwig-Maximilians-Universität München; judging from the book's appearance, it does not seem to have been modified significantly for purposes of publication. As the heading above indicates, the published (print) portion of the book is less than half of the work; the online appendices, which can be downloaded *gratis* from the Harrassowitz website, are longer. One supposes that this "split publication" technique was employed in order to keep the cost of the book, which lists at 78 Euros, lower than it would have been had the appendices been printed rather than published online. This review will discuss the published book first, followed by a consideration of the appendices.

The print book is divided into four chapters: 1) Historically transmitted Chinese accounts about Sogdiana (pp. 1-103); 2) Sources about Sogdians in China (pp. 105-217); 3) Synthesis (pp. 219-300); and 4) Conclusion (pp. 301-6). While at first glance one might wonder what the first chapter—in which the relevant accounts (in sources ranging chronologically from the *Shiji* to the *Xin Tangshu*) are examined and many are translated—has to do with the lives of Sogdians in China, Huber explains that these early Chinese accounts of Sogdiana (and regions sometimes wrongly identified as Sogdiana) establish "patterns of narration and the use of *topoi*" (p. 69) that he will explore in the second chapter and then further employ in the third chapter in order to create a thematic organization for the synthetic consideration of his topic. These themes, or "categories of description and judgement," are as follows: 1) climate, flora, fauna,

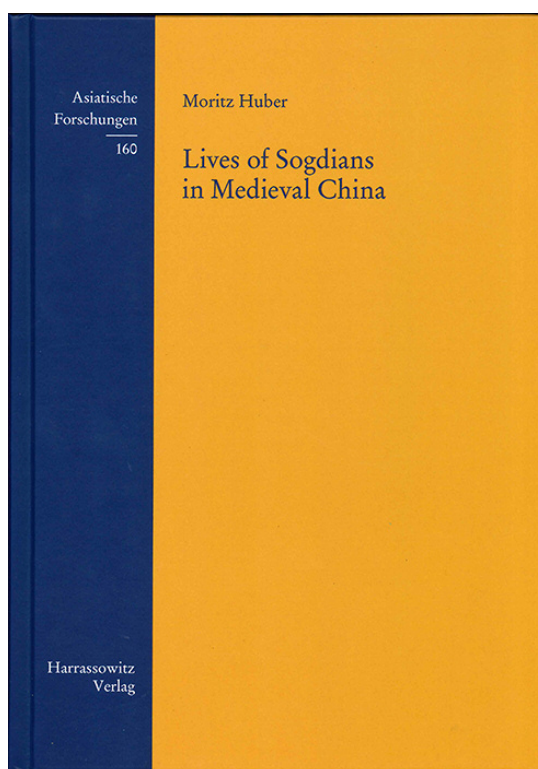
agriculture, and products; 2) the king and his wife, the palace and throne, and domestic politics; 3) people and customs, including physiognomy, military abilities, commerce, social customs, and music; and 4) foreign affairs, focusing primarily on Sogdian gifts to the courts of various Chinese dynasties. Not all of these (for example, the second group) can be used to describe the lives of Sogdians in China, but overall these categories do create a useful system for Huber's purposes.

Chapter 2 focuses on a variety of sources, both archaeological and literary. The author examines the relatively small number of Sogdian-identified graves found in China, considering what these

graves and their contents—including the important epitaphs (*muzhiming*) found within the tombs—can reveal regarding names, kinship and marriage, official titles, events of the deceased's life, and much more. Huber creates family trees for each of the interred and discusses what is known of these persons' biographies. He then analyzes the tombs in a comparative study of various aspects of these biographies, including discussion of the deceased's ancestry, "given names and cultural identity," profession and official titles, marriage, and burial. The last section of the chapter considers places in

China where the presence of a Sogdian community can be discerned.

In the third chapter, Huber uses his "categories of description and judgement" to examine what can be gleaned about Sogdians living in China. It should be noted that this includes not only people from Sogdiana but also people of Sogdian ancestry (or "western" or *hu* ancestry) who were born and lived in China. In this chapter he adds some new texts including relevant portions of additional epitaphs, steles, printed texts, as well as some manuscripts. Much of the chapter is devoted to a discussion of the term *sabao* and its meaning, but there is also consideration of such topics as the



various activities and professions pursued by Sogdians (both in their home region and in China) and the role of religion and ritual in Sogdian communities.

The final chapter presents the reader with some important conclusions. The author describes how Sogdians in China (as well as others identified as *hu*) were formed into a definable group by Chinese observers, leading to specific characteristics (deriving primarily from traditional accounts of Sogdiana and its environs), particularly skill in certain professions, being ascribed to *hu* in general. He adds that within China the Sogdians were allowed a special level of self-administration, primarily through the office of *sabao* that “was the outcome of a successful mobilisation of their accumulated and translated forms of capital” (pp. 303-4). Huber then argues that the creation of a specific Sogdian “identity,” bolstered by marriage practices, was an intentional strategy focused on the protection of their position within Chinese society. In Huber’s analysis, this speaks against an interpretation of Sogdians in China that would emphasize efforts at assimilation.

Another of the author’s contributions has to do with Sogdians improving their social status through military service. One of the characteristics that Chinese often ascribed to Sogdians was skill in martial matters; some of the latter took advantage of this to move up the social “ladder”—in essence, benefiting from a stereotypical image that could help them maintain their distinct identities within China. Finally, Huber argues that “flexible combinations of grave constructions and epitaphs were composed, employing Iranian, Zoroastrian, Buddhist, and typically Chinese structures and symbols” (p. 305) in order to secure the social status (or, as Huber puts it, “social capital”) that some Sogdians created for themselves and future generations. This chapter is followed by a biography.

There is much scientific information to be found in Huber’s book, with even more in the appendices. Interestingly, the title of the online appendices is not *Lives of Sogdians in Medieval China* but *Studies on Sogdians in China*, which seems in many ways a more accurate title for the overall work. The print book’s title seems intended to appeal to readers who might expect a prose narrative

regarding various aspects of how Sogdian émigrés and persons of Sogdian (or partially Sogdian) descent lived in China, while the title used in the appendices seems to emphasize the scientific nature of the bulk of the work and the very large body of data it presents.

The electronic appendices are as follows: 1) excavation reports of the graves and epitaphs of a group of Sogdians surnamed Shi (and some of their wives) from the Sui and Tang eras near modern Guyuan in the Ningxia Hui Autonomous Region; 2) a case study of epitaphs of two of those, i.e., Shi Shewu (d. 609) and his son Shi Hedan (d. 669); 3) a consideration of the epitaphs of Sogdians in China from an archaeological context; and 4) a synthesis. There are also glossaries of toponyms (Appendix 5, pp. 405-37) and titles (Appendix 6, pp. 439-58).

In the first appendix Huber expands upon the print book’s second chapter and brings together a great deal of information from various publications in Chinese and Western languages. This alone will make the work quite useful to researchers. There are plenty of maps, charts, illustrations, and photographs to accompany the author’s descriptions. The drawings and photographs are especially helpful in considering the contents of the various tombs that have not been hauled away by robbers. Wall paintings (particularly the murals from the tomb of Shi Shewu), ceramics, coins (both authentic and imitation), and other objects, many of them depicted in color, complement the photographs of the various epitaphs themselves. The Shi family or families have become famous in Sogdianist circles because of the unusual circumstance of having a group of tombs of persons who share a common surname and whose familial relationships to one another can often be determined, and whose careers and family lives are described in the epitaphs found in those tombs. It should be noted that while some scholars have argued that all of the interred members of the Shi family at Guyuan were related to one another, Huber posits two distinct Shi families with different ancestries. One of these included Shi Shewu, Shi Hedan and his two wives (surnamed Kang and Zhang), Shi Daoluo and his wife (surnamed Kang), and Shi Tiebang; the other included Shi Suoyan and his wife An Niang and Shi Daode. This appendix presents

these tombs in a clear and meticulous fashion and occasionally compares their features to other Sogdian-identified tombs found in China.

The second appendix takes a close look at two members of one of the Shi families and their tombs. Both epitaphs are translated in full, with the Chinese and English texts presented together. The author has formatted these so that after almost every Chinese sentence the English translation appears, making it easy to compare the two texts. After each translation the author provides a chart of variant characters, which are quite numerous in each epitaph; this is extremely helpful to readers who may not be familiar with these variant forms.

The third appendix considers the epitaphs of not only members of the Shi family or families but also other Sogdian-identified persons from the same general period, including Shi Wirkak and his wife Kang Wiyusi, Kang Ye, An Jia, Yu Hong and his wife, Cao Yi, He (?), and An Pu (or Pusa). (These well-known Sogdians are also discussed in the print book's second chapter.) In this appendix one can find the Chinese text of each epitaph, but these are not translated. Huber also presents the Sogdian text of the epitaph from Shi Wirkak's tomb, along with an English translation by Yutaka Yoshida. Huber analyzes these epitaphs in terms of what information they provide regarding such things as biographic data, names of relatives, and official titles held by the deceased. The fourth appendix returns to the topic of the title *sabao* and expands upon the information provided in the print book's second chapter; much of the appendix's information is presented in chart form. The remaining appendices are simple glossaries, followed by a (second) bibliography.

Huber's work presents a rich trove of information which is naturally limited by the materials—both archaeological and literary—that are currently available. He has generously provided his readers with an exceptional level of detail concerning the admittedly small number of Sogdian tombs that have thus far been found. He has not only brought together information from a large number of published sources in many languages, but has also evaluated that information to give his own sense of how these archaeological and literary materials

should be interpreted.

The production values of the book and appendices are generally high, although there are a few problems. The author's English is at times not idiomatic. Words are occasionally misspelt in ways that will outfox even the best spell-checking program ("plated" for "plaited," "felt" for "pelt," etc.). Other misspellings are simply errors, such as "tharkan" instead of "tarkhan" or "tarqan." It must be pointed out that these matters rarely obscure the author's meaning, although there are a few phrases that ultimately could not be unraveled, such as the translation from a passage in Shi Hedan's epitaph that his sons were "weighed down cranked and wailing out loud" after their father's death (appendices, p. 247). A native speaker could have helped in the editing of the work to avoid such confusions as using "unlikeable" rather than "unlikely" (p. 111) and "intruded" rather than "invaded" (appendices, p. 228, n. 35).

Another issue is the matter of footnotes that refer to other parts of the text itself. This is especially problematic in the print book's third chapter. In such notes, the reader is often referred to the wrong page. For example, at least five footnotes (pp. 252, 254, 255, 256, 362) direct the reader to go to p. 270, n. 170 in the book, but the footnote in question is on p. 250 rather than p. 270. There are other such examples, not only in the book but also in the appendices. It seems likely that these errors are connected to the book being reformatted to the publisher's specifications, causing page numbers to shift. The reader thus must search for the desired footnote—a process which is not terribly burdensome, but does slow things down. In addition, there are occasional misstatements of fact, such as the assertion that "in 732 CE, Manichaeism—the religion of the then despised Uighurs—was already outlawed" (p. 295). Manichaeism may have been proscribed in China in 732, but in that year the Uyghurs had not yet become the dominant power on the Mongolian steppe and indeed were still subordinates of the Second Türk Empire, which they replaced only in 744/745; furthermore, the Uyghurs' adoption of Manichaeism, through the conversion of Bügü Qaghan, took place some decades *after* their rise to power, as Huber himself notes (p. 300). Finally, there is no index for either the book or the appen-

dices.

It must be emphasized that none of these issues will keep readers from understanding and appreciating the book and its contributions. But it is frustrating to find such problems in a book in which the author clearly has taken so much care to provide his readers with meticulous descriptions and observations of the materials, along with thoughtful analysis of those materials in their historical context.

Readers who are familiar with the field of Sogdian studies will wonder how Huber's book compares to Patrick Wertmann's 2015 *Sogdians in China: Archaeological and Art Historical Analyses of Tombs and Texts from the 3<sup>rd</sup> to the 10<sup>th</sup> Century AD* (Darmstadt: Verlag Philipp von Zabern). The two titles alone reveal that the authors are dealing with very similar topics and are focused largely on the same period. Both build their arguments from the archaeological record presented by the same tombs. Both are based on the authors' dissertations, although it is clear that Wertmann has modified his dissertation (Freie Universität Berlin, 2013) significantly in the process of creating his book. Wertmann's book thus is in some ways more inviting to the general reader, as it presents its information in a narrative form, while Huber's text retains the dissertation format of dividing everything into numbered (and sub-numbered) sec-

tions, emphasizing the scientific nature of the author's enterprise and presenting the supporting data as clearly and distinctly as possible. Each book seems well-organized for its purposes.

In the final analysis, although there is significant overlap in the two books, both authors have important ideas and information to present. With the addition of the online appendices, Huber's work is far more voluminous. Wertmann's, however, is easier to use in many ways, particularly for the non-specialist reader, and contains a rich collection of maps, drawings, and color photographs (pp. 219-334) that are of very fine quality. Many of the same illustrations are found in Huber's electronic appendices, but Wertmann's book excels in the presentation of important—and beautifully photographed—images from the tombs of An Jia (also called An Que), Shi Jun, and Yu Hong, as well as other types of material remains connected to Sogdian culture such as ossuaries and funerary couches. Huber's book will appeal to specialists who are eager to have a single source that contains a large amount of scientific data, presented clearly and systematically, while Wertmann's book will appeal to persons looking for a smoothly-presented and well-illustrated narrative. Both authors have much to tell us about Sogdians in China, and both of their books will be of interest and use to those drawn to the subject.

- Michael Drompp

---

**Hermann Kreutzmann. *Hunza Matters: Bordering and Ordering between Ancient and New Silk Roads*. Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz Verlag, 2020.**

Hermann Kreutzmann is the recognised world expert on what he calls the "Pamirian Crossroads" and the "Wakhan Quadrangle." *Hunza Matters* is the latest in his impressive series of scholarly works on the region, and is the third in a trilogy that comprises the eponymous two first volumes (Harrassowitz, 2015 and 2017).

Kreutzmann has found a publisher the quality of whose work matches his own. Richly (even lavishly) illustrated with maps from Markus Hauser's Pamir Archive, superb paintings and portraits by

Alexander Yakovlev<sup>1</sup> and hitherto unpublished archival photographs, together with many of his own, these three volumes complete—but probably do not terminate—his life's work that comprises, to date, more than 100 articles, chapters, and books.

The Avant-propos of *Hunza Matters* is a nostalgic reminiscence of his and his wife's more than forty

---

<sup>1</sup> The work of Alexander Yakovlev is virtually unknown in the West. His prolific landscape painting and portraits of people in the Northern Areas of Pakistan date to a very short period in 1931-32, when he accompanied a most unusual expedition (the so-called "Yellow expedition") sponsored by the car manufacturer Citroën to promote its P17 Kégresse track vehicles.