

Silk Road Research Series

Series Editor

Xiao Li, Renmin University of China, Beijing, China

Since the international development strategy known as “Belt and Road” was officially proposed by Chinese President Xi Jinping in 2013, the field of Silk Road studies has attracted renewed attention around the globe. Springer Nature, together with the SDX Joint Publishing Company, has built upon this development with their new academic publication, the Silk Road Research Series (SRRS).

As a high-level, interdisciplinary academic platform, the Series will provide both established academics and ambitious early-career researchers an opportunity to present their work. While a considerable part of the research related to the Silk Road is being pursued in China and being published in Chinese, we consider it vital to encourage and assist Chinese experts with publishing their research results in English and in a Western style in the Series.

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Xiao Li
Editor

Non-Han Literature Along the Silk Road



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Preface of Silk Road Research Series

In recent years, conducting research on the Silk Road has become a popular trend in the international academia. Without a doubt, this is directly related to China's Belt and Road initiative. At the same time, we notice that this particular trend is also a reflection of how the academia in the East and the West leverage the topic and engage in dialogue. Furthermore, this represents efforts by scholars in the post-Cold War world to promote direct dialogue on issues that are of common interest, rather talking about the past with each other.

There are two senses about the Silk Road. The narrow sense is about economic and cultural exchanges between ancient China and countries in Central Asia, South Asia, West Asia, and the Mediterranean region. On the other hand, the broad sense refers to all kinds of exchanges between the East and the West. As such, understanding of the Silk Road in the academia has long been tilted towards the popular narrative, and a majority of Silk Road research, in fact, caters to the taste of the general public.

Nevertheless, the Silk Road epitomizes all kinds of exchanges of material and spiritual cultures across a vast area, from China to Rome, and from the Equator to the North Pole.

As such, the development of Eastern and Western civilizations and their interactions in Asia and Europe can be understood within the Silk Road framework. In this vein, many far-sighted scholars have long ago started making use of this broad concept to consolidate the many common points that emerged from a variety of academic research. This also leads to the emergence of many issues that are of interest to both the East and the West. In particular, many archaeological relics unearthed at old Silk Road towns have become the focal points in the Silk Road research, as these relics exemplify the intermixture of Eastern and Western civilizations. Silk Road towns like Chang'an, Dunhuang, Turpan, Bamiyan, Ai-Khanum, Samarkand, and Palmyra have attracted the attention of scholars, and the related Silk Road research is also linked to a wide variety of disciplines, such as archaeology, history, Dunhuang studies, Iranian studies, and classical studies.

Over the years, there have been many scholarly works on the Silk Road. Yet, on its own, Silk Road is not an official academic discipline. Therefore, the relevant research results are classified under the related disciplines. In China, they are often seen through the lens of history of Chinese–Western communications, history of Sino-foreign relations, or history of cultural exchange between China and the world. That said, we understand that a stringent Silk Road research requires a scholarly journal about the Silk Road.

In the past, due to the popularization of concepts relating to the Silk Road, most magazines dealing with the topic were focused on content that were of popular interest. In fact, only a few titles were scholarly in nature. In the early 1990s, *Silk Road Art and Archaeology*, a journal published by the Institute of Silk Road Studies, which was in turn founded by Ikuo Hirayama, played an active role in advancing scholarly research on the Silk Road. Unfortunately, the passing away of Ikuo Hirayama had dealt a severe blow to the journal, as it was unable to continue operation. On the other hand, *the Silk Road*, supported solely by the American scholar Professor Daniel C. Waugh since 2000, has also become unsustainable despite its rich content.

Fortunately, under China's Belt and Road initiative, the academia and publishers in China have shown a great deal of interest in Silk Road research. Within the past two to three years, we have seen the birth of numerous scholarly journals bearing the "Silk Road" name. Among them is *Silk Road Research Series*, a large-scale and comprehensive scholarly journal edited by Li Xiao and published by Sanlian Bookstore. The first volume, in Chinese, has already been published, and it deals with wide ranging subject matters, such as archaeology, history, the arts, language, religion, and culture.

Now, we are launching the English version of *Silk Road Research Series*, and the content is sourced from the Chinese version as well as fresh contributions. The majority of the authors in the English version are Chinese scholars, and in some senses, this represents the contributions of Chinese authors to this field of study. We also hope that we can engage in dialogue with our international counterparts through this medium to advance research on the Silk Road. As the mother tongue of the authors and editors is not English, it is a challenge for them to publicize their works in this language. We hope that through our concerted efforts, this English-language journal will be more refined in the not-so-distant future.

Xinjiang Rong

Foreword

The present issue of *Silk Road Research Series* is dedicated to Hu-languages in the past of the Silk Road. Hu-languages have been a general terminology in historical Chinese literatures for languages of people who came into contact with Han-Chinese in the first millennium of the Common Era. Today, if the subject of an article is discussing about ancient societies along the Silk Road in Xinjiang, the terminology of Hu-languages is very often mentioned in the circle of Chinese scholars. However, by scrutinizing, it turns out that Hu-languages were a rather common reference to ancient languages including, as for instances, Kharoṣṭhī/Gāndhārī, Sogdian, Khotanese, and Sanskrit, which are definitely Indo-European in modern term. I prefer the usage of terminologies such as Hu-languages and Hu-manuscripts because they instantly guide our attention to a specific time period which at last ended with the invade of Islam, and to the areas which were former oasis kingdoms. Moreover, by using the terms like Hu-language, the perspective from a Chinese viewpoint is somehow highlighted. Articles dealing with Hu-materials very often value Chinese historical sources. There are solidified words in Chinese historical books which were initially transliteration of a Hu-word, and vice versa. Deciphering such a word often reveals a historical moment, and sometimes, it even reflects historical changes of supreme powers which are otherwise not recorded in scriptures.

In the year 2012, the project aiming to research and publish newly discovered manuscripts and documents (other than Chinese) at the former southern Silk Road of Xinjiang received a support for 6 years through the foundation of Chinese National Social Science. During these years we have been focusing on ancient documents of Kharoṣṭhī/Gāndhārī and Khotanese, on Sanskrit Buddhist manuscript-fragments, and on rare pieces in Sogdian which are mainly preserved in Hetian Museum and Xinjiang Museum in Urumqi. Series of articles and books are published in Chinese. Now we are very happy to present a few achievements of the project in the first volume of *Silk Road Research Series*. It is noteworthy that the articles in this volume focusing on Kharoṣṭhī/Gāndhārī are all contributed by young scholars who were graduated students while they were working as team members of my project.

New materials always serve as a basement of progress in research field. One of the important achievements since working on new Kharoṣṭhī documents from Niya is the discovery of the Kharoṣṭhī name of the kingdom. Diego Loukota, a former PKU graduate student and now a Ph.D. candidate at the University of USA, has, for the first time in the field of studies of Kharoṣṭhī documents, identified Nuava with the name of the kingdom which had been always misunderstood as an attribute to the titles of the kings whose names occur on Kharoṣṭhī documents unearthed from Niya sites. The perplexity could happen due to the fact that Nuava, the real name of the kingdom that flourished through the third and fourth centuries on the location which is now Niya site, is always recorded as Shanshan in Chinese historical books ever since the earliest time. There are certainly more interesting discoveries in this article and other articles contributed to Kharoṣṭhī documents in this volume. I would also like to take the opportunity for a brief stating of a related achievement published in one of my Chinese articles: 鄯善 Shanshan was a specially invented name for the ancient kingdom of Lolān. Since very beginning in ancient time, it remains a mere appellation of a country rather than a toponym. Shanshan, supposedly pronounced as [dzian^h dzian^h] in Early Middle Chinese¹, must be a transliteration based on foreign words. The most possible words from the linguistic aspect are *šar šarrāni*—a Middle Iranian imperial title to kings after they could have expanded their territories through overcoming other regions. It was the case in year 75 BC as recorded in *History of Later Han* that Lolān kingdom changed its name to Shanshan after it has annexed the adjacent kingdoms by the name Caḍota, Calma, and Saci.

Khotanese is another field which in recent years has yielded a number of Buddhist manuscripts and documents. All these recently discovered manuscripts and documents in Khotanese have been or will have been published in periodicals or as books. In the first issue of *Silk Road Research Series*, two papers are devoted to Khotanese studies which, however, hold only an explanation of two inscriptions—the one consists of one sentence with four words and the other, of one word. It must be true that precious things need time to reveal themselves. The first paper discussing on the Khotanese inscriptions on carpets from Shampul was published in 2012, but the interpretation was wrong. I am happy that a revision of the last interpretation before 7 years can be included in this volume. The inscriptions on the myth-carpets—as they are defined in the papers—are very important, which not only do offer the eldest kind of Khotanese script, but to much more surprise, they reveal—in combination with the mythic figures and decorative patterns—the ancient religion of Scythians which goes back to Sumerian civilization.

As stated above, in recent years researches focusing on Hu-languages and Hu-manuscripts have been carried out of which the achievements are for the great number published in Chinese language. It was a wish for a very long time that more articles could be translated into English so that findings, discoveries, and opinions can be shared with scholars in the world. Now, the first issue of *Silk Road Research*

¹Edwin G. Pulleyblank, *Lexicon of Reconstructed Pronunciation in Early Middle Chinese, Late Middle Chinese, and Early Middle Chinese*, Vancouver: UBC Press, 1991, p. 275.

Series has managed to translate papers from Chinese to English and thus helps open the window to the English reading world. There might be some less satisfactoriness in reference to our English expressions. However, the first step has been taken. I wish that the periodical of *Silk Road Research Series* of English version will stay forever.

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