

# The Sogdians at Dunhuang in Han Dynasty

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## Abstract

This research focuses on the relationship between people from the Sogdian Civilization and the city Dunhuang, including the Sogdians' different identities when they arrived at Dunhuang, such as ambassadors, guests, Zhi Zi, and merchants. The Sogdians have played a significant role in the material and cultural exchanges on the Silk Road since the Western Han Dynasty, yet seldom do people know or learn about the Sogdian Civilization. Therefore, the purpose of this essay is to inform people about the Sogdians' nonnegligible contribution and mutual impact on Chinese history and culture. The paper mainly uses quotations from Chinese historical records and articles written by modern scholars, with some sources related to archaeological discoveries and methods.

**Keywords:** Sogdian Civilization, Dunhuang, Silk Road, Han Dynasty, Chinese history

## 1. Introduction

Located in the western part of the Hexi Corridor in Gansu Province of China was the famous and ancient city of Dunhuang. Since the Qin and Han Dynasty, the city of Dunhuang had become a hub that connected Chinese culture with other civilizations west of the Han Dynasty. The ancient Chinese called it "a city where Chinese and people of other ethnicities meet" (Si & Liu, 1965). Nevertheless, the glory of Dunhuang would be incomplete without considering the Han Dynasty's operation of the Western Region (Xi Yu) and the establishment of the Silk Road.

In 138 BCE, the famous Han Emperor Wu was recruiting an ambassador to travel to Darouzh, hoping to ally with this foreign tribe in order to combat a strong enemy: Hun (Xiongnu). Zhang Qian, a Han government officer, volunteered and began his journey to the west with his messenger group. When he passed through the territory of Hun, he and his companions were captured and held under supervision for thirteen years. However, he finally escaped and continued his journey to the western region, fulfilling his mission. Despite his ultimate failure to convince the people of Darouzh to ally with the Han Dynasty, he learned a lot of information about the Western Region, its countries, and cultures. After returning to Han, Zhang Qian brought the valuable information to Emperor Wu and other government officials, so Emperor Wu sent one of his best generals Huo Qu Bing to defeat the Hun tribes dwelling around the Qilian Mountain, freeing the Hexi Corridor. In order to strengthen his control over the Hexi Corridor, Emperor Wu established four cities along the corridor – Wuwei, Zhangye, Jiuquan, and Dunhuang – with Dunhuang being the furthest west and the last gate between China and the Xi Yu (Si, 1975).

When the Silk Road fully opened, the people of Han Dynasty began encountering and communicating with people from different countries out west. Among those foreign people, there was one group who played an extremely significant role in the thousand-year history of the Silk Road – the now-vanished Sogdians.

The Sogdian Civilization originated from modern day Uzbekistan, Tajikistan, and part of Kyrgyzstan, between the Oxus and Syr Darya, with its core area located in the Zarafshan River region, the downstream side of Oxus (Zhang, 2021). The Pamir Mountains were adjacent to the Sogdians from the southeastern side, and Bactria, modern day northern Afghanistan, was south of the Sogdians. The Sogdians also enjoyed routes that led to India and Iran. The earliest record of this civilization traces back to the ancient Persian Empire, 6 BCE. The Zoroastrian sacred book "*Avesta*", written during the era of Achaemenid Empire, recorded sixteen regions built by the Zoroastrian god Ahura Mazda. Among the sixteen regions, Sogda, where Sogdians lived, was ranked second, only trailing behind the hometown of Aryan people (Tolman, 2009). The first encounter between China and Central Asian civilizations can be found in "Tale of King Mu" (穆天子传) and "Classic of Mountains and Seas" (山海经), (Yu, 2007) and the earliest official record was written in "Record of Dayuan" in the ancient document "Shiji" (史记·大宛列传) when Zhang Qian disclosed his findings from his journey to Emperor Wu (Si,

1975). At that point, communications between Sogdians and China officially began, especially at Dunhuang, a key position on the Silk Road. This article will discuss the connections between the Sogdian Civilization and the Han Dynasty at the city of Dunhuang, and the deep impacts they had on each other.

## 2. Method

The majority of the evidence presented in this article consist of primary sources, such as bamboo slips or other historical documents, and secondary sources, such as research done by modern scholars and papers published by official institutions. The analysis of the relationship between Sogdian Civilization and the city of Dunhuang is conducted mainly from a historical and ethical perspective, but the section about the mutual impacts of Sogdiana and Dunhuang does use archaeological discoveries and resource. All the sources used in this article are about the Sogdian people in China during the Han Dynasty, excluding the abundant historical records of the Sogdians during the North-South Dynasties, Sui Dynasty, and Tang Dynasty in order to demonstrate the earliest relationship China built with this foreign civilization. Most of the books used in this article come from my mentor, Qi Xiaoqing, with the articles from CNKI (中国知网).

## 3. The First Encounter of Han and the Sogdians

As mentioned in the introduction, Zhang Qian was the first official ambassador in Chinese history to reach the Western Regions and learn about the western countries and cultures; as the first person in the Han Dynasty to learn about the Sogdian Civilizations, he was the individual with the deepest understandings of Sogda. When Zhang Qian returned to Changan, the capital of Han, he reported his findings for Emperor Wu and all the other government officials. Si Ma Qian wrote about this detailed report in his book *Shiji*:

Traveling west from Dayuan to the Parthian Empire, although all the countries speak different languages, they all have very similar pronunciations and words, and the people understand each other's languages. The people there have big and deep eyes, a lot of facial hair. They are very good at business and trading, and they haggle over every price. Local cultures respected women, and their husbands all need to listen and follow what they say without resisting. The countries don't have any silk and paint, and they don't know how to cast coins and implements (Si, 1975).

Kangju is located one thousand miles northwest of Dayuan, a country where people constantly migrate for the needs of herds, and they share similar cultures with Darouzhi. The number of soldiers available for fighting is around eighty to ninety thousand, and they are neighbors to Dayuan. The territory of the country is small, so the southern regions bowed to Darouzhi and the eastern regions bowed to Xiongnu (Si, 1975).

The country "Kangju" Zhang Qian mentions in his report is generally considered to be the Sogdian Civilization around Amu Darya, although there are still debates around the accuracy of this statement. Zhang Qian also describes the neighboring countries:

The Parthian Empire is a few thousand miles west of Darouzhi. Their habit is to settle down in one place, cultivate the lands, plant rice and wheat, and they produce wine. Their cities are like those of Dayuan... There are marketplaces and people use carriage and boats to ship their goods. Sometimes they ship their goods to neighboring tribes, but sometimes far away from their country. They use silver as money, and money is like the face of the king to the people... Daxia (Bactria) is located one thousand miles southwest of Dayuan. The people in the two countries share the same culture and habits, and they have houses and cities... The army of this country is weak because they are afraid of fighting. The people there are very good with business trades (Si, 1975).

It is apparent from these historical records that most countries in Xi Yu, west of modern-day Xinjiang Province, north of India, specialized in commerce, and many people were very calculating with money and trades. Although there were many small, disparate countries and tribes crowded together in the region, they all shared similar, if not the same, cultures and languages and enjoyed open commercial trade and communication. When Emperor Wu heard about these countries far west, he was very excited and hoped to ally with most of the countries, building formal diplomatic connections:

The emperor has already heard about the magnificence of Dayuan, Daxia, and the Parthian Empire, and those countries have very precious and unique goods, and the people settle down to farm in a gathered place, similar to the habits of Han people. However, they have very weak armies, and they value goods produced from China a lot. In the north there are countries such as Darouzhi and Kangju, who have very strong military, but we can give them beautiful jewelry and precious goods so that they will worship Han's emperor. And if we could truly ally with them, and they stay loyal as our subordinate, we can greatly expand our territory, and with translations, recruit different people with different cultural backgrounds, thus spreading the power,

reputation, and generosity of Han's emperor to every corner on Earth (Si, 1975).

Given Emperor Wu's determination to build diplomatic, military, and commercial connections with all the countries in the Western Region, the Han Dynasty sought to establish its primary contact with the Sogdians. As one of the most important cities on the Silk Road, Dunhuang welcomed a lot of Sogdians from the west to visit the great lands of China. The Sogdians came to the city of Dunhuang with different identities and purposes to build connections with the great dynasty, inevitably leaving their own footprints on the history of China and Sogdian Civilization.

#### **4. The Identities of the Sogdians Who Arrived at Dunhuang**

##### *4.1 Ambassadors*

In modern-day Gansu Province, between the city of Dunhuang and a small town named Gua Zhou, lies one of the most significant archaeological sites in the entire Hexi Corridor: Xuanquanzhi Site. During the era of the Han Dynasty, Xuanquanzhi was used as a multifunctional site, both a courier station and post office – it could not only welcome and offer rooms for ambassadors from other countries, but also receive, communicate, and convey messages between China and lands of the west. During the first archaeological expeditions at Xuanquanzhi Site, in addition to the discovery of many valuable items buried two thousand years ago, tens of thousands of bamboo slips from the era of the Han Dynasty were unearthed. After further study, these Han Dynasty bamboo slips were found to have recorded facts and stories that justify and provide new insight about the history of the Han Dynasty and the Hexi Corridor, including the communications between Han and the Sogdians. One of the bamboo slips, called “List of King of Kangju's Ambassadors” (康居王使者册), provides a detailed record of a group of Sogdian ambassadors traveling to China to pay tribute to Emperor Yuan in Yongguang year five (39 BCE).

King of Kangju's ambassador Yangbodao, secondary ambassador Biantian, King of Suxie's, Gumo's secondary ambassador Shaqun, messenger Weini and others have come to worship and pay tribute to the great emperor of Han. All those people have arrived at the city of Dunhuang, bringing camels and other goods for the emperor.

When they arrive at Dunhuang, all of them buy food and supply for their further trip to the city of Jiuquan. One of the government officials at Jiuquan and Yangbodao discuss whether the camels being brought are slim or fat. This time Yangbodao and those people have come to China again to pay tribute to Han's emperor, and the guards on the road do not allow them to pass through.

When they arrive at the city of Jiuquan, the governor of Jiuquan meet with one of his subordinates to verify the goods for the emperor, and the ambassadors cannot see their goods. The ambassador of Gumo presents the emperor with one white camel and two cattles, but the governor thought it was a yellow camel. And Yangbodao

The camels they bring to China, are supposed to be fat according to their own words, but the government officials of Han believe the camels are slim. The ambassadors' words do not match the fact, and the officials want to start a prosecution.

Yongguang year five (39 BCE) June, the governor of Jiuquan suggest to his secretary that to transport those documents to Dunhuang and recheck the goods brought by the Sogdian ambassadors. This accident needs to be reported, and it cannot be delayed.

In July, the governor of Dunhuang, called Hong, the vice governor of Dunhuang, called Zhang, and Shoubu marquis, called Xiuren, are handling this event. They send a message to the officials at the town of Wei: we have received the documents from Jiuquan. The detailed description is about the ambassador of Kangju Yangbodao and others with their goods and foods they have bought, on the 25<sup>th</sup> of that month.

In July, the governor of town of Xiaogu, called Hezong, one of the officials from Dunhuang, and a general called Zhong send a message to the head of Xuanquanzhi: please report that the horses use to send messages are not eating any food, on the 3<sup>rd</sup> of the month (Hu & Zhang, 2001).

These Han Dynasty bamboo slips recorded all transactions between these two regions from the list of ambassadors sent by the Sogdian kings to pay tribute to the Han emperor to the list of cattle and goods brought by the ambassadors. In addition, Kangju was not the only tribe that sent ambassadors. There were ambassadors and guests sent by other smaller tribes from the Sogdian area; smaller tribes from the Sogdian area also sent ambassadors and guests. Amongst the countries, Suxie refers to the country Kang of the Sogdians, located at Samarkand of modern-day Uzbekistan; other countries include Fumo (country An, modern-day Bhakra), Yuni

(country Shi, modern-day Shahrīsabīz), Ji (country He, modern-day Eastern Samarkand) and other tribes. (Hu & Zhang, 2001) They all sent ambassadors to the great dynasty of Han to ally with the emperor. Other bamboo slips also record the visits of Sogdian ambassadors during earlier years. For instance, a wooden slip that has a length of 15.2 centimeter and width of 2.8 centimeter is discovered with words written on it:

The first month of Ganlu year two (54 BCE), the governors of Dunhuang, called Qianqiu and his colleague He Jianxing to report this to the governor of Jiuquan:

We send off two ambassadors of Kangju, ten guests, and others with nine horses, one donkey, five camels, and one cow to Jiuquan. They have already passed through the Jade Gate (Yumen Pass) (Zhang, 2004).

This wooden slip records the time, people, and cattle involved in an exchange between Han and the Sogdian countries in Ganlu year two (54 BCE).

These Han Dynasty bamboo slips not only offer detailed records of specific events and exchanges between the countries, but also some interesting stories that happened during the communication. As the “List of King of Kangju’s Ambassadors” describes, when the Sogdian ambassadors came to pay tribute, the officials alongside the Hexi Corridor had verify whether the goods they had brought met the requirements. However, there were differences between the verifications of Dunhuang and Jiuquan, and the governor of Jiuquan almost sued the Sogdians for lying about the camels they brought for the emperor (Hu & Zhang, 2001).

Although such misunderstandings occasionally happened during the exchanges between Chinese and Sogdians, no severe harm came to the two civilizations to damage their alliance. It is also apparent that Sogdians were very familiar with what Han emperors favored. Many Han emperors loved a special horse named “Ferghana horse” that could only be found in the country of Dayuan, a type of horse so precious they called it “Han Xie Bao Ma” (汗血宝马), because the sweat of this particular horse looks like fresh blood (Si, 1975). Therefore, the Sogdian ambassadors often brought such horses to worship the emperor (Vaissière, 2012). In the same manner, the Han Dynasty sent ambassadors of their own to the countries out west with valuable goods, strengthening their alliance. The book “Shiji” (史记) details what Zhang Qian brought when he was sent to Xi Yu:

The emperor appointed Zhang Qian as corps commander, and he led 300 men, two horses each, with tens of thousands of cattle and sheep and tens of millions of golds and silk to the Western Regions. Zhang Qian padded and sent his deputies to visit various countries in the West as if the roads are open (Si, 1975).

All the countries in the Western Region, especially the Sogdian tribes, were willing to form diplomatic and commercial connections with the Han Dynasty. Because the Sogdian tribes were not located on the routes or the center of the Silk Road, and because they were poorer than neighboring areas such as Bactria (Si, 1975), Sogdian civilization was particularly dependent on maintaining a strong relationship with Han (Vaissière, 2012). During the Han Dynasty’s rule, Sogdians who traveled to the city of Dunhuang to enter China were mostly ambassadors. The two civilizations presented gifts and goods for each other in order to officially establish a friendly alliance, specifically in military and trades, for their mutual benefit.

#### 4.2 Guests

The word “guest” is commonly associated with other words like “visitor” or “company”, referring to a person or a group of people visiting a place. Though this meaning was also extremely common in ancient China, the word “guest” had another hidden meaning only used in official writings. During the Warring States Period (战国时代), “guest” referred to a group of people who were very social among the countries. They traveled across different small countries, adapting to the laws and needs of different kings in order to advocate their ideas for wealth and fame (Wang, 2021). Besides gaining personal wealth and fame, these “guests” also filled irreplaceable societal roles. Various “guests” with different perspectives often met each other during their travels in different countries, arguing about their ideas, thus stimulating the acceptance and emergence of different perspectives in the entire society. During the era of the Eastern Han Dynasty, “Book of the Later Han” (后汉书) describes a group of people called “traveling guests” (Si & Liu, 1965), referring to the group of people during the Warring States Period. In other research about the Eastern Zhou Period, some scholars point out that “guest” could carry the meaning of “messengers from other countries” (Shen, 2003). For example, “Zuo Zhuan” (左传) recorded a group of people called “guest of Ba” during Huangong year five (707 BCE), who were also referred as “the messenger from Ba”. Those people were clearly messengers sent to China from foreign tribes. Some of the aristocrats during the Han Dynasty would also “send guests out of the frontier, communicate with other countries, and search for precious jewelry that cannot be found in China” (Si & Liu, 1965).

Many of these “guests” from the Western Region swarmed into China through the gates of Dunhuang after the Hexi Corridor was opened by Emperor Wu. The bamboo slips discovered at Xuanquanzhi contain clear writings

about “guests” who came from the Sogdian area:

Huanglong year one (49 BCE) June, officer Hong...send a message to his servant Rong that let the supervisor send off the guests from Kangju. Lieutenant Yi and...will carry this message together (Zhang, 2004).

The guests from Kangju will be sent off. Lieutenant Hong, vice lieutenant..., and officer Zhong of Chiyang report. Huanglong year one (49 BCE) (Zhang, 2004).

There are also other records of “guests” from other Xi Yu countries:

The officer sends off the guests from Darouzhi (Hao & Zhang, 2009),

Send off one guest from Shache, two guests from Jibin (Kawmira), one guest from Jiyue (Yecheng county in Xin Jiang), in total of four people (Hao & Zhang, 2009).

Send off the guests from the kingdom of Yutian (Khotan) (Hao & Zhang, 2009).

In these records, it is unclear whether the “guests” mentioned were sent by the kings as official messengers or by the local aristocrats from their servants. Those “guests” might even be common Sogdian citizens. The bamboo slips and other historical books also contained no details about how these guests helped the two cultures once they arrived at Han. However, it is known that Han also sent its own “guests” to the Sogdian countries for the purpose of cultural communication amongst the upper society and the common citizens. The “guests” from Han were also hoping to witness, even possess, some scarce treasures from the west during their journeys. Therefore, it can be reasonably assumed that, like the “guests” Han sent to the Sogdians, the guests who visited Han Dynasty China held respect and curiosity toward Chinese culture, and they traveled around the country to spread their beliefs, exchange with Chinese ideas, and witness valuable treasures produced in China.

#### 4.3 Zhi Zi

The previous section discusses the ambassadors sent by both civilizations to build a mutually beneficial alliance between the Han Dynasty and Sogdiana, but the few ambassadors who traveled between China and Sogda were not enough to maintain this important relationship between two geographically distant civilizations. Thus, the idea of “Zhi Zi” was born. Zhi Zi, also called Shi Zi by some, was a popular diplomatic method to strengthen alliances with other countries in ancient China, particularly during the Han, Tang, and Yuan Dynasties. Commonly, the two countries would send one of the sons from the imperial family to the other country as a “hostage”, so that the alliance between two countries could be strengthened and maintained with a member of the emperor’s family in the other country. As the only path on the Silk Road to enter China from the west, the city of Dunhuang became a hub and transfer station for the “hostages”. Sometimes the Han emperor would allow “Zhi Zi” to stay at Dunhuang instead of traveling to Han’s capital Changan.

In the Han Dynasty bamboo slips found at Xuanquanzhi Site, there are records of Sogdian Zhi Zi coming to Han:

Yangshuo year four (21 BCE), send Kangju’s Zhi Zi to take a ride on the wagon. Execute the order immediately (Zhang, 2004).

There are other bamboo slips that describe the process of serving food and water to the Sogdian “hostages” at Dunhuang (Zhang, 2004), indicating that although these men, even boys, came to China as “hostages”, they were welcomed by the government and treated with great care, further proving the importance that the Han Dynasty placed on their alliance with the Sogdians. They hoped to fight the nomadic tribe Hun in the north together by sending Zhi Zi to each other’s country.

Even more astonishing is that all the Zhi Zi sent from their hometowns were members of the imperial family, who had direct kinship to the king and emperor. Therefore, both sides, even the kings and emperor, sacrificed a lot to maintain this alliance for the greater good of their countries, especially for the Sogdians.

#### 4.4 Merchants

In the centuries after the Han Dynasty, the Sogdians were mostly merchants trading goods in the bordering cities during the Wei and Jin Dynasty, the North-South Period, Sui Dynasty, and Tang Dynasty. The Sogdian people were known by many as calculative merchants, holding the ropes tied to the camels, who traveled across the vast sea of sand to reach the grand cities in China to trade their most valuable items. However, this was not the case for Sogdians during the earlier years (Vaissière, 2004). One of the few written records about Sogdian merchants can be found in “Book of the Later Han” (后汉书):

Fubo general looks like those foreign merchants, who move around and stop a lot (Si & Liu, 1965).

This description vividly reflects the impressions Sogdian merchants left in the Chinese consciousness, thus

indicating that although not much has been recorded of them, there were already Sogdian merchants trading and selling goods in China. Nevertheless, this was the late period of the Eastern Han Dynasty, near the end of the reign of this great empire. In addition, the “List of King of Kangju’s Ambassadors” (康居王使者册) and other Han Dynasty bamboo slips contain details the ambassadors who came to pay tribute to Han’s emperor. Among the group of servants and subordinates those ambassadors brought, some of them were merchants. The goods they carried into China were used to either pay tribute to the emperor or as trading collateral for valuable items such as silk along their journey.

When the previous description was recorded, the pioneers of the Han Dynasty had already opened the Silk Road for around two hundred years. In those two centuries, Sogdian merchants, alongside the ambassadors and Zhi Zi, came to China, using the city of Dunhuang as a waystation. They all played important roles maintaining the prosperity of the Silk Road in ancient China. It was not until after the fourteenth century, when the Silk Road was abandoned and the commercial sea routes began to develop, that the Sogdians’ role in ancient China started to diminish (Vaissière, 2004).

### **5. The Impact of the Sogdian Civilization on the Han Dynasty and Sogdian’s Sinicization**

After Han Emperor Wu first opened Hexi Corridor and connected other civilizations with the Silk Road, many Sogdian people of various identities came to China for cultural and material exchanges. The diversity of cultures and ideas Sogdians brought to the Han Dynasty contributed to an open and multi-cultural China of over two thousand years ago. The most direct reflection of the impact Sogdians brought to the Han Dynasty was the many foreign items and relics discovered in China, in particular glass, which was one of the most popular imported items two thousand years ago.

Glass is one of the earliest man-made materials in human history and one of the most common and popular trading items worldwide during the Han Dynasty. When Han Emperor Wu opened Hexi Corridor, many glass-made accessories and containers came into China through the Silk Road (An, 2007). The imported glasses found in China can be divided into three categories – Roman glass, Sasanian glass, and Islamic glass (An, 2007). The mold, sculpt, and crafting of those glasses were very different from the accessories produced domestically in China, and they made their way to China during the Western Han Dynasty. In a tomb that dates to mid-Western Han Dynasty era found in Hengzhigang, Guangzhou, three glass-made bowls have been unearthed (Cultural Relics Management Commission of Guangzhou Municipality, 1955). The color of the three bowls is the same – semi-transparent dark blue-pink. From the shapes and processing of the three bowls, it is evident that they are made of Roman glasses (An, 2007). There is no direct evidence to prove that this glass was brought to China by the Sogdians, but as one of the vassal states of the Alexander the Great’s Macedon Empire, the Sogdian area was greatly influenced by the Greek-Roman culture from the Mediterranean (Lin, 2015). Thus, it is reasonable to assume that either the Sogdian ambassadors or merchants brought these Roman-style accessories and goods to the Han Dynasty, including the three Roman glass bowls.

Not only did Sogdians bring precious foreign products to China, but they also spread the treasures and goods made in China to the neighboring civilizations. Between 2012 and 2013, the Chengdu Antique Archaeology Team implemented a salvage excavation on a Western Han Dynasty tomb located in Tianhui town, Jinniu district, Chengdu city. Among the relics and items found in the tomb, four machines caught the attention of the archaeologists and historians (Xie, Wu, & Suo, 2014). Most of the research at the time suggested that those four machines were jacquard machines for a special brocade found in modern-day Sichuan Province, also called Shu in ancient times. However, those jacquard machines were also found in modern-day Pakistan and India (the ancient Maues Kingdom), and studies show that they appeared around the same time as the Western Han Dynasty, meaning that once this type of machine was produced, it immediately began spreading on the Silk Road (Lin, 2015). Therefore, although Sogdian civilization did not have a tight connection with the Han Dynasty like it had with Sui and Tang Dynasty, Sogdian merchants were already spreading Chinese items and culture on the Eurasia continent via the Silk Road while bringing diversity and other cultures into China.

At the same time, Chinese culture was also subtly affecting the Sogdians and their civilization. In 2001, a team of French archaeologists discovered an ancient tomb in an area near Samarqand, and by examining the structure of the tomb and its burial objects, they concluded that the master of this tomb was an aristocrat of a nomadic tribe under the kingdom of Kangju (Lin, 2015). Among the items buried in the tomb, the archaeologists unearthed a “four breasts and four cobras mirror”, an item extremely popular in China during the late Western Han Dynasty and the era of Wang Mang (Cheng & Han, 2002). Three years later, archaeologist Alexander Podushkin from Kazakhstan discovered a nomadic tomb near the city of Shymkent. In addition to the regular burial objects in ancient nomadic tombs, such as long and short iron swords, bow and arrows from Maues

Empire, and pottery, there was also an “arc pattern bronze mirror” which was a common object found in the Western Han Dynasty (Sims-Williams, Grenet, & Podushkin, 2007). Despite the structure of the tombs and the fact that most of the burial objects reflected strong nomadic style, the items and culture of the Han Dynasty had traveled far from China to where Sogdians lived. The evidence mentioned above all paved the way for Sogdian’s migration into China during the North-South era, as well as its complete Sinicization during the Tang Dynasty.

## 6. Conclusion

Today, the Silk Road is an important symbol of the great Han Dynasty because of its massive impact on Chinese and global history. However, it is rare that the Sogdians are recognized in Silk Road scholarship. When the Silk Road was first opened, Sogdians traveled from the farthest east end, the prosperous capital Changan, all the way to the Roman Empire on this famous commercial route, and, with their camels, brought goods, accessories, and jewelry from different countries and cultures to China. No matter which sub-routes those Sogdians took, they all reached the western frontier of the Han Dynasty and the only way to enter China – Dunhuang. One route, one city, one ethnicity. When general Huo Qu Bing defeated the powerful Hun to open Hexi Corridor and Silk Road, history tied the fates of Dunhuang and Sogdians together. Two thousand years ago, China was already a country where all people and cultures were welcomed, and the Sogdian civilization also left its footprints on the long history of China.

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