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## 东西交流论谭

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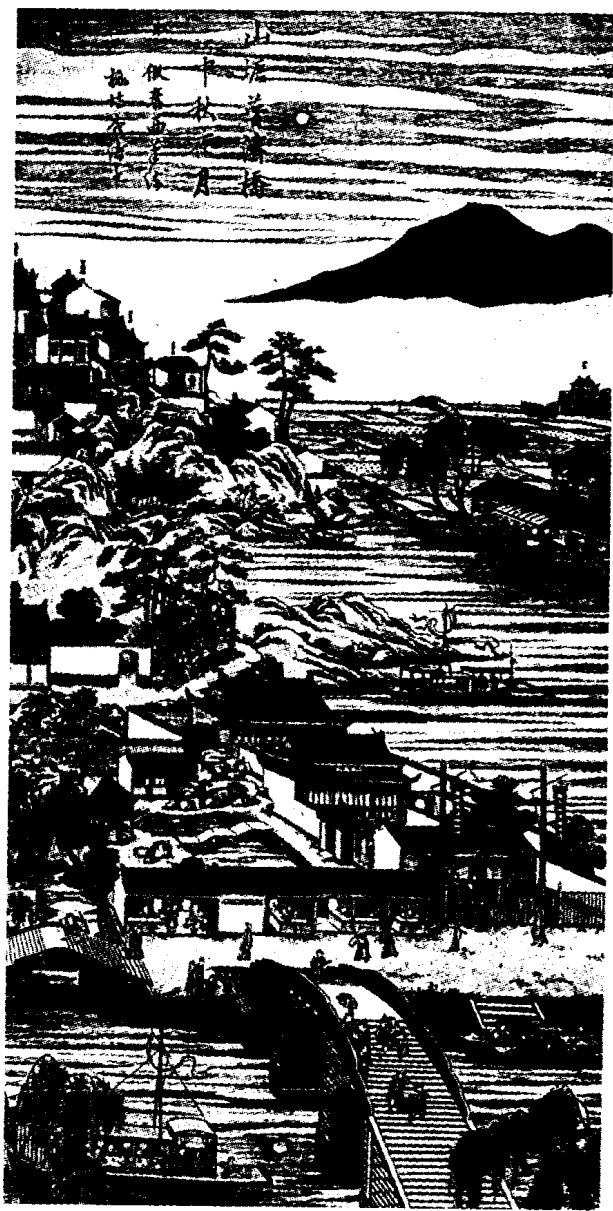
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# The Tokharians and Buddhism\*

Xu Wenkan

## 1. *Introduction : On the Tokharians and the Yuezhi*

From the end of the nineteenth century to the beginning of the twentieth, a great number of manuscripts in Indo – European languages were discovered in northwest China (mainly in Xinjiang and Dunhuang, Gansu). It has been revealed that the languages in which these manuscripts were written include Gāndhārī, Pahlavī, Sogdian, Parthian, Khotanese, Tumshuqese, etc. Also found were texts in another ancient Indo – European language, different from the Indo – Iranian languages listed above and written in the Brāhmī script. Two dialects of this language, A and

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\* I wish to express my gratitude to Julia Lao, Jidong Yang and Victor H. Mair for assistance in the preparation of this article for publication.

B, have been identified. ①Based on the colophons of *Maitrisimit*, a famous Buddhist play written in Uighur, F. W. K. Müller, E. Sieg, and W. Siegling named this ancient language “Tokharian” in their works. One of these Uighur colophons, nr. 48, reads:

Nakridiš ulušta toγmiš Aryačintrī bodisvt kši acari Āntkāḥ  
tilint [in] ... Toγri tilinčā yaratmīs Il – baliqda toγmīs  
Prtanyarakšit kši ačari Toγri tilintin Türk tilinčā ävirmīs  
Maitri...[si]mit nom bitig. ②

W. B. Henning has translated this paragraph into English:

The sacred book *Maitreya – Samiti* which the Boddhisattva guru ācārya Āryacandra, who was born in the country of Nagaradeśa, ③ had composed④ in the Twry language out of the

① Ji Xianlin 季羨林, “Tuhuoluoyu de faxian yu kaoshi ji qi zai Zhong – Yin wenhua jiaoliu zhong de zuoyong” [The Discovery and Studies of Tokharian and Its Function in the Cultural Communication between China and India] 吐火罗语的发现与考释及其在中印文化交流中的作用, in his *Zhong – Yin wenhua guanxi shi lunwen ji* [A Collection of Articles on the Cultural Relationship between China and India] 中印文化关系史论文集 (Beijing: 1982).

② F. W. K. Müller und E. Sieg, “Maitrisimit und Tocharisch”, *SBAW* (1916): 414; F. W. K. Müller, “Toxri und Kūšan (kūšan)”, *SBAW* (1918): 566ff.

③ W. B. Henning suggests that correct transcription of N' kry d̄yś, which was transcribed by F. W. K. Müller and others as Nagaradeśa (“Najie”那竭 in *Faxian zhuan* [Biography of Faxian] 法显传, “Najieluohe”那揭罗曷 in the second chapter of *Da Tang xiyu ji* [Accounts of the Western Regions of the Great Tang] 大唐西域记), should be “knyōys”, equal to Agnideśa, the Sanskritized name for Agnean; see his “The Name of the ‘Tokharian Language’”, *AM*, 1 (1949): 160.

④ “Yaratmīs” means “to edit and translate”; see Ji Xianlin, “Tuhuoluowen he Huihewen ben *Mile huijian ji xingzhi qianyi*” [A Brief Discussion of the Nature of the Tokharian and Uighur Versions of *Maitreyasamiti*] 吐火罗文和回纥文本弥勒会见记性质浅议, *Beijing daxue xuebao* 北京大学学报, 2 (1991): 65. Rerikh, a tibetologist of the former USSR, also thinks that this word corresponds to Tibetan “gtan – la ‘bebs – pa”, meaning “to collate and edit [classics]” (*NAA*, 6 [1963]: 123).

Indian language, and which the guru ācārya Prajñaraksita, who was born in Il – baliq,<sup>①</sup> translated from the Twγry language into the Turkish language.

During the decades that followed, many scholars have debated hotly on the nomenclature of this language and a series of related historical, geographical and ethnological issues, and especially its relationship to the Yuezhi and Kushan peoples.<sup>②</sup> Most of them hold that the Tokharian dialects A and B are actual-

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① F. W. K. Müller and others identify Il – baliq with Ili – baliq or Ila – baliq (near present – day Yining) of the Yuan and Ming periods (see F. W. K. Müller und E. Sieg, op cit., 416). Yet as P. Pelliot has pointed out, this association is debatable; see P. Pelliot, “Tokharien et kouchéen,” *Journal Asiatique*, 224 (1934), or the Chinese translation by Feng Chengjun 冯承钧 in *Tuholuo yu kao* 吐火罗语考 (Beijing: 1957), p. 94. J. Hamilton, on the other hand, regards “Il – baliq” to have the meaning of “capital”, probably referring to the capital of the Uighur empire, Qoto; see his discussion of A. von Gabain’s *Maitrismüt*, I in T’oung Pao, 46 (1958): 443. Also see Geng Shimin 耿世民, “Gudai Weiuer yu fojiao yuanshi juban *Mile huijian ji* (Hami xieben) yanjiu” [Study of the Buddhist Play *Maitreyasamiti* in Ancient Uighur (the Hami Manuscript)] 古代维吾尔语佛教原始剧本弥勒会见记(哈密写本)研究, *Wenshi* 文史, 12 (1981): 215.

② Wang Jingru 王静如, “Lun Tuholuo ji Tuholuo Yu” [On the Tokharians and Tokharian] 论吐火罗及吐火罗语, in *Zhong De xuezhì* 中德学志 5, nos. 1 – 2 (1943). Buddha Prakash, “Thakura,” *CAJ*, 3 (1957); Yu. N. Rerikh, “Tokharaskaya problema,” *NAA*, 6 (1963); Huang Shengzhang 黄盛璋, “Shilun suowei ‘Tuholuo yu’ jiqi youguan de lishi dili he minzu wenti” [A Preliminary Discussion on What is Called “Tokharian Language” and Its Related Historical, Geographical and Ethnic Issues] 试论所谓吐火罗语及其有关的历史地理和民族问题, in *Xiyu shi luncong* 西域史论丛 [Anthology on the History of the Western Regions], Vol. 2 (Urumqi: 1985).

ly Agnean and Kuchean.<sup>①</sup> However, many questions about this theory still need to be resolved, and “Tokharian” as a useful term should not be dismissed.

The extant Tokharian documents date from the period between the sixth and the eighth centuries. However, Tokharian itself is an ancient Indo – European language belonging to the Centum branch, more closely related to Celtic, German, Italian, and Greek than to other languages.<sup>②</sup> This means that an Indo – European people rather than those speaking Eastern Iranian (the Satem branch) entered modern Chinese territory at a very early time. The British scholar T. Burrow, who studied the Kharoṣṭhī documents unearthed in Niya, Loulan and Shanshan, pointed out long ago that many grammatical phenomena and the vocabulary of Niya vernacular were close to Tokharian.<sup>③</sup> Therefore, the residents of the Shanshan state were speaking a Tokharian language which was somewhat different from the later Agnean and Kuchean. That is to say, there existed a third Tokharian dialect, and the Tokharian entry to the Tarim Basin can be traced back to

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① Geng Shimin and Zhang Guangda 张广达, “Suolimi kao” [Study on Sulmi/Solmi] 梭里迷考, *Lishi yanjiu* 历史研究, 2 (1980): 156. Nevertheless, some scholars still hold that the name “Tokharian” is probably correct; see W. Thomas, “Zu skt. tokharika und seiner Entsprechung im Tokharischen,” (Kuhns) *Zeitschrift für vergleichende Sprachforschung* 95. 1 (1981).

② D. Q. Adams, “The Position of Tokharian among the Other Indo – European Languages”, *Journal of the American Oriental Society*, 104 (1984).

③ T. Burrow, “Tokharian Elements in Kharoṣṭhī Documents”, *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society* (1935).



the second and third centuries.

Furthermore, there have been some very important archaeological discoveries in Xinjiang in recent years which may provide new clues to the origin of the Tokharians. For example, in 1979 the Archaeology Institute of the Xinjiang Academy of Social Science excavated forty – two ancient tombs in the lower Kongque River valley, seventy kilometers west of the presently dry Lake Lop – nor. These tombs, which constitute an important site of the Gumugou Culture, date from the Bronze Age, approximately 3,000 before present. The anthropometric studies of the human skulls collected from these tombs have shown that the Gumugou people possessed primitive Caucasoid features and that their physical characteristics had certain similarities with the Nordic or northern European type.<sup>①</sup> Moreover, a large number of mummies has recently been found in Xinjiang. These mummies, of which the oldest date from 4,000 before present, also show Caucasoid

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① Han Kangxin 韩康信, “Xinjiang Kongquehe Gumugou mudi rengu Yanjiu” [A Study of the Human Bones from the Gumugou Cemetery in the Kongque River Valley, Xinjiang] 新疆孔雀河古墓沟墓地人骨研究, *Kaogu xuebao* 考古学报, 3 (1986); “Xinjiang Kongquehe Gumugou muzang rengu de renleixue tezhen” [The Anthropological Characteristics of the Human Bones of the Gumugou Cemetery in the Kongque Valley, Xinjiang] 新疆孔雀河古墓沟墓葬人骨的人类学特征, in *Zhongguo kaoguxue yanjiu—Xia Nai xian-sheng kaogu wushi nian jinian lunwen ji* [Research on Chinese Archaeology—Articles Collected on the Fiftieth Anniversary of Mr. Xia Nai’s Archaeological Studies] 中国考古学研究——夏鼐先生考古五十年纪念论文集 (Beijing: 1986). The tombs are actually located in the sandy hills of the second plateau above the northern bank of the river.

features. May we surmise from these facts that, as early as three or four thousand years ago, the Caucasian residents of the Tarim Basin were already in certain ways related to the Tokharian people who came later?

The Yuezhi 月支 people recorded in Chinese histories might be related to the Tokharians. Since the 1970s quite a few scholars have proposed that the Yuezhi were a branch of the Tokharians. Detailed arguments can be found in articles by B. Henning, A. K. Narain, Lin Meicun, and myself.<sup>①</sup>

It is commonly accepted that the “Yuzhi” 禺知 people mentioned in *Mu tianzi zhuan* [*Biography of the Son of the Heaven Mu*] 穆天子传, the “Yuzhi” 禺氏 people in the “Wanghui” 王会 chapter of *Yi Zhou shu* [*The Lost History of the Zhou*] 逸周书 as well as in the “Gouxu” 国蓄, “Kuidu” 揆度, “Qingzhong jia” 轻重

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① W. B. Henning, “The First Indo - Europeans in History”, in G. I. Ulman, ed., *Society and History: Essays in Honor of Karl August Wittfogel* (The Hague: 1978); A. K. Narain, “On the ‘First’ Indo - Europeans”, in *The Tokharian - Yuezhi and Their Chinese Homeland: Papers on Inner Asia 2* (Bloomington: 1987); *Idem*, “Indo - Europeans in Inner Asia”, in D. Sinor, ed., *The Cambridge History of Early Inner Asia* (Cambridge: 1990); Lin Meicun 林梅村, “Kaituo sichou zhi lu de xianqu—Tuhuluoren” [The Pioneers on the Silk Road—the Tokharians] 开拓丝绸之路的先驱——吐火罗人, *Wenwu*, 1 (1989); and Xu Wenkan 徐文堪, “Cong yijian Poluomi zi boshu tan woguo gudai de Yin - Ouyu he Yin - Ouren” [Indo - European and the Indo - Europeans in Ancient China: Looking from a Manuscript in Brāhmī Script] 从一件婆罗迷字帛书谈我国古代的印欧语和印欧人, in Li Zheng et al. eds., *Ji Xianlin jiaoshou bashi huadan jinian lunwen ji* [Articles Collected on the Occasion of Professor Ji Xianlin's Eightieth Birthday] 季羨林教授八十华诞纪念论文集 (Nanchang: 1991).

甲, and “Qingzhong yi” 轻重乙 chapters of *Guanzi* [ *Book of Guanzi* ] 管子, the “Yuezhi” 月氏 people in the “Yiyi chaoxian” 伊尹朝献 chapter of *Yi zhoushu*, and the “Niuzhi” 牛氏 people in the “Dishu” 地数 chapter of *Guanzi*, all are the same as the Yuezhi people. During the Qin and Han Dynasties, the Yuezhi were one of the three major ethnic groups (the other two were the Eastern Hu and Xiongnu) to the north of China, living between Dunhuang and Qilian Mountains, “residing wherever there were water and grass.” So they must have been active in the vast area from the Tarim Basin to the Ordos Grassland. The power of the Yuezhi was weakened after they were defeated by the Mo Du shan - yu of the Xiongnu. After their king was killed by another Xiongnu shan - yu, Laoshang, the Yuezhi was divided into two groups, one called Greater Yuezhi and another called Lesser Yuezhi. The former moved westwards, conquered Bactria, and established a kingdom in south Central Asia, leaving a remarkable chapter in world history.

It is after the westward migration of the Tokharian - Yuezhi people that the term “Tokharian” began to appear in the documents of various languages. According to Strabo’s *Geography* [ XI.8.2 ], the four nomadic peoples who took Bactria from the Greeks were the Asii, Gasiani, Tochari, and Sacarauli. Trogus, on the other hand, records that “the Scythian tribes, the Saraucae and Asiani, conquered Bactria and Sogdiana”, and that “the Asiani [became] the kings of the Tochari, and the Saraucae were destroyed.” We believe that one or a few of the four peoples who

were mentioned in the Greek sources as having conquered Bactria must have been the Yuezhi. The Yuezhi was a tribal federation dominated by the Tokharians. Yet in the course of their westward migration, they also absorbed various Eastern – Iranian speaking Śaka tribes.<sup>①</sup> According to “Xiyu zhuan” [Account of the Western Regions] 西域传 in both *Han shu* [History of the Han Dynasty] 汉书 and *Hou Han shu* [History of the Later Han Dynasty] 后汉书, the Greater Yuezhi were later broken into “five divisions under five *xihou* 翕侯 leaders”, among which the Kushan division was the most powerful. In the early first century, the Kushan *xihou* Kujula Kadphises unified the five divisions, broke away from the control of the Hellenized Bactrian dynasty, and established the Kushan Empire.

All the branches of the Tokharian people mentioned above had important influences on the transmission of Buddhism across Central Asia to China. In the following section I will explore this point, relying principally on Chinese sources.

## ***2. The Tokharians , Yuezhi and the transmission of Buddhism to China***

Buddhism spread to northwest India and its neighboring

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① A. N. Zelinsky and Y. G. Rychkov point out that the physical attributes of the early Kushans are similar to that of the Yuezhi, belonging to “north – Europeans”, which were distributed from Europe to Sayano – Altai during ancient times; see *Kushan Studies in U. S. S. R.* (Calcutta: 1970), p. 179.

countries very early. According to the Aśokan inscriptions, Indian envoys reached Parthia, Bactria, Egypt, and Greece. We know for sure that as early as the mid – third century BCE, Buddhism flourished in Qandahar in southern Afghanistan. In the early second century BCE, the Bactrians, who were ruled by the Greeks, invaded northwest India, but later Bactria itself became divided. Menander (or Menandros, rendered as Milinda in Pali), the king of the Hellenistic city state whose center was Sāgala (modern Siālkoṭ in Pakistan), had a well – known discourse with Nāgasena, a prestigious monk from Jibin (present – day Peshawar, Pakistan), and allegedly converted to Buddhism. This discourse was recorded and compiled into the *Milindapaṭhā* in Pali and translated into Chinese as the *Naxian buqiu jing* [*Sūtra of Bhikṣu Nāgasena*] 那先比丘经. After the Tokharians, namely the Yuezhi, conquered Bactria in the middle of the second century during their westward migration, they inherited Buddhism, which had already been transmitted there.

The Greater Yuezhi had converted to Buddhism by the first century BCE at the latest. the country expanded rapidly after Qiujiuque established the Kushan Dynasty. Within one hundred years the Yuezhi had invaded Parthia, took Gaofu (today's Kabul in Afghanistan), and destroyed Puda (today's Gwadar in Pakistan) and Kashmir. From the first century CE, the famous Gandharan art began to appear. In the early second century, the king of the Kushans, Vima Kadphises (Yan – gao – zhen 阎膏珍 in Chinese), further expanded the country by occupying the In-

dus River region in Pakistan. Then the Kadphises royal house was replaced by the -ška family. The founder of this new royal house was the historically renowned Kaniška I. V. V. Ivanov has studied the suffix of the name of this Kushan king, and regarded it to have originated from Kuchean.<sup>①</sup>

The exact date of Kaniška's accession to the Kushan throne has not been confirmed, and the entire chronology of the Kushan empire has also been the subject of heated controversy. These issues were the primary topic of two international conferences held in London in 1913 and 1960, and they were also discussed during the conference on Kushan civilization held in Dushanbe in 1968. However, no consensus has been reached.<sup>②</sup> According to our present understanding, Kaniška's accession probably occurred sometime between 78 and 144 CE, with c. 128 being the most likely specific date. Since Kaniška employed a policy of supporting and sponsoring various religions, Buddhism was able to develop rapidly. The famous Fourth Council of Buddhism (ac-

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① Vyach. Vs. Ivanov, "Yazykovyue dannye o proiskhozhdenii Kushanskoi dinastii i Tokharskaya problema," *NAA*, 1967, 3. H. W. Bailey and W. B. Henning regard the name "Kaniška" as being constituted with the combination of the root *kan* the suffix - *ška* ( - *iška* ), which makes it term of praise meaning "the most youthful and energetic." This name could also have been a Bactrian term: \* *kaništaka* > \* *kaništka* > *kaniška*. Refer to J. Brough, "Nugae Indo - Sericae", in M. Boyce and I. Gershevitch, eds., *W. B. Henning Memorial Volume*, (London: 1970), pp. 85 - 86.

② Buddha Rashmi Mani, *The Kushan Civilization: Studies in Urban Developments and Material Culture* (Delhi: 1987), pp. 12 - 13.

tually a conference of the Sarvāstivāda school) was summoned during Kanīška's reign. He built Buddhist temples and stupas throughout the kingdom. The Queli (Jaurya) 雀离 stupa, which he built at his capital Puruṣapura (today's Peshawar), was reportedly seen by the Northern Wei emissary Song Yun 宋云 and a pilgrim Huisheng 惠生 who passed by here on their way to India in search of Buddhist scriptures in the early sixth century.<sup>①</sup> Research has shown that Queli and Zhaohuli 昭怙釐<sup>②</sup>, the name of another Buddhist temple in Kucha reported by Xuanzang 玄奘 in the first chapter of his *Da Tang xiyu ji* [Accounts of the Western Regions of the Great Tang Dynasty] 大唐西域记, must be the same Tokharian word.<sup>③</sup>

The most important Kushan Buddhist site excavated in former Soviet Central Asia is Kara – tepe in ancient Termez. The

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① *Luoyang qielan ji* [Accounts of Buddhist Temples in Luoyang] 洛阳伽蓝记, Chapter 5.

② Also written as Queli da qingjing 雀离大清净 in the *Shishi xiyu ji* [Account of Buddhist Western Regions] 释氏西域记 as cited in *Shuijing zhu* [Commentary on the Book of Water] 水经注, and Queli da si 雀离大寺 in the "Biography of Kumārajīva" in the second chapter of *Gaoseng zhuan* [Biographies of Eminent Monks] 高僧传.

③ In the context of Ban's expedition to Karashar, "Ban Yong zhuan" [Biography of Ban Yong] 班勇传 in *Hou Hanshu* mentions a place name "Jueli guan" [the Jueli pass] 爵离关, which is another transcription of this word. This question has repeatedly been discussed. See P. Pelliot, "Tokharien et Koutchéen"; P. Boodberg, "Two Notes on the History of the Chinese Frontier", *HJAS* 1 (1936): 290 – 291; E. Pulleyblank, "An Interpretation of the Vowel System of Old Chinese and Written Burmese", *AM*, 10 (1963): 206 – 207.

archaeological findings include stone statues, sculptures, Kushan coins, and inscriptions in the Kharoṣṭhī and Brāhmī scripts. There are also inscriptions in local Bactrian, written in a cursive style of Greek script.<sup>①</sup>

Zhang Qian's 张骞 journey to the Western Regions during the Western Han period marked the official opening of the Silk Road, which connected inland China with Central Asia. It has long been a hotly debated issue when Buddhism was transmitted from India to China. Nevertheless, one thing is known for sure: the Tokharian – Yuezhi people played a key role in this transmission. In a passage from Yu Huan's 鱼豢 *Weilue* [A Brief History of the Wei] 魏略 Cited by Pei Songzhi 裴松之 in his commentary to the "Dong Yi zhuan" [Account of the Eastern Aliens] 东夷传 chapter in *Weizhi* [History of the Wei] 魏志 of *Sanguo zhi* [History of the Three Kingdoms] 三国志, there is a clear record:

In the first year of the Yuanshou Reign of the Han Emperor Aidi 哀帝 (2 BCE), Jing Lu 景卢, A student of the Grand Academy, received the dictation of *Futu Jing* [Buddha's Sūtra] 浮屠经 from Yicun 伊存, an envoy sent to China by the king of the Greater Yuezhi. It was he who had reestablished [Buddhism in China]. All the terms such as *pusai*

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① B. Ya. Stavisky, "Kara Tepe in Old Termez: A Buddhist Religious Center of the Kushan Period on the Bank of the Oxus", in J. Harmatta, ed., *From Hecataeus to Al - Khwarizmi: Bactrian, Pahlavi, Sogdian, Persian, Sanskrit, Syriac, Arabic, Chinese, Greek and Latin Sources for the History of Pre - Islamic Central Asia* (Budapest: 1984).



[upāsaka] 蒲塞, *sangmen* [ś ramana] 桑门, *bowen* [brāhmaṇa?] 伯闻, *shuwen* 疏问, *boshuxian* 白疏閒, *biqu* [bhikṣu] 比丘 and *chenmen* 晨门 appearing in this sutra are titles of [Buddha's] disciples.

This event is also reported in Liu Xiaobiao's 刘孝标 commentary to the "Wenxue" [Literature] 文学 chapter of *Shishuo xinyu* [New words and Sayings of the World] 世说新语, "Shi Lao zhi" [Treatise on Buddhism and Daoism] 释老志 of *Weishu* [History of the Northern Wei] 魏书, "Jingji zhi" [Bibliographical Treatise] 经籍志 of *Suishu* [History of the Sui] 隋书, the fifth chapter of Falin's 法琳 *Bianzhent lun* [Treatise on Defending the Right] 辩正论, Zhang Shoujie's 张守节 commentary to the "Dawan liezhuan" [Account of Ferghana] 大宛列传 of *Shiji* [Records of the Grand Historian] 史记, the 193rd chapter of *Tongdian* [Comprehensive Codes] 通典, *Futu jing* [Buddha Sūtra] 浮屠经 of the Jin and Song dynasties cited in the 196th chapter of *Tongzhi* [Comprehensive Accounts] 通志, and *Jin zhongjing* [The Middle Sūtra of the Jin] 晋中经 cited in the second chapter of *Guangchuan huaba* [Guangchuan's Postscripts to Paintings] 广川画跋. However, Jing Lu's name is written as Qin Jingxian 秦景宪 in *Weishu*, and in *Bianzheng lun* we find another version of the story (Qin Jing 秦景 went to the Yuezhi country, whose king ordered his son to teach [Qin] the *Futu jing*), which is similar to the account in the *Jin zhongjing*.

After the Greater Yuezhi migrated westwards to Bactria, they quickly assimilated themselves to the local culture. There-