

## Another Sogdian–Chinese bilingual epitaph\*

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### Abstract

Two stone tablets in the Wangye Museum, Shenzhen, contain a bilingual Sogdian and Chinese epitaph for a Sogdian merchant and his wife, who lived in the northern Chinese city of Ye 鄴 in the late sixth century CE. The two texts are published here for the first time and accompanied by a detailed commentary on philological and historical points of interest.

**Keywords:** Sogdian–Chinese bilingual, Sogdian epitaph, Chinese epitaph, Sogdians in China, Sogdian language

The Sogdians were an Iranian-speaking people whose homeland was the area around Samarkand in what is now Uzbekistan. In the first millennium CE Sogdians played a leading role in the overland trade along the so-called “Silk Road”. As a result they had a substantial presence in China, thousands of miles to the east of Sogdiana, from at least the early fourth century.<sup>1</sup>

In the past two decades, several tombs of Sogdians and other Central Asians have been excavated in Shaanxi and Shanxi provinces in northern China. Amongst the most important are the tombs of An Jia 安伽 and Shi Jun 史君 (Wirkakk),<sup>2</sup> both of whom lived in the Northern Zhou period (557–581 CE)

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1 The activities of Sogdian merchants in China are documented *inter alia* by the Sogdian “Ancient Letters”, which probably date from 313–314 CE (see most recently Grenet et al. 2001: 102).

2 Shi Jun, lit. “Master Shi”. His Sogdian name was Wirkakk, but his Chinese personal name is not preserved. For a comprehensive publication of the tomb of Shi Jun see Yang 2014.

and bore the title *sabao* 薩保 from Sogdian *s'rtp'w* “caravan-leader”. These funerary monuments, which are extravagantly decorated with carved and painted panels in Central Asian style, have greatly enriched our knowledge of the culture of the Sogdians in China around the second half of the sixth century.

While many of these tombs contain epitaphs in Chinese indicating the names of the deceased and the dates of their death or burial, the tomb of Shi Jun is so far unique in containing a bilingual epitaph, written not only in Chinese but also in his native Sogdian, the two texts being engraved side-by-side on a long rectangular stone slab.<sup>3</sup> Here we present a second Chinese–Sogdian bilingual epitaph. In this case, unlike that of Shi Jun, the Chinese and Sogdian texts are written on two separate stones, which appeared on the antiquities market in northern China in the early 2000s and are now housed in the Wangye Museum in Shenzhen, China.

The two inscriptions are engraved on stone slabs of similar material and size. The slab with the Sogdian epitaph is 43.2 cm in length, 29.6 cm in height and 7.5 cm thick. The one with the Chinese epitaph measures 43 cm in length, 29.5 cm in height, but only 4.8 cm in thickness. The Sogdian text is 15 lines long, while the Chinese inscription consists of just 45 characters (nine columns of five characters each). It seems likely that the two epitaphs were placed side-by-side in an arrangement similar to that of the epitaph of Shi Jun, where the Sogdian inscription is on the right and the Chinese on the left. This arrangement implies that the lines of the Sogdian text were oriented vertically.<sup>4</sup> Despite some variation in colour and some minor surface damage, both stones are in good condition and the inscriptions are well preserved.

Although there is unfortunately no record of the provenance of the inscriptions, the place names which appear in the Sogdian and Chinese texts indicate that they come from a place called Jimo 際陌, a few kilometres to the north-west of the city of Ye 鄴, which is nowadays in Linzhang county, Hebei province. The epitaphs also tell us that the tomb was that of a Sogdian merchant named Nanai-vande and his wife Kekan, whose families lived in Ye under the Northern Qi (550–577 CE) and later the Northern Zhou.

The presence of Sogdians in Ye can be traced back as early as the fourth century, when the city is referred to in the Sogdian “Ancient Letter II” under its Sogdian form *'nkp'* (see below). Some two centuries later, the Sogdians had become a major influence on the political and cultural life of northern China. Historical sources and excavated materials show that the Sogdians living under the Northern Qi were quite numerous. Some of them served the court as musicians, dancers, diplomats or guards, etc., while most were ordinary merchants like Nanai-vande.<sup>5</sup> The situation was similar under the Northern Zhou. It is striking that although An Jia and Shi Jun both bore the title *sabao* and are depicted as merchants in many scenes on their funerary monuments, it seems that their epitaphs prefer to emphasize their role as officials rather than as caravan-leaders. The composer of the present epitaph, on the other hand, seems happy to present Nanai-vande as a merchant and a member of a merchant

3 For editions of the Chinese and Sogdian texts see Sun 2005 and Yoshida 2005 respectively.

4 Cf. Yoshida 2013.

5 See Bi 2009.

family. Thus, in contrast to the epitaphs of important persons such as An Jia and Shi Jun, this new find may provide us with a different viewpoint, that of the ordinary Sogdians, who also played their part in the history of northern China in the late sixth century.

### Chinese text (Figure 1)

- 1 大象二年歲
- 2 次庚子十月
- 3 癸丑廿日壬
- 4 申相州商客
- 5 遊渥々[渥]槃隨
- 6 妻康紀姜合
- 7 壜舊相州城
- 8 西北六里際
- 9 陌河所銘記

### Translation

On the twentieth day (day of *renshen* 壬申) of the tenth month, the month of *guichou* 癸丑, in the second year of the era Daxiang 大象 (580), the year of *gengzi* 庚子, You Nini Pantuo 遊渥渥槃隨 (Nanai-vande), the travelling merchant from Xiangzhou 相州 (i.e. Ye 鄴), and his wife Kang Jijiang 康紀姜 (Kekan) were buried together, six *li* to the north-west of the city of Old Xiangzhou, in the place Jimo 際陌 where the [Zhang] river ran through. The inscriptions were engraved (on the stone).

### Commentary

As in the case of the epitaph of Shi Jun, the Sogdian version is much longer and more informative than the Chinese. Only two details in the Chinese text are missing in the Sogdian and therefore need to be discussed here:

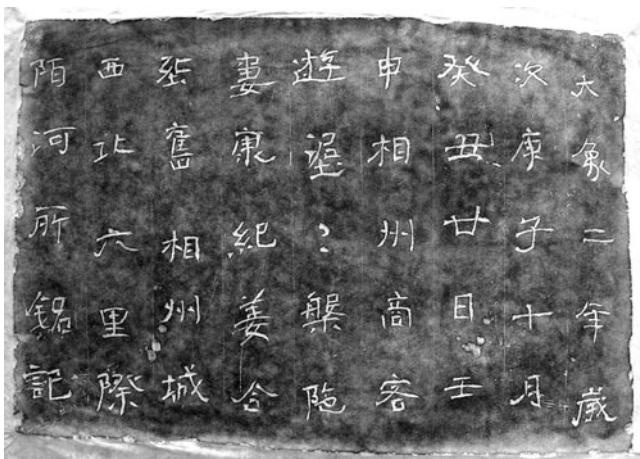


Figure 1. The Chinese inscription (rubbing). © Yan Yan.

Nanai-vande's surname You 遊 (line 5) and the place name Jimo 際陌 (lines 8–9).

5 You 遊 (EMC \*juw).<sup>6</sup> Judging from its position in the text, this should be Nanai-vande's surname, which is not given in the Sogdian text. In view of his Sogdian personal name (see below), his merchant background and his marriage to a Sogdian woman, it is natural to assume that Nanai-vande is of Sogdian or Central Asian descent, in which case his surname would normally indicate his family's place of origin. However, since You is not one of the surnames commonly used by the Sogdians in China, we also have to consider the possibility that Nanai-vande is Chinese or half-Chinese. You 遊 is attested as a Chinese surname in a document from Mazar Tagh near Khotan (mid-eighth century)<sup>7</sup> and several documents from Dunhuang (c. late ninth to late tenth centuries).<sup>8</sup> Later on, the surname 遊 seems to occur only in documents from the area to the west of Dunhuang, so it might be a Chinese surname originating in that region, or perhaps just a local corruption of its homophone 游, a well-attested surname in historical sources and epitaphs from central China as well as in documents from Dunhuang and Turfan. According to Lin Bao's *Yuanhe Xingzuan* 元和姓纂 (Register of the Great Families from the Yuanhe Reign (806–820), completed in 812 CE), *juan* 5, the surname 游 originates in an area not far from Ye. However, it is difficult to imagine that a powerful Chinese family of Ye would have had marriage connections with a foreign family at the time of our epitaph. It may be more relevant to note that some people also bore the surname 游 in the Hexi Corridor and even further west. In the biography of Qu Yun 鞠允 (d. 316 CE), an official under the Western Jin (265–316 CE), it is recorded that he was originally from Jincheng 金城 (Sogdian *kmzyn*, modern Lanzhou), where his family Qu and the family You 游 had been local great families (*haozu* 豪族) for generations. See the *Jinshu* 晉書, *juan* 89, which even refers to a verse indicating the grandeur and wealth of these two families, which is said to have been widely known in his hometown and the surrounding areas (*xizhou* 西州, lit. “the Western prefectures”). It therefore seems possible that Nanai-vande's surname indicates a connection with the You 游 family from the Hexi Corridor, whose surname may have been corrupted to You 遊 in the Western regions.

8–9 Jimo 際陌 (EMC \*tsiaj<sup>h</sup> maijk). According to historical sources and epitaphs this place is located five or seven *li* to the north-west of the city Ye (see Figure 2). The place was originally called Jimo 祭陌, with *ji* 祭 (EMC \*tsiaj<sup>h</sup>) meaning “to offer a sacrifice, hold a memorial ceremony for” and *mo* 陌 meaning “an east–west path in the fields”. The name refers to an event during the Warring States period, when the local witches and wizards are said to have married young girls to the river god by throwing them into the Zhang River 漳河 to prevent it from flooding. In 345 CE, Shi Hu 石虎, a ruler of the Later Zhao (319–351 CE), built a pontoon over the Zhang River beside the place Jimo and named it Zimo Qiao 紫陌橋 (lit. Zimo Bridge), which indicates that by this time Jimo had been changed to Zimo 紫陌 with the first character 紫 (EMC \*tsiaǎ/tsi<sup>i</sup>) meaning “purple, violet”. Although Zimo is well-attested in historical texts

6 For the reconstruction of Early Middle Chinese (EMC) see Pulleyblank 1991.

7 M. Tagh 0124 = Or. 8212/1515.

8 See Dohi (2015: 644), a reference which we owe to Professor Yoshida.

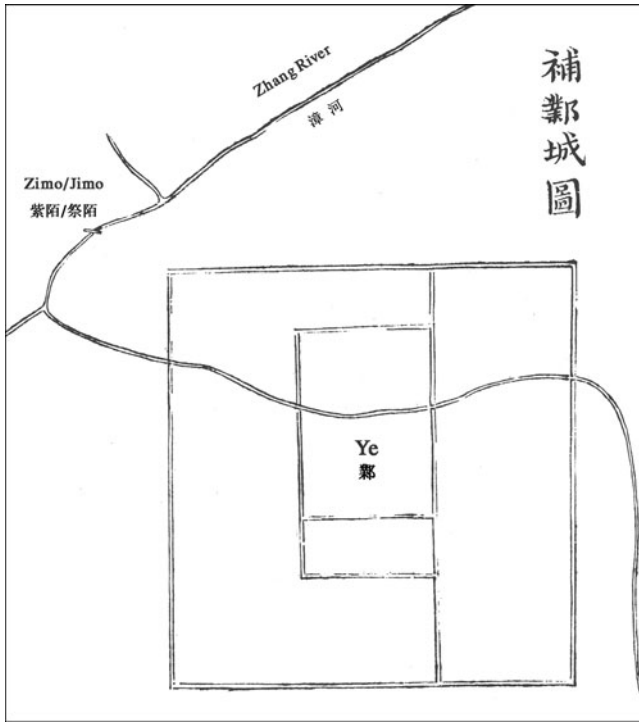


Figure 2. Map of Ye and area. Adapted from Wang Shiduo 1861.

and epitaphs from the Northern Qi period, the form Jimo is still attested in an epitaph of 546 CE under the Eastern Wei (534–550 CE) and in the epitaph under discussion.

In the present epitaph, the character following Jimo is *he* 河 “river”. It is not easy to decide whether we should read these words together as “Jimo River” or separately as “Jimo and the river”. Besides the epitaph of the Sogdian couple, the above-mentioned epitaph of 546 CE also contains the combination 際陌河, and the similar expression 紫陌河 appears in three epitaphs from the Northern Qi period. In these four epitaphs, the burial places are all indicated by the phrase “to the north of the river”. This might seem to imply that there is a Zimo (or Jimo) River to the west of Ye. However, judging from the available literary and archaeological sources, the river referred to in these texts must be understood as the Zhang River. Since Zimo was a fixed place well known to the local residents of Ye, it may be that they tended to give the name “Zimo River” to this part of the Zhang River, using it as a landmark to record the precise locations of the burial places of their family members.

### Sogdian text (Figures 3–5)

- 1 'wyn tyntw'n δw' srδ k's srδ 10my
- 2 m'xw 23yh nnyβntk xw'c'k<sup>a</sup> ZK cyn''kk
- 3 xw'c'k<sup>a</sup> BRY 'nkpc'n'k 'HRZY cnn βnδ'<sup>b</sup>

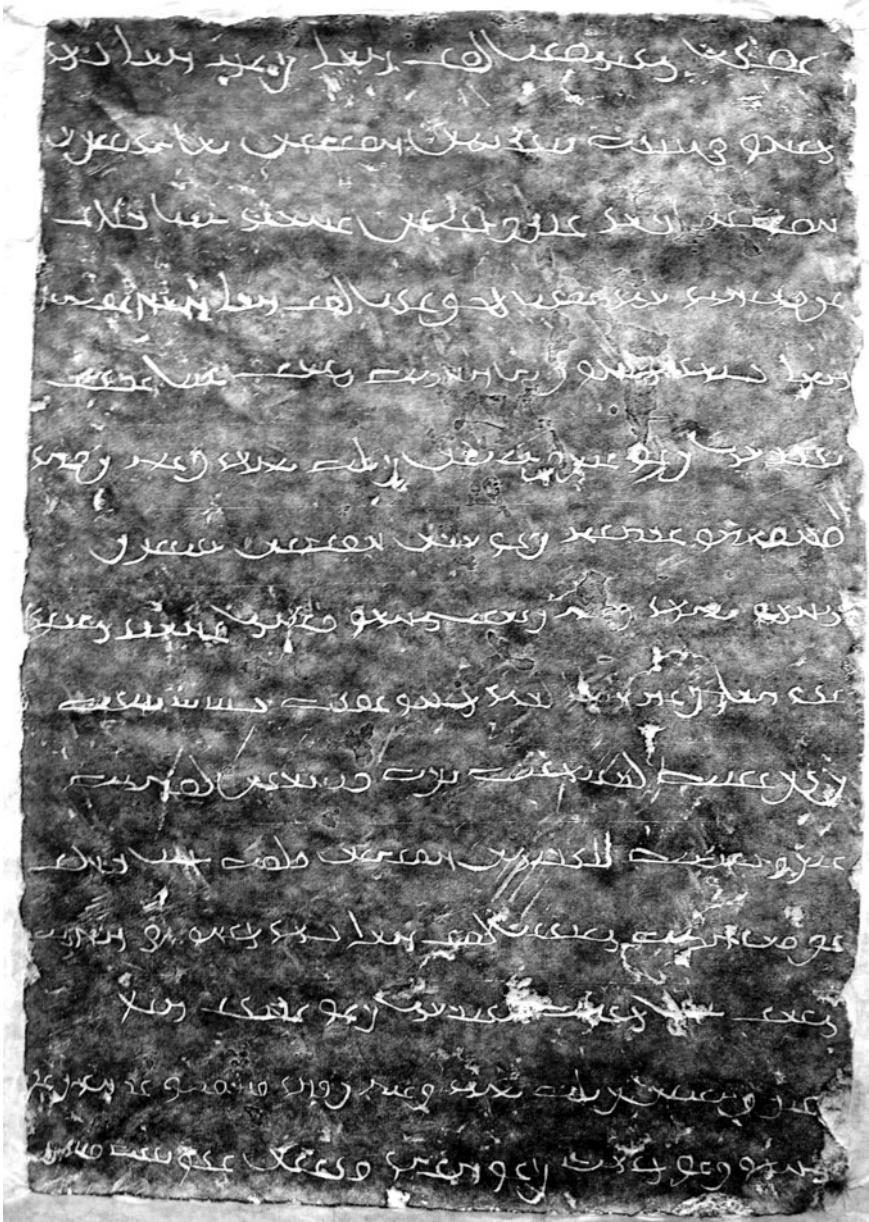


Figure 3. The Sogdian inscription (rubbing). © Yan Yan.

- 4 'pwr'sty<sup>c</sup> rty 'wyn mwp'yn δw' srδ xry-'wš'(k)<sup>d</sup>
- 5 srδ 11my m(')xw pnc sy-th t'r' cnn 'BY'
- 6 nyzβrt k'w 'nkpc'n'k k(n)δh nšmy p'š kwsy
- 7 wxwšw 'βs'x k'w R(B)k xw'c'k cyn''kk
- 8 txmw nšmy p'š kyr'n txmw w'(s)t<sup>e</sup> 'HRZY t'(z)'y(n)<sup>f</sup>
- 9 'yw srδ k's (srδ) δβty m(')xw 'wyh 19yh

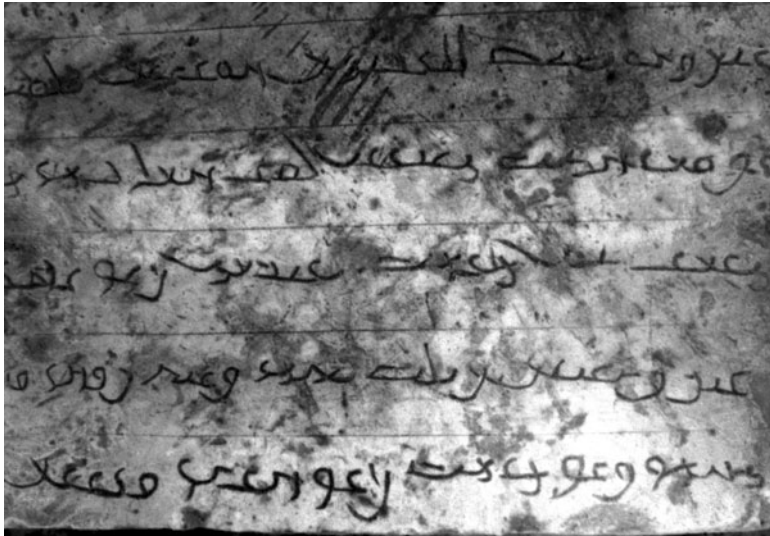


Figure 4. The Sogdian inscription, right side of lines 11–15 (negative photograph). © Bi Bo.

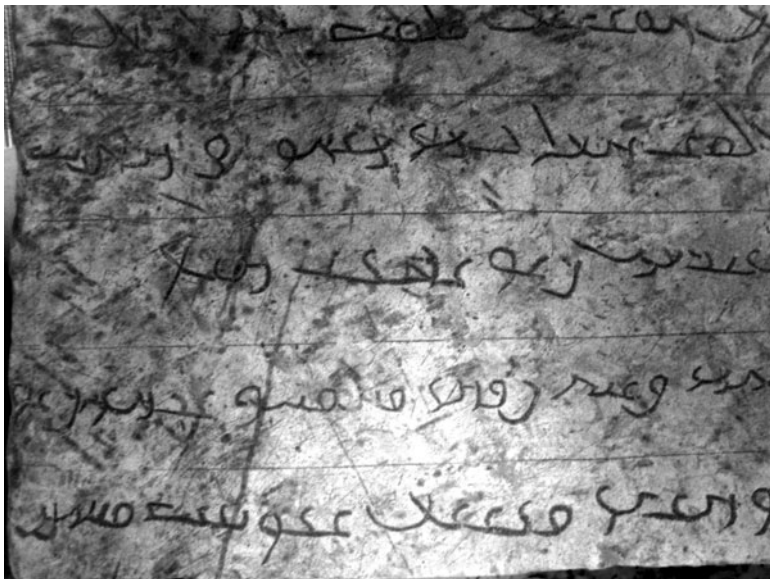


Figure 5. The Sogdian inscription, left side of lines 11–15 (negative photograph). © Bi Bo.

- 10 kyk'nh δβ'nm'h<sup>c</sup> ZKh wxr'k δwxth<sup>g</sup>
- 11 'nkpc'neh nnyβntk xw'c'k wδwh cnn βnδ'h
- 12 'pwr'sth<sup>c</sup> t'z'n<sup>i</sup> δw' srδ 10my m'xw 20 sy-th

- 13 t' r' (c)[n]n m' mh<sup>l</sup> nyzβrt k' w 'BY<sup>k</sup> s' r  
 14 'nkpc' n' k knδh nšmy p' š kwsy wxw(š)w 'βs'(x)<sup>l</sup> k' w  
 15 txmw p' w m' mh k' w s' cy wy 'k' yw z' yh w' (sn)t<sup>m</sup>

<sup>a</sup> Here could be *xw'cyk*, but *-'k* is sure in lines 7, 11. Hardly *xwyc'k*.

<sup>b</sup> Hardly *β'δ'*. Or *βγ'*?—cf. *γ* immediately below. But cf. line 11.

<sup>c</sup> Sic.

<sup>d</sup> Last letter at edge of stone, rather unclear, but *-k* is more likely than *-y*.

<sup>e</sup> Or *w'xt*? But cf. line 15.

<sup>f</sup> The last letter is a rather long vertical stroke at the very edge of the stone.

<sup>g</sup> Looks like *δwsth*.

<sup>h</sup> The reading seems certain here.

<sup>i</sup> Or *t'zy'n*? The writing cannot be reconciled with that in line 8.

<sup>j</sup> From the rubbing *m'th* seems possible, but *m'mh* (as in line 15) is clear on a negative photo.

<sup>k</sup> The *B* seems to be altered (from *x*?).

<sup>l</sup> The end of the word is clumsily written.

<sup>m</sup> The middle part of the word is unclear, but neither *w'xt* nor *w'st* (as in line 8) seems likely here. One may either read *w'(š)t* (with a complex *š* similar to that in *wxwšw*, line 7), or *w'(sn)t*.

## Translation

In year two of (the era) *tiantong*, a pig year, on the 23rd of the 10th month, the merchant Nanai-vande, the son of the merchant Chinakk, (resident) of Ye – then he departed from the \*world; and in the year two of (the era) *wuping*, a hare year, on day five of the 11th month, (his) \*body was taken away from (his) father; (at) six parasangs (distance) to the north-west side of the city of Ye, in a north-west direction to (the graves of) the great merchant Chinakk family, the family laid (him).

Then in the year one of (the era) *daxiang*, a pig year, on the 19th of the second month, the lady Kekan, the daughter of Wankharakk, (resident) of Ye, the wife of the merchant Nanai-vande, departed from the \*world; in the year two of (the era) *daxiang*, on day 20 of the tenth month, (her) \*body was taken away from (her) \*mother to (her) father; (at) six parasangs (distance) to the north-west side of the city of Ye, in the family (grave), without (her) \*mother, in a suitable place (in) one (piece of) ground, (they) laid (her).

## Commentary

1–2. The dating formula is similar to that at the beginning of the Sogdian inscription on the tomb of Shi Jun. The month is indicated by an ordinal number. The form *23yh* “on the 23rd day” is the oblique of a special feminine form of the numeral which indicates the day of the month, confirming Yoshida’s reading of exactly the same form in line 3 of the Shi Jun inscription (Yoshida 2005: 63). Similarly *'wyh 19yh* “on the 19th day” in line 9 of our text.

The year is identified by the transcribed Chinese era-name (here *tyntw'n* = *tiantong* 天統, EMC \**t'ɛn t'awj<sup>h</sup>*, an era of the Northern Qi dynasty), as well as by its place in the animal cycle. It seems that the composer of the epitaph made a mistake in calculating this date, which of course is some years earlier



than that of the inscription itself. Since the second year of *tiantong* was in fact a dog year, either “pig year” is a mistake for “dog year”, in which case the date indicated would correspond to 20 November 566 CE, or “second year of *tiantong*” is a mistake for “third year”, in which case the date would correspond to 9 December 567 CE.

2–3. The deceased Nanai-vande bears one of the commonest of all Sogdian names (Lurje 2011: 271–3, no. 787), reproduced in the Chinese version as Ninipantuo 涅涅槃陀. His father’s name *cyn’kk*, which does not seem to be attested elsewhere, is probably a hypocoristic from a name containing the noun *cyn’*, *cyn’kh* “desire”, cf. such names as Avestan *xšaθrō.cinah-*, Old Persian *Aspacanah-*. Connection with *cyn* “Chinese” seems less likely, especially as a suffix *-’kk* would be hard to explain. Both father and son are described by the previously unattested term *xw’c’k*. It does not seem possible to read the word as *xwyc’k* “open” (which could potentially be interpreted as “freeman”). On the basis of the Chinese version, which has *shangke* 商客 (EMC \**ciaŋ kʰaijk/kʰε:jk*), lit. “travelling merchant”, it seems likely that this word means “merchant”. If so, it might be cognate with *xw’kr* “id.”, where the element *xw’-* no doubt derives from *\*wahāka-* “trade” as proposed by Henning (1937: 116a). However, the suffix *-c’k* would not be easy to explain. Another possibility would be to understand it as a slightly adapted loanword from Chinese *huozhu* 貨主 (EMC \**xwāʰ tɕuǎʰ*) “seller”, lit. “owner of goods”,<sup>9</sup> an expression attested in Chinese since Eastern Han,<sup>10</sup> as well as in early Chinese Buddhist scriptures such as the *Pratyutpanna-samādhi-sūtra* (*Banzhou sanmei jing* 般舟三昧經) translated by the Yuezhi monk Lokakṣema in 179 CE<sup>11</sup> and the *Ṣaṭ-pāramitā-saṃgraha-sūtra* (*Liudu ji jing* 六度集經) translated by the Sogdian monk Kang Senghui 康僧會 under the Three Kingdoms (third century CE).<sup>12</sup>

Dr Pavel Lurje has kindly suggested to us that *xw’c’k* might be the same word as Persian *x’āja*, which is used as a title for men of importance, including rich merchants. The word is already attested in Rudaki, but apparently not in Middle

- 9 This very expression is attested in a Chinese epitaph as the name of the youngest son of the Sogdian Kang Ye 康業. Since the name *huozhu* 貨主 has a clear meaning in Chinese, and one highly suitable to the mercantile background of the Sogdians in China, it does not seem likely that it is merely a transcription of a Sogdian personal name, though it is of course possible that a Sogdian name was punningly transcribed in a way which made it meaningful in Chinese. Kang Ye may have been Sinicized to a greater extent than many other Sogdians whose funerary monuments are known to us: the pictorial panels on his stone bed display a linear Chinese style and his personal name Ye is itself a common name (or name-component) in Chinese. However, Kang Ye’s other sons bear Sogdian names. The eldest is named as *bianxiuyan* 派休延 (where the first character should perhaps be emended to 沝, giving *woxiuyan*, EMC \**ʔawk xuw jian*, as a possible if not very precise transcription of Sogd. \**wxwšwy’n* “Favour of the River Oxus”, as suggested by Wang 2012: 185–6) and the second as *pantuo* 槃陀 (= Sogd. *βntk*). On the epitaph of Kang Ye, see Cheng et al. 2008: 82.
- 10 Cf. *Lun heng* (“Discourses weighed in the balance”), *juan* 12. According to T. Pokora and M. Loewe, this work may have been completed between 70 and 80 CE (see Loewe 1993: 309).
- 11 TT 418. For an English translation, see Harrison and McRae 1998: 27.
- 12 TT 152.

Persian, and has no obvious etymology,<sup>13</sup> so the possibility must be considered that it is a Sogdian loanword in Persian. If so, the replacement of Sogdian [č] by Persian [j] would be comparable to the case of Persian *xāj* “cross” from Armenian *xač* (see Hübschmann 1895: 227). This explanation would be compatible with either of the etymologies (Sogdian or Chinese) suggested above for *xw’c’k*. It seems less likely that the Persian form is an inherited cognate of the Sogdian, with -j- from \*-č- as in a few other Persian words (see Hübschmann 1895: 226–7). In the latter case one would have to reconstruct an underlying form such as *\*xwāčaka-*, and the connection with Sogdian *xw’kr* “merchant” from *\*wahāka-* “trade” would be excluded.

3 *'nkp' n'k* “of (the city) Ye”, f. *'nkp' nch* (line 11). See Henning (1948: 608–9) on the writing of the name of the city Ye 鄴 as *'nkp'* in Ancient Letter II, line 13. The Chinese version refers to the city as Xiangzhou 相州 (Xiang prefecture), its official name under the Northern Zhou, which had replaced the Northern Qi in 577 CE (see *Zizhi Tongjian* 資治通鑑, *juan* 173). In the Chinese text the expression “Old Xiangzhou” is used to refer to the burial place, probably because the city had been destroyed by Yang Jian 楊堅, the founder of the following Sui Dynasty, in August 580 CE, just before the making of the epitaph in November 580 CE (cf. the note on line 12), and the residents and the seat of the prefecture had been transferred to Anyang 安陽, 45 *li* to the south of the old city (see the *Zhoushu* 周書, *juan* 10).

3–4. The phrase *cnn βnd' pwr'st-*, also in lines 11–12, must mean “died”, perhaps as a euphemism. Despite the strange spelling, *'pwr'sty*, f. *'pwr'sth*, is probably the 3 sg. preterite of *'pwr't* “to turn”. The same verb is used in the Bugut inscription in another expression for “to die”: *k'w βγγ/βγγšt s'r pwrsty/pwrst*, lit. “turned (= departed) to the god/gods” (Yoshida 1999: 123–4). Since it is here construed with *cnn* “from”, the governed noun *βnd'* might mean “world”, “body” or “life”. Cf. the expressions for “to die” in the Qara-Balgasun inscription: *tnp'r pryc/pr'yt* “to abandon the body” (a calque on Turkish *üt'öz qod-*, see Hansen 1930: 29; Yoshida 2009: 573), *'βc'npδy xr'm* “to proceed (from) the world” (Yoshida 1988: 44; wrongly Hansen 1930: 32). It is worth noting that one of the commonest expressions in Chinese for “to die, pass away” is *lishi* 離世, lit. “to part from the world”. If the phrase here is a calque on the Chinese expression, *βnd'* should mean “world”. According to Benveniste (1940: 130, 224), a noun *β'δ* is attested in P12, line 6. The form is quite unclear in the published facsimile but it seems likely that it can equally well be read *βnd'*, of which *βnd'* here could be an ablative form. However, since its meaning is quite unknown (Benveniste conjectured “seat” on the basis of an unacceptable etymology), this does not help.

4–5. The second date given here must be that of Nanai-vande’s burial, four or five years after his death, the fifth day of the eleventh month in the second year of the era *mwp'yn* = *wuping* 武平 (EMC *\*muə' biaŋj*), corresponding to 7 December 571 CE. This was a hare year, as correctly given in the Sogdian text, line 4. The date formula is similar to that in lines 1–2, but this time the

13 Bailey (1982: 3) derives it from *\*hwa-* “one’s own” with an unexplained conglomeration of suffixes *\*-ā-ča-ka-*.

day is indicated using another traditional expression with *sy-th*, lit. “elapsed” (as also in line 12).

5–6. It is clear from the contexts that the expressions *t' r' cnn' BY' nyzβrt* here and *t' r' (c)[n]n m' mh nyzβrt* in line 13 refer to the burial of the husband and the wife respectively. For *t' r'* and *nyzβrt* we are happy to adopt the suggestions of Professor Yutaka Yoshida, who interprets the former as a noun referring to the remains of the dead persons and the latter as 3 sg. intransitive preterite of a verb *nyzβr-* < \**niž-bara-* “to bear off, to take away”. Assuming that *m' mh* is a variant of *m' th* “mother”, as discussed in the note to line 13 below, the two sentences would mean “(his/her) body was taken away from (his/her) father/mother”.

Although the verb *nyzβr-* is certainly not common, it seems to be attested in the variant spelling *'nzβr-* in Ancient Letter II, line 45, where it may mean “to withdraw”, with reference to a financial transaction (Sims-Williams 2001: 276), and probably survives in Yagnobi *živár-* “to bring out” (Andreev and Peščereva 1957: 370). Moreover, Avestan *niž-bar-* and its derivative *niž-bərəθi-* are specifically used, as would be the case here, with reference to the “removal” of a corpse (Vidēvdād 6, 31 ff.). The noun *t' r'* “body” does not have an obvious etymology, but a connection with Khotanese *ttarandara-* “id.”, itself of obscure origin, seems worth considering.

6–7 *k' w' nkpc' n' k k(n)dh nšmy p' š kwsy wxwšw' βs' x* “(at) six parasangs (distance) to the north-west side of the city of Ye”. Similarly (but without *k' w'*) in line 14. The word-order *nšmy p' š* follows that of 西北, lit. “west-north”, in the Chinese text. “Six parasangs” corresponds to 六里 “six *li*” in the Chinese text, the Sogdian unit of distance *'βs' x* “parasang” being equated with the Chinese *li* 里, although the original values of the two units were quite different. Similarly in the Sogdian gospel lectionary E5, *fsx* is used to translate Syriac *myl'* “(Roman) mile”, without strict regard to the distance indicated by either unit (Sims-Williams 2016: 80).

7–8 *k' w' R(B)k xw' c' k cyn' 'kk txmw nšmy p' š kyr' n* “in a north-west direction to (the graves of) the great merchant Chinakk family”. We are again grateful to Professor Yoshida for the suggestion that *txmw* “family” here implies “family grave”. Thus the text would indicate that a new tomb was built for Nanai-vande beside those of his ancestors. The parallel passage referring to the burial of his wife in lines 14–15 has merely *k' w' txmw* “in the family (grave)”, i.e. in the same tomb as her husband.

8 *txmw w' (s)t* “the family laid (him)”. The noun *txm-* “family”, which is usually masculine, here seems to be treated as a neuter. This is perhaps an archaism, as the Avestan cognate *taoxman-* is likewise neuter. Cf. also the (metathesized?) form *txwm* (Sims-Williams and Durkin-Meisterernst 2012: 195a)? For the use of the verb *'wst(y)* “to lay”, imperfect *w' st*, with reference to the deposition of a corpse, one may compare the Mug document B-8, line 15 (Livshits 2015: 40). See also below on the awkward form *w' (sn)t* in line 15.

*t' (z)' y(n)* may be a mistake for *t' z' 'n* or *t' zy' n*, as the Northern Zhou era-name 大象 *daxiang* (EMC \**da' /daj<sup>h</sup>-zian<sup>7</sup>*) seems to be written in line 12. The same era is named in the epitaph of Shi Jun, where it is written *t' y z' nw* (with silent final -w, see Yoshida 2005: 63).

8–9. The date given here is that of the death of the wife. The nineteenth of the second month in the first year of *daxiang*, a pig year, corresponds to 1 April 579 CE.

10. *kyk'n*, the name of the deceased wife, is otherwise unknown and has no obvious Sogdian etymology. The Chinese equivalent is Jijiang 紀姜 (EMC \**kī*/*ki' kīaj*), which looks like a genuine Chinese name consisting of two common surnames. The Chinese text also gives her surname Kang 康, which indicates that her family originally came from Samarkand.

*δβ'nm'h* is presumably a mistake for *δβ'm'nh* “lady” or a similar form.

For *wnxr'k*, the name of Kekan’s father, see Lurje (2011: 413, no. 1331).

12. This is the only date which is also given in the Chinese version. It corresponds to 12 November 580 CE. According to the Chinese text, this is the date when the couple were buried together. The long gap between death and burial – in Kekan’s case more than a year, four or five years in that of her husband – suggests that the Sogdians in China followed the Chinese tradition of selecting an auspicious date for the burial.

13 *t'r' (c)[n]n m'mh nyzbrt* “(her) body was taken away from (her) \*mother”. Comparison with lines 5–6, *t'r' cnn 'BY nyzbrt* “(his) body was taken away from (his) father”, suggests that *m'mh*, which occurs again in line 15, must be a variant of *m'th* “mother”, probably a childish form with reduplication of the first syllable: “mama”. One could imagine that it was merely conventional to mention the father in this idiom in the case of a man and the mother in the case of a woman. However, the expressions surely imply that the parents mentioned – Nanai-vande’s father and Kekan’s mother – were still alive at the time of the burial of their children. The addition here of the phrase *k'w 'BY s'r* “to (her) father” seems to indicate that Kekan’s father had predeceased her, while the fact that Kekan’s mother survived her daughter is further emphasized by the phrase *p'w m'mh* “without (her) \*mother” in line 15. Possibly the couple both died young; it may be significant that, unlike the case of the Shi Jun inscription, no children are mentioned as having been involved in the construction of the tomb for their parents.

15 *k'w s'cy wy''k* “in a suitable place”: cf. *s'c'w wy''kh* “id.” at the end of the Shi Jun inscription.<sup>14</sup> Since there seems to be no equivalent expression in contemporary Chinese epitaphs, it is possible that this phrase is connected with the religious beliefs and customs of the Sogdians. In Zoroastrianism it is extremely important that a dead body should not come into contact with earth, fire or water but must be laid in a “suitable place” such as the stone couch which is typical of the Sogdian burials in China. Professor Almut Hintze has kindly drawn our attention to certain Avestan passages which refer to taking the corpse to the “lawful room” (*dāitiia- kata-*, Vidēvdād 5.11) or “lawful (place)” (*dāitiia-*, scil. *gātu-*? Vidēvdād 5.40).

*'yw z'yh* “(in) one (piece of) ground”, i.e. in the same place as her husband. The Chinese text also mentions that the couple were buried together.

14 The edition of the Shi Jun inscription (Yoshida 2005: 58, line 32) has *sc'w*. Professor Yoshida kindly informs us that he now reads *s'c'w* and compares *nw-s'c'y wy'k'y* “an unsuitable place” (So 10100v, side 1, line 4, unpublished).

w'(sn)t, if this is the right reading, may be a mistake for \*w'stnt "they laid (her)", or possibly a deliberately abbreviated form due to the lack of space at the end of the inscription. As in line 8, the object is not expressed. Although the verb 'wšt is the intransitive equivalent of 'wst, the alternative reading w'(š)t, lit. "she stood", could hardly be understood as having passive meaning "she was laid", for which a periphrastic form would be expected.

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