

Trade and Tribute along the Silk Road before the Third Century A.D.

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INTRODUCTION

The Silk Road trade refers to the long-distance commercial routes that extended past the Pamir Plateau and beyond Central Asia, as well as encompassing the oases of the Taklimakan desert. It is not easy to travel the length of the Silk Road route even today; historically, the arduousness of the journey effectively separated East and West into worlds of their own. Nevertheless, despite the difficulties, these two worlds traded substantial quantities of goods. Important items such as horses and carts found their way into China from the West around 3,000 years ago, and the history of trade in the western part of the Pamir Plateau can be traced back even further.¹ The fact that goods from the West such as gold and silverware were also common in China before the third century B.C.² is testimony to the power of merchants to surmount the geographical barriers to trade.

Although goods and cultures had been transferred between East and West since before 1,000 B.C., the Silk Road is not said to have been opened up until the second half of the second century B.C., when Zhang Qian (張騫) made his journey to the West.³ Why, we may ask, did it take so long for the Silk Road trade to become established? A look at the topography of Central

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Asia indicates that the route could not have changed between 1,000 B.C. and the time Zhang Qian set out. What was it about Zhang Qian's journey in particular that led to the opening up of the Silk Road? A consideration of potentially analogous cases may help shed some light on this. For example, although it is said that Cai Lun (蔡倫) invented paper during the Later Han Dynasty, archaeological excavations have confirmed that it was invented much earlier. This does not necessarily mean that there is something wrong with the literature that emphasizes Cai Lun's role: rather, he was decisive in spreading the use of paper, and thus was set down in literature as having invented it. The same could be true of Zhang Qian. While goods had long been transported along the route in smaller quantities, it was only after Zhang Qian that trade became intensive. What difference, then, did his commissioned journey to the West make?

This article investigates how trade forms differed between the periods prior and subsequent to the second century B.C., in order to help understand what Zhang Qian's journey might have meant for the opening of the Silk Road. Most previous studies of the Silk Road trade have focused on conditions in the fourth century A.D. and later. This is because most of the known sources on mercantile activity concern this period: except for *Shiji* (史記), *Hanshu* (漢書), and *Houhanshu* (後漢書), virtually no sources are currently available for eras prior to the third century. While goods from the West have been unearthed in large quantities, it is still difficult to tell specifically what trade was like at that time. However, the wooden tablets recently excavated in Xuanquanzhi (懸泉置) in Dunhuang shed light on some of the issues in question. These tablets detail commercial activities by merchants and official envoys in the period prior to the third century—and in fact these turn out to be not so different from the activities of Sogdian merchants after the fourth century. These tablets, then, may resolve the problem of the discontinuity in Silk Road trade which previous studies have suggested took place around the fourth century. In contrast, this article suggests that the watershed in Silk Road trade dates back to Zhang Qian's journey in the second century, as laid down in writings such as *Shiji* and *Hanshu*.

I. EARLY SILK ROAD TRADE PRIOR TO ZHANG QIAN

1. Isolated traffic and fear of strangers

The tremendous difficulties in negotiating the Silk Road remained basically unchanged from the Bronze Age until the Former Han Dynasty. Above all, traveling over such a long distance required huge expense, as Dawan's (大宛) biography of *Shiji* confirms. Many countries of the West Region used the long distance as a rationale for cutting off relationships with the Han Dynasty,⁴ and even the Han took the West Region to be a far-off and isolated land, to which Han people would not be inclined to travel.⁵ But the difficulty was not a matter of distance alone: what really mattered was the extreme scarcity of water and food. It was not until the travelers reached a sparsely planted oasis area that they could hope to resupply themselves; and all too often, in the absence of provisions, they starved to death. Even after the Silk Road was officially opened up the most difficult thing the Han's messengers had to face was lack of food. Many countries of the West Region withheld supplies to the messengers,⁶ who, starving, were driven to attack each other. The reason the Han Empire's Ershi General (貳師將軍) failed in the first Dawan expedition was lack of food.⁷ While it was thanks to the provisions supplied by minor countries that the general was able undertake the second expedition, sections of his army were defeated for want of supplies.⁸

As well as this, the ancient world's general fear of and hostility towards strangers played an important role. This was not, however, a case of unconditional hostility towards outsiders: rather, it was protective. Groups automatically struck a defensive posture in their dealings with others. Relations between neighbors were especially marred by animosity, and disputes occurred over territory and resources. The fact that Zhang Qian was caught by the Xiongnu after he took the trail from the town of Changan (長安), and the fact that he was detained by the Qiang (羌) on his way home, points to the ongoing hostility between the Han and the peripheral powers. Shanyu (單于) of Xiongnu asked Zhang Qian: "Yuezhi lies to the north, how could the Hans send an envoy out across us? If I send out an envoy to Yue (越) south to the Han, do you think the Hans would accept it?"⁹ This suggests they took it for granted that neighboring countries would be hostile. The legend that the Shanyu defeated and killed the king of Yuezhi and drank liquor out of a cup made from his skull, that Yuezhi took the Xiongnu for their enemy, and the fact that the Wusun (烏孫) showed unconcealed animosity

toward the Xiongnu while staying diplomatically neutral, reveals some of this neighborly hostility.¹⁰ The political relationships between Dayuezhi (大月氏) and Daxia (大夏), Kangju (康居) and Xiongnu, and Kangju and Dayuezhi,¹¹ were premised on the existence of hostilities between neighboring countries.

Under such circumstances, it was extremely difficult to build a commercial network along the Silk Road which would embrace the countries of the West. The long distances, the life-threatening shortages of supplies, and the tensions over borders made it impossible to transport goods to distant places directly.

2. *Advent of Mt. Kunlun myths*

Ancient Chinese knowledge of the Western world prior to the mid-second century B.C. was extremely limited. Though *Mutianzizhuan* (穆天子傳), the biography of Emperor Mu, is sometimes regarded as an historical account allegedly containing relatively abundant information on the Western world and supposedly describing his travels there,¹² in fact it most likely belongs to the genre of fantasy. Even if it is a real record, the biography is little more than an account of superficial impressions compared with the report by Zhang Qian who has clearly been there in person. Such passages concerning the Western world as are to be found in the Tangwen chapter of *Liezi* (列子·湯問篇) and the Dixingxun chapter of *Huainanzi* (淮南子·地形訓) are nothing more than collections of mythological fragments, indicating negligible actual knowledge about that part of the world.¹³ It was based on the information collected from a surrendering Xiongnu soldier that Emperor Wu decided to send Zhang Qian to the West¹⁴—information about the Western world was so scarce that news about the war between the Xiongnu and the Yuezhi reached the Han Empire only through this soldier.

Lack of information engenders myths. The *Mutianzizhuan* mentioned above is a case in point, and in addition special note should be taken of the Mt. Kunlun myth.¹⁵ Mt. Kunlun is described as a holy place, and a repository of treasures of various kinds; it is the lower capital of God (帝) and the center of the universe, where various gods gather, including a goddess called Xiwangmu (西王母), and where all rivers originate. The sacred tree Jianmu (建木), which reaches to Heaven, grows on Mt. Kunlun, and no shadow falls even while the sun shines.

At the same time, Mt. Kunlun was described as an inapproachable paradise lying beyond the west, a mountain measuring 800 li (里) in circumference and 10,000 ren (仞) in height and inapproachable by ordinary

men. It was depicted as made of copper, as slippery, steep on all sides, and as surrounded by sand and by ponds which consumed with fire anything plunged into them. To climb it, the climber needed the assistance of the messengers of the god such as the Holy Horse, Dragon, and Phoenix. *Shanhaijing* (山海經) also depicts its periphery as populated by people who look completely different from the Chinese.

According to Mircea Eliade,¹⁶ religions tend to locate themselves at the center of the world, where interaction with deities can take place; the mythical location of Mt. Kunlun, however, does not fit this rubric, since it was believed that the mountain was far, far away to the west, and that it was inaccessible even by those who would brave the distance. Why, then, does the Mt. Kunlun myth, so cherished among the Chinese people's religious beliefs, differ from the otherwise anthropologically universal concept?

This striking phenomenon calls for explanation. I suspect that it may result from special conditions in the process of myth creation: the generation of the Mt. Kunlun myth was not a spontaneous process, but rather evidences influence from outside. Unless we assume that there was a massive migration of people toward the Pamir Plateau at that time, the most reasonable alternative account of the myth would be cultural exchange with the West. Under circumstances where acquisition of information was out of the question, the more they tried to acquire rare and precious articles from the West, the more they must have mythicized the Western world. Thus the Mt. Kunlun myth came into being: a far-off mountain, located to the west, full of treasures, but inaccessible. This could be compared to the phenomenon of "Cargo Worship" (itself a type of silent trade, as discussed below). This is a form of worship where the utility of imported articles is felt so keenly that cargos themselves come to be worshipped.¹⁷ Significantly, while the members of Cargo Cults realize that, as a matter of fact, they receive the articles in question from (hostile) foreigners, they nevertheless claim that the articles originate from their ancestors in heaven and are properly intended as gifts for them; the Cargo Cult thus develops as a religious system whereby the gifts may be acquired continuously, and which also explains away the perceived injustice of the desired items being in the hands of aliens. Likewise, the myth of Mt. Kunlun—the origin of miraculous treasures—was invented by the Chinese people as a way of explaining away the apparent possession of such desirable articles by hostile powers, and also of securing their continuous acquirement with the help of mythical gods.

3. *Trade without man: Silent trade*

In spite of the difficult conditions, goods and technology were transported along the Silk Road in prehistoric times. Advanced items such as bronzeware, steelware, and carriages found their way into China through Central Asia.¹⁸ Archaeological excavations of the Xinjiang area have suggested that it is likely that metallic technology was introduced from the West and then spread across China.¹⁹ While disputes are still ongoing over whether metalware appeared in China spontaneously or by transfer, it is highly likely that bronzeware and carriages which involve complicated workmanship were disseminated. The tendency of Chinese scholars to emphasize “spontaneous existence” when discussing trade with the outside, and “dissemination” when discussing trade within Chinese borders, leaves much room for further examination.²⁰ Rare and precious luxuries of various kinds other than metallic technology and carriages also found their way into China through dissemination.²¹

The manufacture of bronzeware and carriages after the Neolithic age made a strong impression on the chieftain class, and demand for such luxuries must have increased enormously. When used as a weapon, bronzeware had incomparably more destructive power than stone, while its splendor met the most demanding standards required of offerings to the deities. A military horse-drawn carriage was both lethal and majestic. Bronzeware and carriages thus played a very important role in this period, enabling their owners to occupy political, military, and religious positions that were superior to their rivals. The same is true of gold, silverware, and jade.

The easiest way for the chieftain class to come to possess such treasures would have been to tap the existing sources of supply: however, as discussed in the previous section, trade with the West was not so smooth as to allow a regular supply of finished products. Ultimately, the difficulty of the route and the fear of strangers likely forced the Silk Road commerce to take the form of silent trade.

“Silent trade” refers to the exchange of goods without intermediaries—normally out of hostility toward, or fear of, strangers or unknown worlds. In a silent trade the trading partners intentionally try not to learn anything about their counterparts on the other side; they concentrate solely on getting the things desired. Numerous cases of silent trade have been identified in China and Japan,²² Zegoulou (曠溝婁) of Koguryo (高句麗) being a typical example.²³ While Koguryo was originally provided with clothing from

Xuantu (玄兔) commandery, it is said that as the bilateral relationships worsened, Xuantu commandery residents began leaving the clothing in small castles close to Zegoulou, their eastern borderland, and that the Koguryo residents picked it up on lunar New Year's day. Thus a form of trade that began with humans as intermediaries (授受) shifted to a system in which an object was left (置) in a specified place by one party, and picked up (取) by the other without any human contact—a typical form of silent trade.

Of course, it is not that trade with neighboring countries was carried out without human contact at all. In some cases, the time and place of the meeting was decided and one-shot transactions were made under mutual surveillance. The border fair (關市) which appears in the written sources may fall into this category.²⁴ While it was true that human contact was made in such cases, such fairs involved the minimum possible number of persons. They were held infrequently, typically on a special day, and only when hostile relationships had been resolved. It has been confirmed that under certain circumstances, some individuals of special talents did attempt trade with foreign races;²⁵ however, even under such circumstances, trade was possible only when hostilities had ceased.

In summary, although a fair number of goods of Western origin have been found in China from early times, transactions were few and far between and these goods might be the accumulated result of sparse trading carried out over a long period, from about 2,000 B.C. to the second century B.C. However, while the ruling classes' desire for the technology and the luxuries of the West ultimately led to the creation of Mt. Kunlun myths, commerce took the form of "silent trade," where goods were transferred with a minimum number of persons involved.

II. MERCHANTS OF THE WEST AND THE TRIBUTE TRADE AFTER EMPEROR WU OF THE HAN DYNASTY

1. Acquisition of information, solution of traffic and foodstuff problems

In 2,000 B.C., while the nomadic tribes of the Eurasian steppe areas were gradually moving toward Kazakhstan, Afghanistan, and so forth, the metallurgy of the Andronovo culture was spreading. By 1,200–800 B.C., a new production system by the name of nomadism was introduced as the weather grew colder. By that time, the population had moved up to Xinjiang, and the area was strongly influenced by their culture, which was characterized by

metallurgy, carriages, and horseback riding.²⁶ However, this was as far as the spread of technology could extend. Cultures and goods that reached Xinjiang could not flow further into China, one of the possible reasons being that the inclinations of the residents of the two regions were markedly different—this is evident from the fact that up until the Yuezhi moved their base to the west, residents in the Xinjiang area were of Caucasian origin, while residents dwelling to the west of the border of Longxi (隴西) area were of a different race and culture.

However, it was not merely fear of strangers that hampered transactions of goods: a more pressing problem was hostile relationships. For example, when relationships were peaceable the Koguryo were able to trade clothing with the Han Chinese; but once the relationships worsened the parties were forced to retreat to silent trade, as in the case of Zegoulou. To the Hans, the greatest hostile power was the Xiongnu. At the end of the Warring Era, as the agricultural Chinese powers gradually expanded their realm, they began to collide with nomadic tribes in the north, thus entering into full-scale confrontation. Later, as the Xiongnu grew into a huge nomadic nation, they were able to keep various powers in the Tarim Basin under control. During the Qin Empire (221–206 B.C.), the Qin dispatched General Meng Yan (蒙恬), built long walls, and adopted such a confrontational stance that the First Emperor himself took the trouble to visit the defenses. However, with the Han Empire gaining ground, the Xiongnu responded militarily, leading to a series of conflicts. The Hans sued for peace, but only after many goods were presented to the Xiongnu did hostilities end.²⁷

The hostile relationship with the Xiongnu was a direct impediment to the acquisition of valuable goods from the West. While the border fair did exist as an official means of exchange, it was impossible for trade to be revitalized while the flow of information remained completely shut off. From this perspective, Zhang Qian's journey played a significant role: he made it possible to acquire information about the countries of the West, albeit on a basic level. It is likely that because Zhang Qian's information was considered the best then available, many policies were adopted by the Han government relying on it. With the adjutant officers who accompanied Zhang Qian on various expeditions bringing back further information, more precise knowledge was acquired on populations, distances, public posts, native products, and so forth. The facts and figures found in the Western Region biography (西域傳) of *Hanshu* were based on this information.

However, as long as hostile relationships endured, trade between the Han Dynasty and the West would have been difficult no matter how much

information was acquired. The significance of Zhang Qian's "opening up" of the Silk Road should therefore be supplemented by other points—in particular the reduction in travel expenses and increased security, which was essential to the emergence of merchants.

The exchanges of messengers between the Han and the West after Zhang Qian's second journey began to improve security. It was not until the adjutant officers returned home from their travels to various countries in the West Region, bringing with them envoys from the West, that the Han Empire began to communicate along the Silk Road. While diplomatic relations were sometimes broken off, positive exchanges of envoys were maintained up until the end of the Former Han era. Though hostile relations with the Xiongnu were not completely cleared up, the hostile relations between the Han Empire and the West which had so hampered bilateral trade were mitigated by their entering into direct diplomatic relations with each other.

Notably, a procedure of direct escorts for outgoing envoys was adopted at this time. Typical of this was the case in which Du Qin (杜欽), an official of the Han Dynasty, offered to advise Wang Feng (王鳳), the great general, regarding escorting envoys from Jibin (罽賓) during the days of Emperor Cheng (成帝).²⁹ Du Qin said, "Escorting the guests is for the purpose of protecting against possible invasion in the days to come." He went on to add that though they offered presents and called themselves envoys, they were really no more than ordinary persons of low class doing business and that offering them presents in return was nothing more than a formality. Accordingly, he asserted that there was no point in sending many officials and soldiers to take the trouble of escorting mere "barbarians" all the way home.³⁰ While this case suggests that the Hans sometimes escorted those who had offered tribute to them all the way home, it also clearly indicates that the newly built safe traffic routes and availability of food enabled the merchants accompanying the envoys to travel. The outposts that were set up in the West Region to keep the Tarim Basin under control also supported the growing Silk Road trade.

Besides this, the fact that the diplomatic envoys of the West offered tributes to the emperor also played an important role in the early trade. The tributes offered by a foreign envoy were normally reciprocated with royal gifts, and it may well be supposed that both tribute and reciprocating gift were rare and precious luxuries. This exchange, then, could have yielded high rates of commercial profits, sufficient indeed to offset the significant risk factors associated with the journey. Moreover, the fact that it was a tribute specifically offered up to the emperor, and for which a good price was guaranteed, had

the additional advantage of securing a “buyer” for high-priced objects which envoys may have struggled to sell in the ordinary market.

In summary, Zhang Qian’s journeys to the West provided important solutions to the problems that had hitherto limited trade—hostile relations with neighbors, paucity of information, lack of provisions, uncertainty of purchases, and so forth. Although hostile relations with the Xiongnu remained unresolved, the information about the West he brought home provided an opportunity to occupy the Hexi (河西) corridor and establish four commanderies. Above all, this allowed the Han Empire to pave the way for direct trade with the West by building direct diplomatic relations, thus bypassing the Xiongnu. Subsequently, the knowledge of the other party required for trade began to accumulate; however, even more important than this was the securing of safe traffic routes. The two-way traffic by diplomatic envoys provided a means to protect merchants and goods from marauder bands en route. In addition, with trade centering on tributes, the risks of trade could be reduced. This, then, marked the advent of a new stage in which merchants positively intervened in transactions, a material departure from the stage of silent trade.

2. Analysis of the Xuanquanzhi wooden tablets

Although the exchange of envoys under the tribute system provided the security necessary for trade, mercantile commercial activities were heavily restricted under the Han Dynasty and the free movement of foreigners was certainly not permitted. Accordingly, merchants from the West sought ways to expand their opportunities for trade within the framework enforced by the Han Dynasty. This led to the further development of trade in the form of tributes.

In the History of the West Region, the biography of *Hanshu* and *Houhanshu* briefly mentions the existence of merchants who conducted commerce under the guise of offering tributes. However, nothing specific was known about who entered the Han territories and on what scale, how they paid their tributes or how they were given royal gifts. In this respect, the wooden tablets excavated in Xuanquanzhi in the early 1990s provide considerable help. These tablets, which are official administrative documents recording assignments related to envoys from the West, have the potential to reveal how the trade worked, and also permit comparison with the modes of trade employed by the Sogdian merchants from the fourth century onward.

(a) Escorting outside Dunhuang

The scale of the tribute missions as described in the wooden tablets ranges from a single person to over a thousand. The documents record food and lodging being offered to envoys starting with a single person, and extending to two, three, and over eight people.³¹ The tablets concerning the escorts also contain the number of envoys, and groups of 1–2 persons, 12, 17, and 64 persons are noted.³² Records also show that a group of 1,074 persons headed by the King of Yudian (于闐) and one of 470 persons headed by the King of Jingjue (精絕) were escorted en route.³³

Moreover, it is notable that trade delegations of such large scale are composed of members of diverse standing and from different countries. A number of examples are listed below:

- (a) the envoy and deputy envoy of Kangju and those of Suxie (蘇鞏) entered Han at the same time,³⁴
- (b) the envoy of Dayuezhi (大月氏) and deputy envoy of Shan (山) joined in offering tributes,³⁵
- (c) nobility from Dayuezhi traveled with an envoy of Guizi (龜茲),³⁶
- (d) Dakunmi (大昆彌) of Wusun (烏孫) and the envoy from Dayuezhi are listed together,³⁷
- (e) envoys, deputy envoys, nobility and so forth from Wusun,³⁸ Gumo (姑墨), Weixu (危須), and Wulei (烏壘) are grouped together,³⁹
- (f) the envoy from Shanshan (鄯善) and the deputy envoy from Shan are cited as coming to offer tributes,⁴⁰
- (g) visitors from Cheshi (車師) and Wusun are cited together,⁴¹ and
- (h) envoys from eight countries including Dayuezhi, Dawan, Shule (疏勒), Yudian, Shache (莎車), Qule (渠勒), Jingjue, and Yumi (扞彌) are registered together.⁴²

It does not seem that those countries put down in writing had instigated joint missions for the same diplomatic purposes and thus entered the Han Empire together. In case (a), Suxie was one of the five kingdoms belonging to Kangju, so the possibility cannot be excluded that the two countries accompanied each other for the same diplomatic purpose. However, this can hardly be the case for the other countries. For example, (b) Dayuezhi and Shan, (c) Dayuezhi and Guizi, (d) Dayuezhi and Wusun, and (h) Dayuezhi and Dawan were all located thousands of Chinese miles (li 里) apart, with no vertical relations of superior and subordinate existing between them. Rather, it seems that these countries were situated along the same route. In case of (e), Wusun

is followed by countries which were all located along the North Silk Road; in document (h), the seven countries were all located along the South Silk Road, which was the route starting with Wusun and Dawan and stretching all the way to Dunhuang of the Han Dynasty.

In the previous section, I proposed that the most important reason why the Silk Road opened up in the Han period was that the safety of the route had been secured by the escorts attached to envoys being exchanged between China and the West. The Xuanquanzhi wooden tablets provide clear evidence of this. For example, (i) Duanjun (段君), a Han envoy, returned to the Han accompanied by Shule's princes and three heads of camel,⁴³ and (j) Wangjun (王君), also a Han envoy, went to the West accompanied by 1,074 persons under the King of Yudian.⁴⁴ Here, the fact that the total population of Yudian was reportedly only 19,300⁴⁵ suggests that envoys from countries other than Yudian would have been included in that number. In these kinds of cases, when over 1,000 persons were included in the mission, the Han's envoys most likely traveled accompanied by envoys from various other countries on the way to Dunhuang. Case (i) was an example of the Han envoy being accompanied by envoys of the lands lying on his way home; case (j) was one where the Han envoys were accompanied on their outward journey by foreign envoys who were already in the empire. Thus we can draw the conclusion that envoys of the West were escorted by Hans both on the way to the Han Empire and home to the West. In cases (a) to (h), where envoys from various countries traveled together, those foreign envoys were most likely escorted all the way by Hans.

With the number of envoys increasing after the expeditions to Dawan, the Han Empire built pavilions from Dunhuang to Yanze (鹽澤) and stationed hundreds of soldiers in Luntai (輪臺) and Quli (渠犂), thereby catering to the envoys.⁴⁶ While the Han envoys were escorting envoys from the West, they would have been reprovisioned at such midway bases.

Envoys from the various lands of the West did not necessarily travel with the Han's envoys, since there are cases of the use of the phrase "envoy who came by himself" (自來使者) in connection with a number of countries,⁴⁷ such as Dayuezhi, Dawan, Wusun, Shanshan, etc. The fact that the expression "came by himself" is noted at all in the tablets suggests that in most cases foreign envoys arrived accompanied by the envoys of the Han.

In view of the fact that envoys from various countries shuttled between East and West, sometimes by the hundred, and that they did so escorted by Han envoys, it is not likely that they were traveling on diplomatic missions alone. The primary reason for such journeys was that the Han actively

promoted envoys carrying tributes in an effort to display the Han Emperor's authority worldwide. However, those countries of the West which were far from the Han Empire had little reason to worry about their security to the point of maintaining peaceful relations through diplomatic channels. Rather, the principal reason for these exchanges would have been economic. As was clearly indicated by Du Qin, these were merchants wearing the cloaks of envoys. While the wooden tablets of Xuanquanzhi did not refer to them as merchants, their mercantile intent can easily be detected.

For example, a look at the titles of people listed as coming from the West shows that envoys and deputy envoys are frequently called a "guest" (客) or a "nobleman" (貴人), and that they traveled accompanied by servants or attendants. This appellation is significant. As is widely known, the term "barbarian guest" (胡客), along with "barbarian merchant" (胡商), shows up in literature or excavated materials from after the fourth century, all of them being merchants from the West. Though the specific names of the countries were recorded instead of the term "barbarian" (胡), the "guests" in the Han wooden tablets were most likely the same as the "barbarian guests" or "merchants" traveling from the West in later days.⁴⁸ While "nobleman" is generally understood as referring to a man of nobility from the West, they are also thought to be of a kind similar to guests because often they were not accompanied by envoys.⁴⁹ A number of cases are found where a guest or a nobleman offered tributes. In the following, we set out how they behaved after entering the Han Empire.

(b) The transfer to Jiuquan (酒泉) after entering the Han Empire

Whether escorted by the Han Emperor's envoys or arriving by themselves, once they stepped through the western gate of Dunhuang the envoy was registered and escorted to the Dunhuang commandery office. The person put in charge of escorting the envoys varied in position. Sometimes, envoys who had themselves been dispatched from the central government to the West were given the duty, but there were also cases in which local officials escorted them. The wooden tablets show a case (case (k)) where the King of Kangju's envoys entered the Yumen Gate (玉門關) on the way to Dunhuang and received a traffic pass issued by the commandery administrator of Dunhuang such that they be escorted to Jiuquan commandery.⁵⁰ It shows that upon entry into the gate, they were escorted immediately. Could it be, then, that all of those tributes offered were transferred to the capital city, Changan? The following extracts from the documentation found in Xuanquanzhi provide a good clue to the actual nature of the trade transactions made by the envoys.

(1) Yangbaidao, the King of Kangju's envoy, Biantian, the deputy envoy, Gumo, the King of Suxie's messenger, Shaqunji, the Deputy messenger, Weini, the nobleman, and so forth, bowed down to the ground and said, "We have been here to offer camels through the gate of Dunhuang before. Each time we were given food at the prefecture castle midway, and came to Kungui office in Jiuquan, the commandery administrator along with Yangbaidao and so forth talked about the price of the camels and determined whether the camel was chubby or was skinny. However, this time Yangbaidao and his entourage entered Han to offer camels to the emperor, but reached Jiuquan unfed on the way and the commandery administrator of Jiuquan decided on the price all by himself along with his junior officials. Yangbaidao and so forth didn't even see the camel offered. Gumo also presented a white male camel and two female camels to the emperor. But the commandery administrator of Jiuquan labeled it as a yellow camel, and labeled the camels Yangbaidao and his entourage presented as skinny while they were chubby. I regret that these are far from facts."

(2) On June 1st, in 5th year of the Yingguang (永光), Dang, an official of the Central Government in charge of foreign visitors sends a document to the commandery administrator of Dunhuang. The moment the document arrives, investigate the situation and report the result. Don't delay the procedure as provided in the law.

(3) On July 18th, Hong, the Dunhuang commandery administrator, and Zhang, the Chief Clerk (長史), Xiuren, the Temporary Acting Assistant (行丞事) as Area Guardian (守部侯), instructed the prefecture to make a detailed report on the amount of cereal used to feed the camels offered by Yangbaidao and so forth, envoys of the Kings of Kangju and Suxie. The due date for the report is the 25th of this month, as put down in the law. Official (掾) Deng, Associate (守) Jian, Document Accessory (書佐) Zhengguang signed.

(4) On July 20th, Hezong, the Temporary Xiaogu Prefecture Chief and Zhong, Temporary Acting Assistant as Dunhuang Left Colonel instructed the Station (置) to make a detailed report upon the arrival of the document on the reason why passing horses were not fed when they stopped by. The due date for the report is the 23rd of this month as provided in the law. Official Zong, Bailiff Fu signed.⁵¹

Here we see two points raised by the King of Kangju's envoy. First, they were not given food and lodging in transit; second, the object offered as tribute was devalued. Let us look more closely at the first point. In extract (1) we see the King of Kangju's envoy indicating that they had visited several times in the past to offer tributes, suggesting that the current situation was different from the previous ones. Extracts (2), (3), and (4) set out the process of dealing with this problem, as described in the wooden tablets. Extract (2) concerns the report made by the official in charge of foreign visitors (使主客諫大夫漢侍郎) on matters related to the Dunhuang commandery administrator. Extract (3) concerns the instruction by the Dunhuang commandery administrator

to the prefectures under him to report on the amount of foodstuffs and cereal offered to the Kings of Kangju and Suxie's envoys and their camels. (4) concerns the report directed from Xiaogu (效谷) prefecture to Xuanquanzhi regarding whether the horses that stopped over were fed. Since the envoys offering tributes were meant to be fed, when the central government received complaints from the envoys of the West it embarked on an investigation.⁵² The traffic pass issued to escorted envoys contained a regulation that required outposts en route to provide them with meals and lodging, and numerous cases of food being offered to envoys are given in the Xuanquanzhi documents. However, in the present case the envoys from the West on the way to Jiuquan commandery claimed that they were not given food. Since the problem had taken place on the way from Dunhuang commandery to Jiuquan commandery, the central government instructed the Dunhuang commandery administrator to check on the matter. The order was passed down to Xuanquanzhi, where the document was found.

The second point concerned whether the camels offered in tribute were depreciated. The last time they had visited, the envoys had looked into the state of the camels and decided on the price along with the Jiuquan commandery administrator. However, this time the Jiuquan commandery administrator decided on a price, which was unfairly low, solely in collaboration with lower officials. Though this point was raised alongside the first, it was only related to the Jiuquan commandery administrator and therefore it was unnecessary for the Dunhuang commandery to check it. This perhaps explains why extracts (2), (3), and (4) do not address the second point.

The person to whom tributes were to be offered was the emperor; thus the formal destination of tributes was always "where the emperor resides" (行在所), and the pass issued for the envoys from the West usually reflected this.⁵³ Extract (1) states that the envoys from Kangju and Suxie offered camels as tributes; thus, formally speaking, the camels should have been headed to where the emperor resided. However, the camels offered as tribute ended up being priced at Jiuquan commandery and were disposed of there. Since they did not complain about the tributes not reaching where the emperor resides, it seems that the envoys from the West thought it natural that their tributes to him could end up anywhere.

Let us now look at the Jiuquan Kungui office (酒泉昆歸官), where the camels offered as tributes were priced. First, note the term "Kungui office": with no usage found about the Kungui office, no precise explanation of this term is available. However, the fact that there was an office of the Yihe

Chief Commandant (宜禾都尉) called Kunlunzhang (昆侖障) in Dunhuang commandery provides us with a clue. Since, during the Han Era, the term “Kunlun” referred to the West, “kun” (昆) here could be understood as meaning the West. At the same time, there were numerous offices in charge of foreigners during the Han Era. The Xuanquanzhi documents classify the naturalized Qiang tribes into “Guiyi” (歸義), and even registered them as such in the official documents. Therefore, “Kungui office” could be an office overseeing those from the West who had naturalized, or those who entered from the West.

Next comes Jiuquan commandery. Jiuquan commandery had a special position in writing concerning the West. With respect to the dates of the establishment of the Jiuquan and Dunhuang commanderies, the relevant section of Wudi (武帝紀) and the Geography (地理志) of *Hanshu* offer differing dates. However, recent studies indicate that Dunhuang commandery was set up at least ten years after Jiuquan commandery.⁵⁴ This means that Jiuquan commandery had shared the border with the countries of the West before Dunhuang commandery was established. This is why the Dawan biography of *Shiji* states that the Northern Way starts with Jiuquan and connects to Daxia, from where the number of envoys had increased.⁵⁵ Wudi also issued the following edict: “I asked to load donkeys and camels with foodstuffs in Jiuquan, and get out through Yumen Gate, welcoming the army back in Jiuquan.” Therefore, it can be presumed that at least in the days of Wudi a major organization in charge of the administration of the West was set up in the office of Jiuquan commandery. For this reason, it seems that Jiuquan commandery maintained the role as the center administering the West even after Dunhuang commandery was established. Zheng Ji (鄭吉), a Protector-General of the Western Region (西域都護), traveled eastward, arriving at Jiuquan to report on the situation in 66 B.C., and received a royal edict at Jiuquan, not at the capital.

Document (k), quoted earlier, also seems to imply that Jiuquan commandery had special status. The moment the King of Kangju’s envoys arrived, with their camels, donkeys, and cows, they were escorted to Jiuquan commandery rather than to the emperor. It is most likely because the Jiuquan commandery administrator was in a position to take charge of foreign envoys and tributes that those envoys were sent immediately to Jiuquan, even though Dunhuang commandery was located right by the border gate. Furthermore, document (j) shows that the Han Empire’s envoys returned to the West, leading 1,074 persons including the King of Yudian. The fact that the point of their departure was Lufu (祿福) prefecture, a prefecture of

Jiuquan commandery, apparently suggests that Jiuquan commandery was the center of the administration of the West, too. If these 1,074 persons of various backgrounds (including state envoys and noblemen) were mostly merchants, as suggested in the preceding section, then the center of merchants in the Han Era must have been Lufu prefecture, Jiuquan commandery.

Among all the facts presented in these documents, it is most noteworthy that the Kings of Kangju and Suxie's envoys who filed the suit had visited the Han Empire many times before to offer tributes. A look at their suit indicates that the major concerns of the envoys from the West were not political or diplomatic: their message was rather that "appropriate prices should be guaranteed for the articles of tributes." They were, then, aimed primarily at economic reward, and their request for food and lodging was made essentially from an economic perspective. That is, they were "barbarian merchants" (蠻夷之賈), as indicated by Du Qin. When the two requests were accepted, they would have been willing to enter again and receive the appropriate prices for the articles or "tributes" at Jiuquan.

It was not that the ultimate destination of the tribute missions was Jiuquan commandery. It was normal diplomatic procedure that a foreign envoy would have an audience with the emperor in the capital. As suggested in the case where merchants from the West were persuaded to have an audience with the emperor in the Sui Era—even to the point of paying tremendous amounts of money on the part of Chinese officials⁵⁶—they would intentionally have been escorted to where the emperor was. Whereas envoys-cum-merchants are likely to have gone to the capital city, it would have been too burdensome to take the trouble of conveying such ordinary articles of tribute as camels and horses all the way to the capital. Therefore, it is highly likely that once the envoys entered the Han Empire, they went to Jiuquan, settled the prices, and traveled to where the emperor was, leaving the articles at Jiuquan. The result was that the actual transaction was made in the peripheral commandery.

(c) Commercial activities in the border commandery and their limitations

Though occurring later than the Xuanquanzhi documents, similar trade activities being carried out in a frontier commandery are found in the case of Chuangzi (倉慈) at the end of the Later Han Dynasty.

- (1) Though various barbarian tribes of the West wanted to visit Han to offer tributes, the powerful family (豪族) stopped them midway from entering into transactions. Trade transactions were made in falsehood, and with disdain, and

there were many unclear aspects about the transactions. This made the barbarian harbor grudges all the time. Chuangzi comforted them, issuing passes for those who want to go to Luoyang (洛陽), and bought articles from those who wanted to return home from the commandery, trading them with goods from the stock of the office and had officials escort them on their way back home.⁵⁷

This is very similar to the frontier trade in Jiuquan commandery which can be discerned in the Xuanquanzhi documents. It is similar in that when envoys from the West wanted to go to the capital where the emperor resided in order to offer tributes, passes were issued permitting them to travel to Luoyang, and also similar in that if they wanted to trade in the border commandery instead of Luoyang, the administrator of the frontier commandery decided on the price of the tribute and traded them for the commodities of the area. Since Chuangzi was the administrator of Dunhuang commandery, it seems that the trade centering around Jiuquan commandery shifted gradually to Dunhuang commandery towards the end of the Later Han Dynasty.

Moreover, I suggest that the duration of the envoys' sojourns in the empire also supports this. Envoys from the West were supposed to be in Dunhuang commandery right after entering Han, and then head for Jiuquan commandery to the east. On the way they passed Xuanquanzhi and left records of travel, including the date of their visit. Accordingly, the dates in the records make it possible to calculate the duration of their stay.

A number of relevant cases are contained in the documents. In the first of these cases, (m), the Dunhuang commandery administrator issued passes so that envoys from Kangju and Shan could offer tributes to the emperor.⁵⁸

While the Dunhuang commandery administrator issued an escort pass on January 19, 18 B.C., Xuanquanzhi recorded their arrival on June 20, 18 B.C., meaning that they passed Xuanquanzhi after five months and twelve days. It is notable here that the direction in which they passed Xuanquanzhi is "to the west." If they had started from Dunhuang and passed Xuanquanzhi headed for the capital, the direction should have been "to the east." Therefore, this document most likely shows that they left Dunhuang on January 19, offered tributes at the capital, and passed Xuanquanzhi on June 20 on their way back home. Thus this is a case where they sojourned for over five months and twelve days after the passes were issued.

In a second case, (n), passes were issued to escort envoys from the central government on June 2, 49 B.C.⁵⁹ (Though the full content in this case is not precisely recoverable since middle paragraphs are missing.) Document (n) reads that they passed Xuanquanzhi in March, on some day starting

with Xin (辛). Though this character was not clearly decipherable, the March mentioned must be in 48 B.C. Therefore, the day starting with Xin must fall on either the 5th, 15th, or 25th of March. Whichever it is, some seven months had passed. While it is not clear which direction is meant, as nothing regarding the direction is written down, it is clear that seven months had elapsed between leaving the capital and passing Xuanquanzhi.

The third case, (o), is one in which passes were issued for the envoy to be escorted at the central government on April 23, 60 B.C.⁶⁰ They passed Xuanquanzhi in October. With nothing written down as to the direction, it seems that it took about six months to reach Xuanquanzhi from the capital.

Records say that when Zheng Ji (鄭吉), Protector General of the Western Region, escorted the King of Cheshi's wife and children to Changan, the emperor awarded him generous prizes and treated him with dignity in all of their morning meetings;⁶¹ it is also recorded that when the King of Guizi came to Han he was awarded royal gifts and allowed to stay for a year.⁶² However, it is hardly believable that envoys from the West, as seen in the cases (m), (n), and (o), all stayed at Changan for a long period, enjoying special treatment. In these cases they would most likely have been put up at a barbarian residence (蠻夷邸) in the capital or stayed in Jiuquan commandery where a multitude of people from the West congregated, carrying out trade. A letter written in Sogdian vernacular indicates that full-scale international trade went on around Dunhuang and Jiuquan in the first half of the fourth century, while keeping in touch with the Sogdian homelands.⁶³ Though detailed records are not available prior to the third century, it seems that the way in which envoys from the West got together in such places as the Kungui Office (昆歸官), bargained for prices and traded with the Hans while staying for a certain period of time, is not so different from the way the Sogdian merchants fared. It is clear that the way Sogdian merchants carried out transactions, which gained momentum after the fourth century, did not represent a break with existing practice.

However, it is also significant that the state imposed high levels of restrictions on commercial activities as a whole during the Han Era.⁶⁴ Trade activities were supposed to be carried out within an enclosed city, and prices, measuring instruments, and even articles for sale were heavily regulated and taxed. External trade was restricted, as was domestic commerce. This is well testified to by the Ordinance on Fords and Passes (關津令) of the Zhangjiashan (張家山) legal texts, which prohibited transport of gold, copper, and horses to the exterior,⁶⁵ or the policy which prohibited sales of strategic goods such as weapons and ironware even in the capital, as well as at frontier

fairs.⁶⁶ Where they were able to enter the Han Empire at all, heavy taxes were levied on merchants. Individual commercial activities must have been difficult, since without permission and help from the state authorities, trade could not easily be carried out. This, then, is why the merchants from the West had to do business with the Han in the form of presentation of tributes. Such trade could be carried out under the aegis of governmental authority, with no heavy taxes levied on them, and with significant extra benefits.

For the same reason, pillage by officials was also to be expected. Extract (1), in which the King of Kangju's envoys filed a suit, was typical in this respect. Although in principle fair prices were to be set and food provided, such principles were sometimes unilaterally abrogated by officials. The trouble was that such unfair dealings with the merchants from the West on the part of officials were not isolated incidents, but rather customary. Under circumstances in which dealing with a continuous flow of people from the West imposed exorbitant costs on the state, officials would have done all they could to reduce them.

Other judicial cases in the Xuanquanzhi documents are associated with officials extorting the merchants from the West. In one case, (p), Wudan, a nobleman from Weili, was passing Xuanquanzhi when his leather garment was confiscated on the grounds that he had no transport pass ready to hand.⁶⁷ Though no further details are available, this was a case where officials made a compulsory confiscation of a foreigner's goods. In another case, (q), Shiqianjiu, a nobleman from Shache, offered a head of donkey in tribute without being compensated for it.⁶⁸ In view of the fact that the legal term "statement by oneself" (自言) was used in this case, it seems that the suit was filed by the merchants from the West. Though no abundant data are available, it is most likely that unfair acts had been perpetrated by the officials. Officials were not the only cause of the plight of Western merchants: the Chuangzi record mentioned above (case (l)) indicates that various powerful families in the peripheral areas stopped merchants from the West from presenting tributes, which seems to indicate that those families in the peripheral areas bought the articles of tribute midway. While case (q)—in which a head of donkey was offered at one of the stations of Dunhuang commandery called Guangzhijiu (廣至廄) without reaching Jiuquan—could be ascribed to officials of Guangzhijiu, such midway transactions most likely suggest that transactions were made between the merchants from the West and powerful families in the peripheral areas.

CONCLUSION

This study investigated the Silk Road trade from prehistoric times down to the third century, with a focus on merchants as the agents of change. Availability of information on the trading partner, the securing of traffic routes, guarantees of safety, and a supply of foodstuffs were all important factors determining the emergence of merchants. The reason why Zhang Qian is thought to have opened up the Silk Road is that these conditions began to be met after his journey to the West in the second century B.C., with the trade in the form of tributes gathering strength.

The period from prehistoric times to the second century B.C. did not see merchants emerging on a large scale. The Silk Road trade involved traveling to distant locations, and, without a guaranteed supply of provisions, life itself was in danger. Furthermore, hostile relations between neighboring areas in ancient times often led to fear of strangers, making it difficult or impossible to transport goods. Lack of information often created myths, such as that of Mt. Kunlun. In spite of such difficulties, the evidence shows that commodities and technology were transferred along the Silk Road from prehistoric times onward. The chieftain class tried continuously to acquire luxuries, most likely to maintain their authority and status. The desire for treasure, combined with hostility to the other party, found expression in the form of silent trade.

Things changed fundamentally after Zhang Qian returned from the West in the second century B.C. Merchants could now emerge under conditions where specific information on the seller and purchaser was exchanged, traffic routes were more accessible, and safety was guaranteed. Zhang Qian's voyage to the West made it possible to open diplomatic relations with the West while steering clear of the Xiongnu, easing hostile relationships, and securing traffic routes. More importantly, however, trade was made in the form of tributes which better guaranteed safety and provisions en route.

The recently found Xuanquanzhi wooden tablets give detailed proof of these facts. While there were small diplomatic missions, there were also delegations numbering over 100 persons. The tablets also confirm that many persons on the traffic route traveled as part of mixed groups, escorted by the envoys of the Han Empire. Thus merchants from the West were supplied with foodstuffs by the Han Empire via their envoys. Those merchants arriving from the West were escorted to Jiuquan commandery, where they sold their commodities as tributes at prices set by the officials. While envoys had to travel on to the capital for audience with the emperor, commodities were

traded on the frontier. Moreover, merchants from the West got together and traded commodities, principally in Jiuquan commandery. Those merchants who entered the Han Empire sometimes stayed there for several months, while possibly trading in frontier areas. The situation was not, then, so very different from the way the Sogdian merchants did business after the fourth century. The introduction of trade in the form of tributes in the second century B.C. paved the way for the emergence of the Silk Road trade.

NOTES

¹ E. E. Kuzmina, *The Prehistory of the Silk Road* (Pennsylvania: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2008).

² Qi Dongfang, “Pengzhuang yu Ronghe” [Collision and fusion], in *Xiyu (Western Region)* (Hong Kong: Hong Kong City University Press, 2009). I distinguish “the West” from the “West Region.” The former includes Central Asia and sometimes the Near East, while the latter indicates the oasis areas in the Taklimakan desert, so-called Xiyu (西域).

³ *Shiji* (hereafter SJ) and *Hanshu* (hereafter HS) dubbed this the “opening up” (鑿空). SJ 63/3169; HS 61/2693.

⁴ SJ 63/3158; SJ 63/3169; SJ 63/3173; SJ 63/3174.

⁵ SJ 63/3171.

⁶ SJ 63/3171.

⁷ SJ 63/3175.

⁸ SJ 63/3175.

⁹ SJ 63/3157.

¹⁰ SJ 63/3161–62.

¹¹ SJ 63/3161.

¹² Zhao Lisheng, “Mutianzizhuan zhong yixie buluode fangweikaoshi” [Study on some tribes seen in Mutianzizhuan], *Zhonghua Wenshi Luncong* 2 (1979).

¹³ *Liezi* 5/157; *Huainanzi* 4/132.

¹⁴ SJ 63/3157.

¹⁵ The portion addressing the Mt. Kunlun and Xiwangmu myths is adapted from Kim Byung-Joon, “Seobang Jeonrae Munmul gwa Gonryunsan Sinhwa” [Western products in Ancient China and the Mt. Kunlun myths], in *Godae Jungkuk-eui Yihae* [Understanding of Ancient China], vol. 5 (Seoul: Jisiksaneop Press), 150–62.

¹⁶ See Mircea Eliade, *Images and Symbols*, trans. Philip Mairet (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1991).

¹⁷ Typical is the “cargo worship” as seen among the native tribes in mountainous areas in New Zealand. See Marvin Harris, *Cows, Pigs, Wars, and Witches: The Riddles of Culture* (New York: Vintage, 1989).

¹⁸ Kim, “Seobang Jeonrae Munmul gwa Gonryunsan Sinhwa.”

¹⁹ This is confirmed in the papers contributed to the Fourth Worldwide Conference of the Society for East Asian Archaeology, held in Beijing, June 2008.

²⁰ Robert Bagley, “Shang Archeology,” in *The Cambridge History of Ancient China: From the Origins of Civilization to 221 B.C.*, ed. Michael Loewe and Edward L. Shaughnessy (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 133.

²¹ The traffic of goods was certainly reciprocal: unilateral traffic is hard to imagine. In return for a variety of advanced technology and goods, products from all over China would have found their way into the West. For now, though, there is only confirmation of a measure of influence of earthenware from Xinjiang.

²² Aida Hiroshi, *Izin to Si* [Foreigner and the city] (Tokyo: Ken Bun Press, 1997), 11–52.

²³ *Sanguozhi* (hereafter SGZ) 30/843.

²⁴ HHS 90/2982; SGZ 15/470.

²⁵ SJ 129/3263.

²⁶ Kuzmina, *The Prehistory of the Silk Road*, 88–107.

²⁷ Nicola Di Cosmo, *Ancient China and its Enemies: The Rise of Nomadic Power in East Asian History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002).

²⁸ Yu Taishan, *Lianghan Weijin Nanbeichao yu Xiyu Guanxishi Yanjiu* [The historical relationship between Chinese Dynasties and the Western Region from Han to Nanbeichao] (Beijing: China Social Sciences Press, 1995), 61–62.

²⁹ HS 66/3886.

³⁰ HS 66/3886.

³¹ For a single person, see Hu Pingsheng and Zhang Defang, *Dunhuang Xuanquan Han jian shicui* (Shanghai: Shanghai Guji Press, 2001), II 0214(1):126; I 0110(2):33; II 0314(2):355. For two, II 0215(3):267. For three, V 1611(3):118; V 1509(2):4. For over eight people, V 1712(5):1. Here the amount of 4 dou (斗) and 8 sheng (升) is equal to portions for sixteen persons, but this is the result of double meals (再食). Therefore the total who stayed in this place must be eight persons.

³² For 1–2 persons, see *ibid.*, II 0214(2):78. 12 persons, II 90DXT0213(3):6A. 17 persons, I 0309(3):20. 64 persons, II 0124(3):83.

³³ *Ibid.*, I 0309(3):134.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, II 0216(2):877–83.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, V 92DXT1210(3):132.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, I 91DXT0309(3):98.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, V 1712(5):1.

³⁸ The note for this document in *Dunhuang Xuanquan Han jian shicui* proposes that this Right General must be Wusun's general.

³⁹ Hu and Zhang, *Dunhuang Xuanquan Han jian shicui*, V 1410(3):57.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, II 214(2):78.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, II 0113(3):122.

⁴² *Ibid.*, I 0309(3):97.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, II 0216(3):137.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, I 0309(3):134.

⁴⁵ HS 66/3881; HS 66/3880.

⁴⁶ HS 66/3873.

⁴⁷ Hu and Zhang, *Dunhuang Xuanquan Han jian shicui*, I 0116(2):15; II 214(2):78; II 214(1):126; II 114(4):57; II 0214(2):385; II 90DXT0216(2):702.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, II 0114(4):277; II 0115(1):114; II 0216(2):54; II 90DXT0114(4):277; II 90DXT0214(3):109; V 92DXT1411(2):35; V 92DXT1311(3):140; II 90DXT0216(2):702; V 92DXT1311(3):129.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, II 0214(2):53.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, II 90DXT0213(3):6A.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, II 0216(2):877–83.

⁵² Zhang Defang (張德芳), *Xuanquan Hanjian Yanjiu* (Lanzhou: Gansu Cultural Press, 2009). Zhang Defang re-transcribed the “Xiancixushi” (縣次贖食) as “Xiancigoushi” (縣次購食). His view was that envoys were still not supplied with food, but procured food on their own as in the past. His view became established, with most subsequent researchers following him. However, an

overview of the document indicates that it cannot be interpreted in this way. This part should be read as follows: unlike the previous several times when they were given food, the Kangju envoys complained of “not having been provided with food” en route this time.

⁵³ Hu and Zhang, *Dunhuang Xuanquan Han jian shicui*, II 0214(4):78.

⁵⁴ Zhou Zhenhe, *Xihan Zhengqu Dili* (Beijing: Renmin Press, 1987), 157–68.

⁵⁵ SJ 63/3171.

⁵⁶ Suishu (隋書) 67/1581.

⁵⁷ SGZ 16/512.

⁵⁸ Hu and Zhang, *Dunhuang Xuanquan Han jian shicui*, II 0214(4):78.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, II 0114(4):277.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, I 91DXT0309(3):59.

⁶¹ HS 66/3923.

⁶² HS 66/3916

⁶³ See J. Harmatta, “The Archaeological Evidence for the Date of the Sogdian <Ancient letters>,” *Studies in the Sources on the History of Pre-Islamic Central Asia* (Budapest) 2 (1979).

⁶⁴ Lee Sung-Kyu, “Godae Dongasia Kyoryu eui Yeolim gwa Datchim” [Initiation and closure of traffic in ancient Asia], *Dongasia Gyeongje Munhwa Netwok* [East Asia economy and culture network] (Seoul: Taehak Publishing Co., 2007), 127–50.

⁶⁵ Peng Hao, Chen Wei, and Kudo Motoo, eds., *Ernian Luling and Zouyan Shu* (Shanghai: Shanghai Guji Press, 2007), 307, 309.

⁶⁶ Lee Sung-Kyu, “Jungguk Godae Sangeop eui Seongkyeok e daehayeo” [Study on the traits of the ancient commerce in China], *Jungguk Gojungsesa Yeongu* [Study of ancient and medieval Chinese history] 12 (2004), 72–73.

⁶⁷ Hu and Zhang, *Dunhuang Xuanquan Han jian shicui*, II T0215(3):133.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, II T0111(2):59, 74.