Kroraina and Khotan in Historic Records and Excavated Documents

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Kroraina Kingdom/
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Transmitted vs. Excavated Sources
(Intention vs. non-Intentional Sources)

Dynastic histories
  Descriptions of foreign kingdoms: distance from capital, population, ruler, relations with Chinese dynasties

Monks’ travel accounts
  Similar capsule descriptions, assessments of extent of Buddhism, also what they saw and heard

Each findspot is different:
  some, such as garbage pits, are randomly preserved, while others are deliberately buried.

Common types of documents include:
  letters
  contracts
  judicial decisions
  royal orders (especially at Niya)
Matching the Niya site with the Dynastic Histories

Shanshan Kingdom: 14,100 people in 1570 households

Jingjue Kingdom: 3360 individuals in 480 households

So far around 150 dwellings have been found at Niya. Are there more somewhere else? Did the size of the settlement contract dramatically?
Material Evidence points to settlement of Niya by people from the Gandhara region of modern Pakistan and Afghanistan.
Ancient Niya Site

Buddhist stupa, 7m tall
Square Buddhist stupa at Niya, 2 m on each side, with a pathway 1.1-1.4 m across. Found by Sino-Japanese tea in the 1990s.
Kharoṣṭhī Documents
Intentional and Unintentional Sources

Kharoṣṭhī documents 佉卢文文書: what do they reveal about local society?
- little evidence of trade
- family life: “milk” payments to parents of adopted children by the adopting families
- women’s varied roles
- Buddhists living inside monasteries and out
- frequent wars with Khotan

After ca. 400, Niya is largely abandoned. Faxian’s account matches archeological finds.
1907 Stein retraces Xuanzang’s journey leaving China

Huili’s hagiography of his master is largely accurate (Xuanzang covered 218 miles or 351 km), but Huili left out two days of walking between the first and fourth gate past Guazhou.

Other reasons to view Huili’s account with skepticism.
Legend of Khotan’s Founding as recounted by Xuanzang

In 644, when the Chinese monk-pilgrim Xuanzang passed through Khotan, the inhabitants related this legend of the kingdom’s founding: after a son of the great Buddhist ruler Ashoka (reigned 268–32 BCE) was banished from the Mauryan Kingdom in India, he crossed the Pamirs into Khotan and became a shepherd, leading his flocks through the barren desert in search of grass.

Childless, he stopped to pray at a temple to the Buddhist guardian of the north. A male child then appeared at the deity’s forehead, while the earth in front of the temple produced a liquid “with a strange taste, sweet and fragrant as breast milk” for the infant.
Shanpula site, much disturbed, contains materials from the 3rd C BC to the 4th C AD
Trouser leg from Shanpula site, probably 3rd C BC, points to contact with peoples to the west
Buddhism in Khotan

• First written mention of Buddhism at Khotan, from a sixth-century catalog of Buddhist texts. 260 CE Zhu Shixing stays in Khotan after translating *Prajñāpāramitā-Sūtra* 大般若波罗蜜多经 (Perfection of Transcendent Wisdom)

• Stylistic evidence dates the Rawak site to the 3rd-4th centuries AD
Interior wall at Rawak, 50 m by 43 m, encircled the central stupa. Ancient Khotan fig 65.
On the 18th day of the 10th month of the 3rd year, at this time in the reign of the king of Khotan, the king of kings, Hinaza Deva Vijitasimha, at that time there is a man of the city called Khvarnarse. He speaks thus: There is a camel belonging to me. That camel carries a distinguishing mark, a mark branded on it, like this—VA SO. Now I am selling this camel for a price of 8,000 masha [most likely Chinese coins] to the suliga [literally “Sogdian, by extension, “merchant”], Vagiti Vadhaga. On behalf of that camel Vagiti Vadhaga paid the whole price in masha, and Khvarnarse received it. The matter has been settled. From now on this camel has become the property of Vagiti Vadhaga, to do as he likes with it, to do everything he likes. Whoever at a future time complains, informs, or raises a dispute about this camel, for that he shall so pay the penalty as the law of the kingdom demands. By me Bahudhiva this document (?) was written at the request of Khvarnarse.

Unlike Niya, at Khotan (240 km to the west) an Iranian language was spoken.
Oktor Skjaervo’s three phases of Khotanese 于闐語

• Old Khotanese (5-6\textsuperscript{th} C CE): *The Book of Zambasta* 赞 巴斯特之书

• Middle Khotanese (7\textsuperscript{th}-8\textsuperscript{th} C CE) excavated documents from Dandan Uiliq (130 km north of Khotan) dated from 722 to 802. In Khotanese and Chinese: tax documents, tallies, contracts.

• Late Khotanese (9\textsuperscript{th}-10\textsuperscript{th} C CE) Cave 17 at Dunhuang, 901-1006. Royal edicts, bilingual phrasebooks.
Total Surprises not mentioned anywhere in the dynastic histories

At Dandan Uiliq, in 1901, Stein’s workers find a letter written in Hebrew characters in New Persian, the language that replaced middle Persian in the ninth century. Letter is from a trader who writes about “profit and loss” and mentions different transactions involving sheep, clothing, plants, a saddle, stirrups, and straps.

In 2004, a second letter appears.
In New Persian using the Hebrew alphabet, the letter dates to the very early 800s, possibly 802, argues Zhang Zhan of Harvard, because of the line “The Tibetans have all been killed.”
Fall of Khotan to Karakhanid Forces, ca. 1006

970, when Khotanese armies defeat Karakhanids, king of Khotan writes to his uncle in Dunhuang (where the letter was found).

1006 Karakhanids, having defeated Khotan, launch campaign toward the west.

1009 Chinese records mention a mission from Khotan, then under the rule of the Karakhanids. Over the next 500 years Xinjiang becomes Islamicized.
Islamic Khotan