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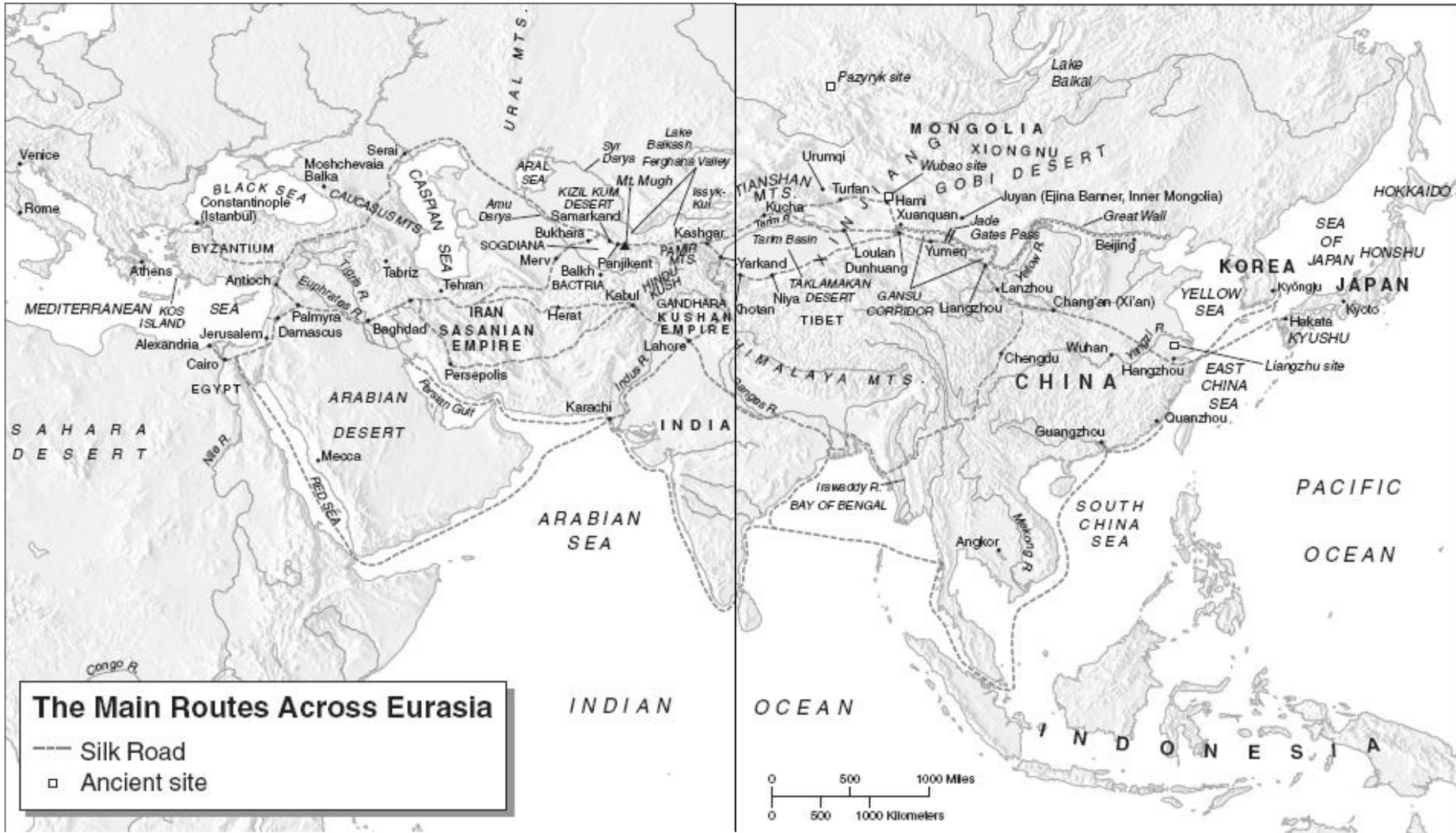
# The languages of the Silk Road

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# The Silk Route(s)



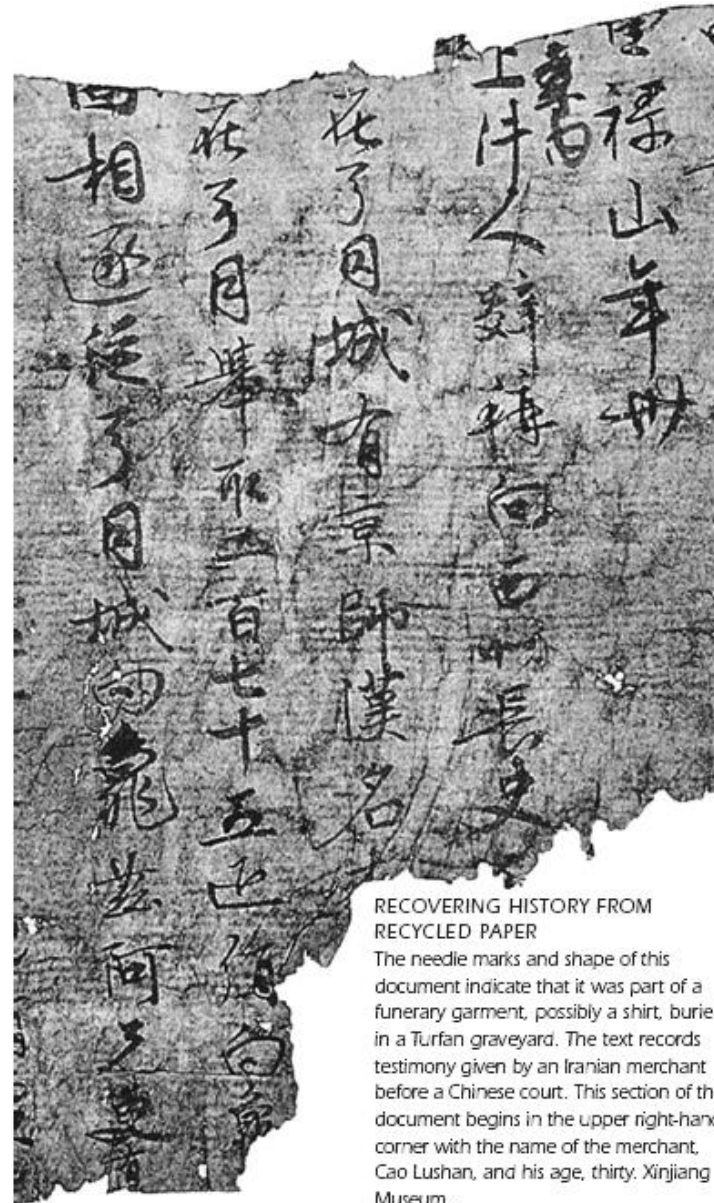
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## The relevance of the interpreters: Pegolotti's *La pratica della mercatura*

### *Cose bisognevoli a mercatanti che vogliono fare il sopradetto viaggio del Gattaio*

Primieramente conviene che si lasci crescere la barba grande e non si rada. E vuolsi fornire alla Tana di turcimanni, e non si vuole guardare a rispiarmo dal cattivo al buono, chè il buono non costa quello d'ingordo che l'uomo non—s'ene migliori via più; e oltre a' turcimanni si conviene menare per lo meno due fanti buoni che sappiano bene la lingua cumanesca. E se il mercatante vuole menare dalla Tana niuna femmina con seco, s'è puote, e se non la vuole menare non fa forza, ma pure se la menasse sarà tenuto di migliore condizione che se non la menasse, e

## Written records of language contact



### RECOVERING HISTORY FROM RECYCLED PAPER

The needle marks and shape of this document indicate that it was part of a funerary garment, possibly a shirt, buried in a Turfan graveyard. The text records testimony given by an Iranian merchant before a Chinese court. This section of the document begins in the upper right-hand corner with the name of the merchant, Cao Lushan, and his age, thirty. Xinjiang Museum.

## Written records of language contact



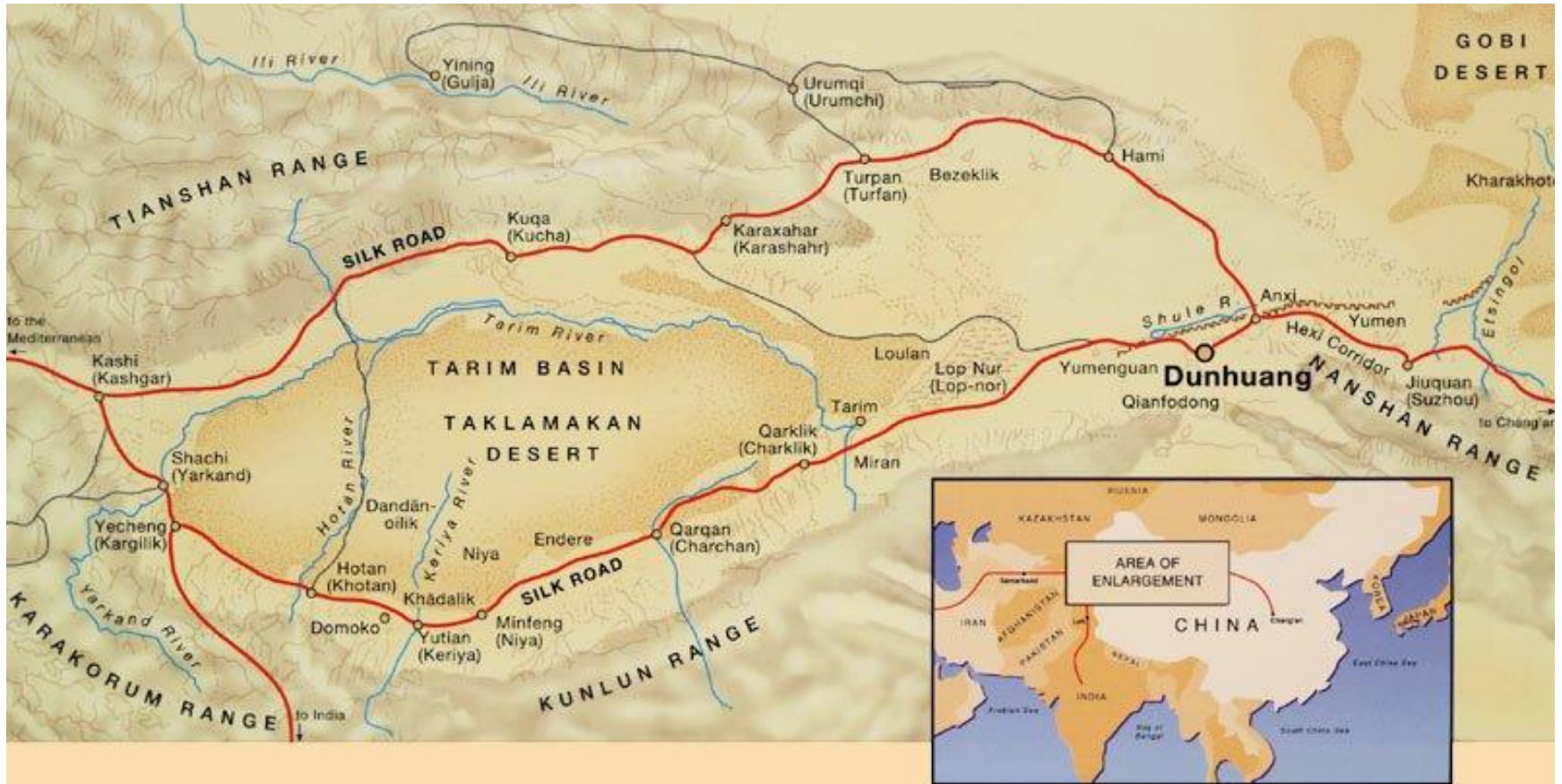
### EAST MEETS WEST ON A KHAROSHTHI DOCUMENT

This wooden document from Niya survives intact: the upper drawer has been slotted into the lower holder, and cords have been wrapped around both pieces of wood through notches and then sealed with clay. The seal on the left is in Chinese; that on the right shows a Western-looking face, most likely a Greek or Roman deity, which are often shown on Gandharan seals. These double rectangular tablets record the exchange between two parties of various types of property—slaves, livestock, and land—and give the names of the officials who recorded the transaction.

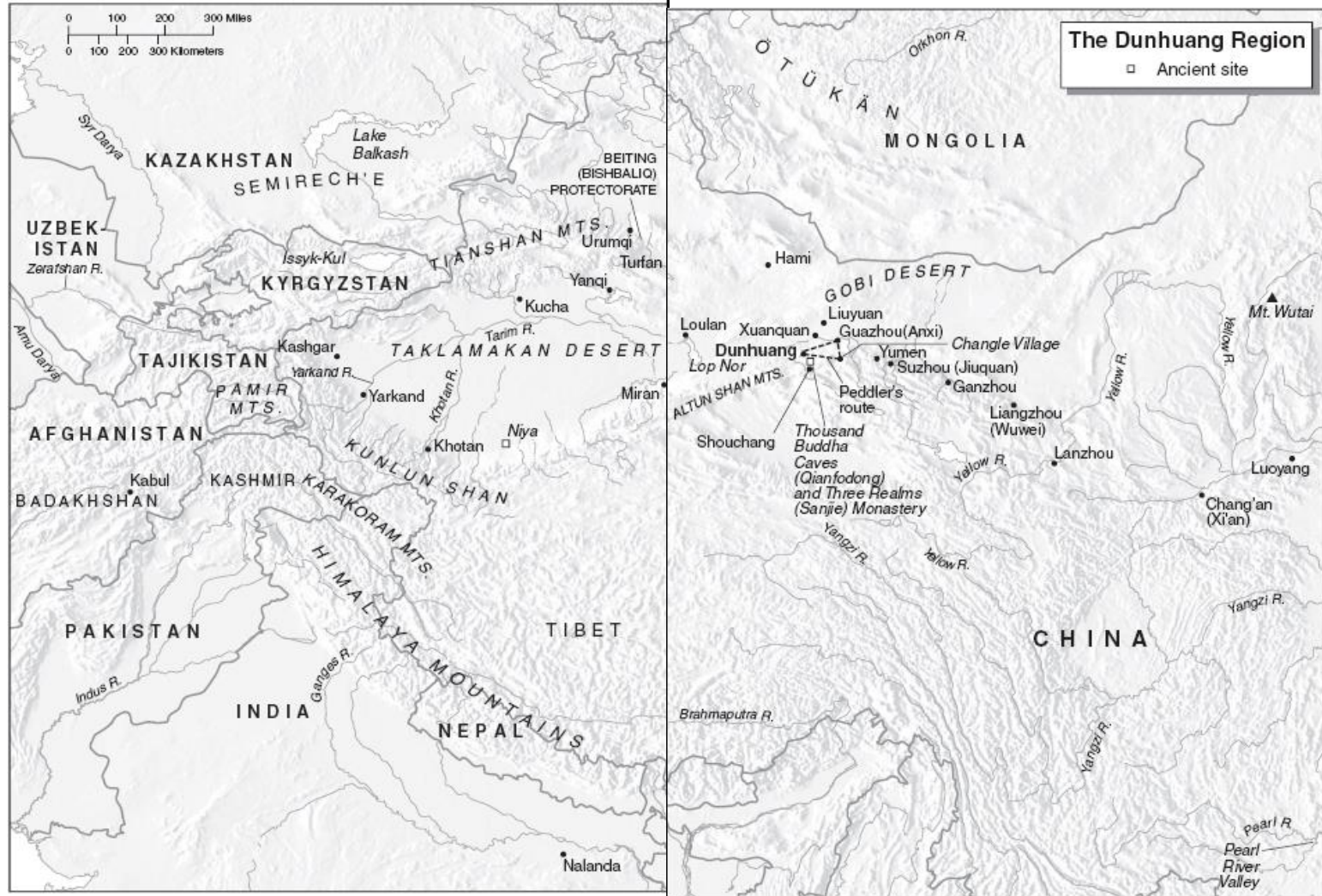
# Chinese



# Chinese



# Dunhuang



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## Dunhuang

### LANGUAGES

1. Arabic
2. Avestan
3. Chinese (Chinese and 'phags-pa scripts)
4. Kothanese
5. Gāndharī
6. Greek
7. Judeo-Persian (Hebrew script)
8. Khitan ( "large Khitan" script")
9. Mongolian
10. Parthian
11. Persian (middlle and modern)
12. Sanskrit
13. Syriac (*Maḍnḥāyā* script)
14. Sogdian
15. Tangut
16. Tibetan
17. Tokharian A
18. Tokharian B
19. Tumshuqese
20. Turkish (Kok script)
21. Zhang-zhung
22. Unidentified languages

# Dunhuang

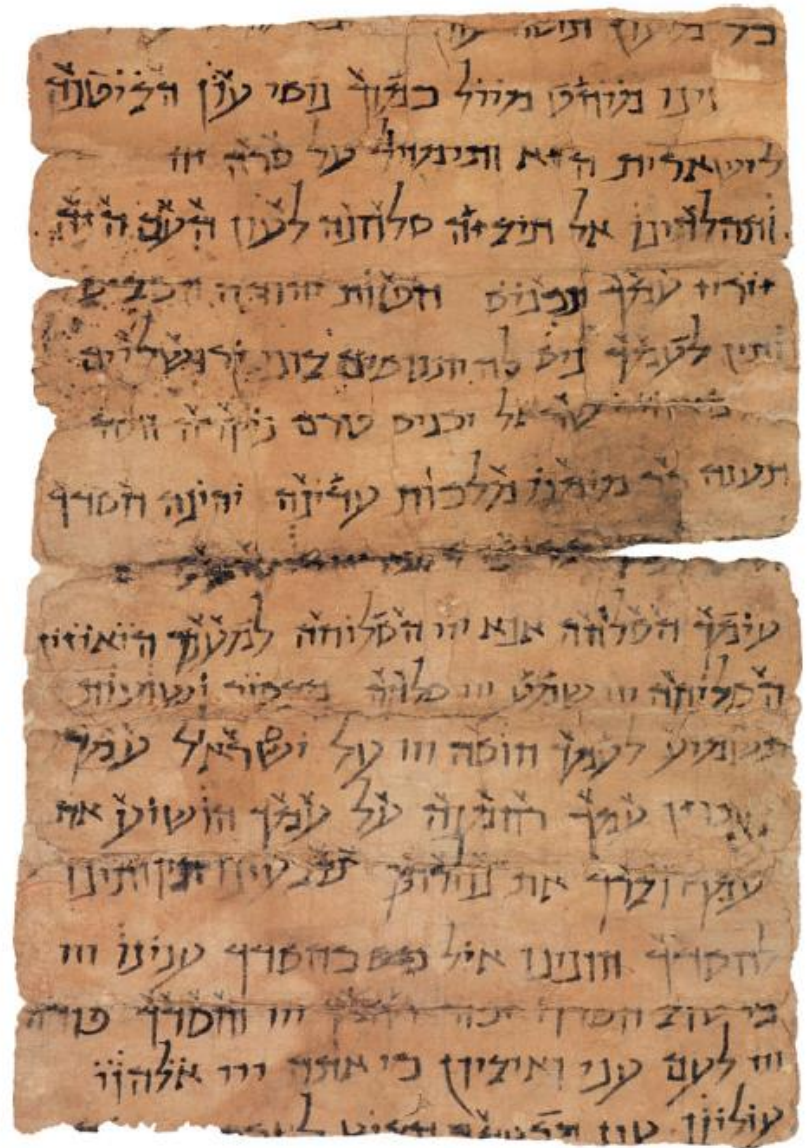


PLATE 12. HEBREW PRAYER FOUND IN THE LIBRARY CAVE AT DUNHUANG

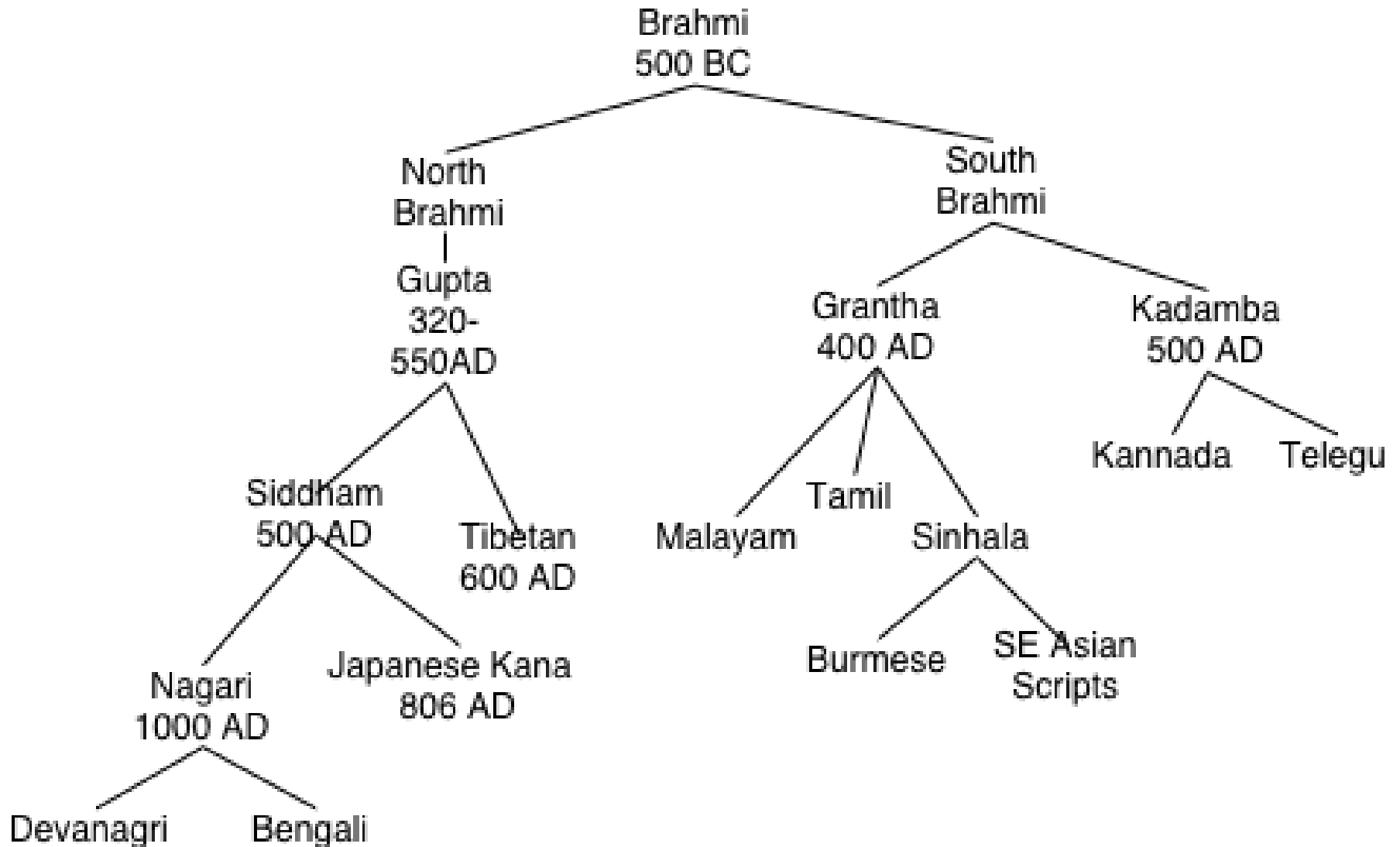
# Sino-Tibetan languages



# Sino-Tibetan phylum

- Chinese
- Tibetan
- Zhang-zhung

# Brahmī family of scripts



## Languages belonging to other *phyla*

- Tangut (Tibeto-Burman)
- Xiong-un's language (Proto-siberian?)

# Tangut script



A page of the manuscript of the *Suvarnaprabhasottamaraja Sutra* (11<sup>th</sup>-13<sup>th</sup> c. AD)

# Altaic languages

## ALTAIC LANGUAGES

### AMo Mongolic languages

- AMo1 Mongolian / Ordos
- AMo2 Oirat / Kalmyk
- AMo3 Buryat
- AMo4 Dagur
- AMo5 Monguor-Santa
- AMo6 Shira Yugur
- AMo7 Moghol

AK Korean

AJ Japonic languages

agglutinating languages,  
so the language family  
is in dispute

### ATu Tungusic languages

- ATu1 Northern Tungusic (Tungus)
- ATu2 Southeastern Tungusic (Amur)
- ATu3 Southwestern Tungusic (Manchu)

### AT Turkic languages

- AT1 Qashqai
- AT2 Salar
- AT3 Yugur
- AT4 Khalaj
- AT5 Khakas
- AT6 Tuvan
- AT7 Shor
- AT8 Altay
- AT9 Tofa
- AT10 Karakalpak
- AT11 Kazakh
- AT12 Turkish
- AT13 Chuvash
- AT14 Karaim
- AT15 Türkmen
- AT16 Azerbaijani
- AT17 Tatar
- AT18 Crimean Tatar
- AT19 Bashkir
- AT20 Uzbek
- AT21 Kyrgyz
- AT22 Gagauz
- AT23 Afshar
- AT24 Khorasani Turkic
- AT25 Uyghur
- AT26 Nogai
- AT27 Karachay-Balkar
- AT28 Kumyk
- AT29 Trukhmen
- AT30 Dolgan
- AT31 Sakha

From a geographical point of view the Turkic languages AT26 - AT29 are also belonging to the group of the otherwise isolated Caucasian languages.

## URALIC LANGUAGES

### UF Finno-Ugric

- UF1 Baltic Finnic
- UF2 Sami languages
- UF3 Permic languages
- UF4 Volga-Finnic
- UF5 Hungarian
- UF6 Ob-Ugric

### US Samoyedic

- US1 Northern group
- US2 Southern group

UY Yukaghir

The affiliation to the Uralic languages is in dispute.

Sketch: Dr. phil. Ihsan Yilmaz Bayraktarlı  
Cartography: Dipl.-Geogr. Maximilian Dörbecker

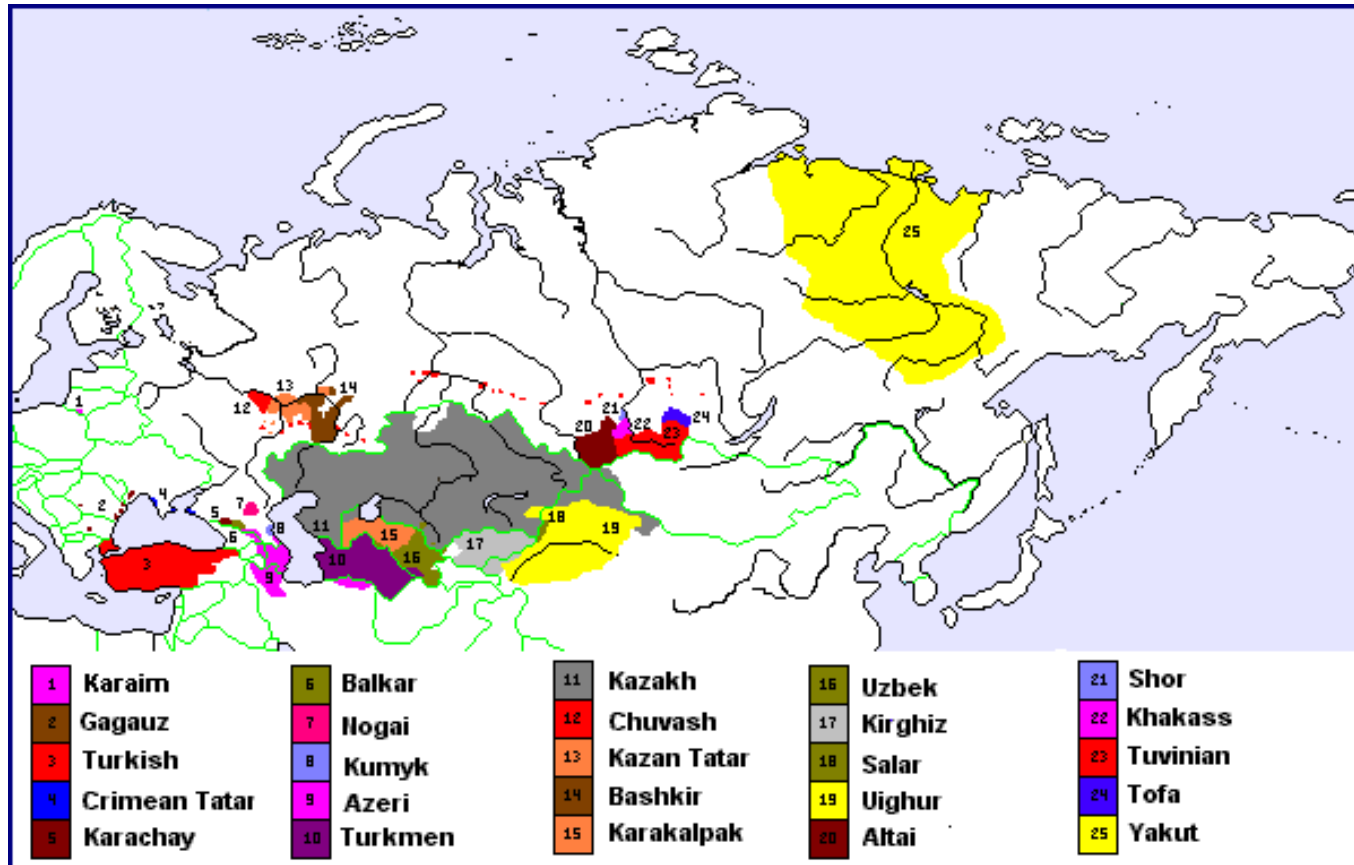




# Altaic languages

- Mongolian
- Khitan
- Manchu
- Turkic languages

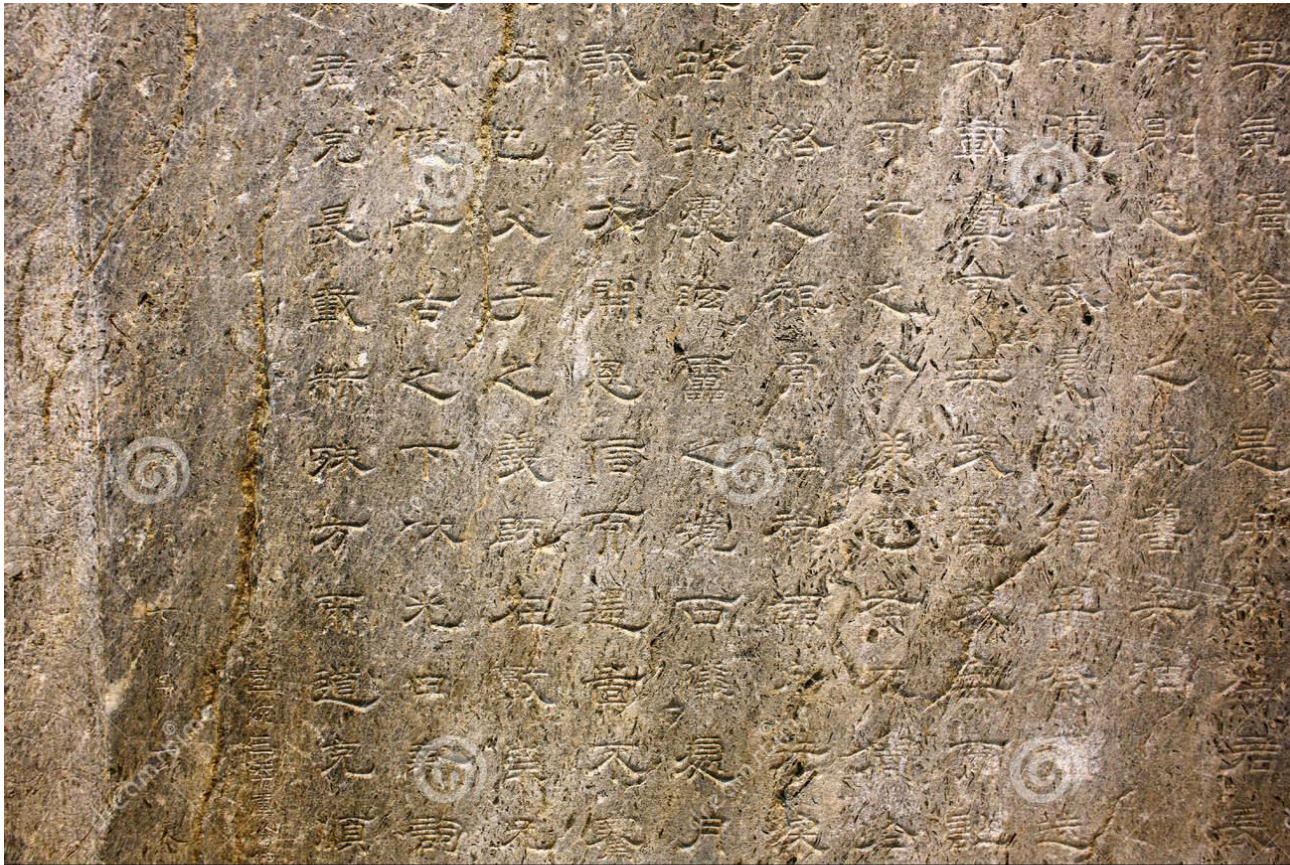
# Turkic languages



# Orkhon Turkic inscriptions



# Orkhon Turkic inscriptions



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# Orkhon Turkic inscriptions

ᠨ	ᠬ	ᠦ	ᠠ
ö/ü	o/u	y/i	a/ä

## Consonants with back vowels

ᠳ	ᠰ	ᠷ	ᠨ	ᠯ	ᠲ	ᠯ	ᠬ	ᠬ	ᠳ	ᠪ
y	s	r	n	l	t	oq/uq/ qo/qu	q/k	ɣ/g	d	b































































## Consonants with front vowels

ᠳ	ᠰ	ᠷ	ᠨ	ᠯ	ᠲ	ᠬ	ᠬ	ᠳ	ᠪ	
y	s	r	n	l	t	ök/ük/ kō/kū	k	g	d	b

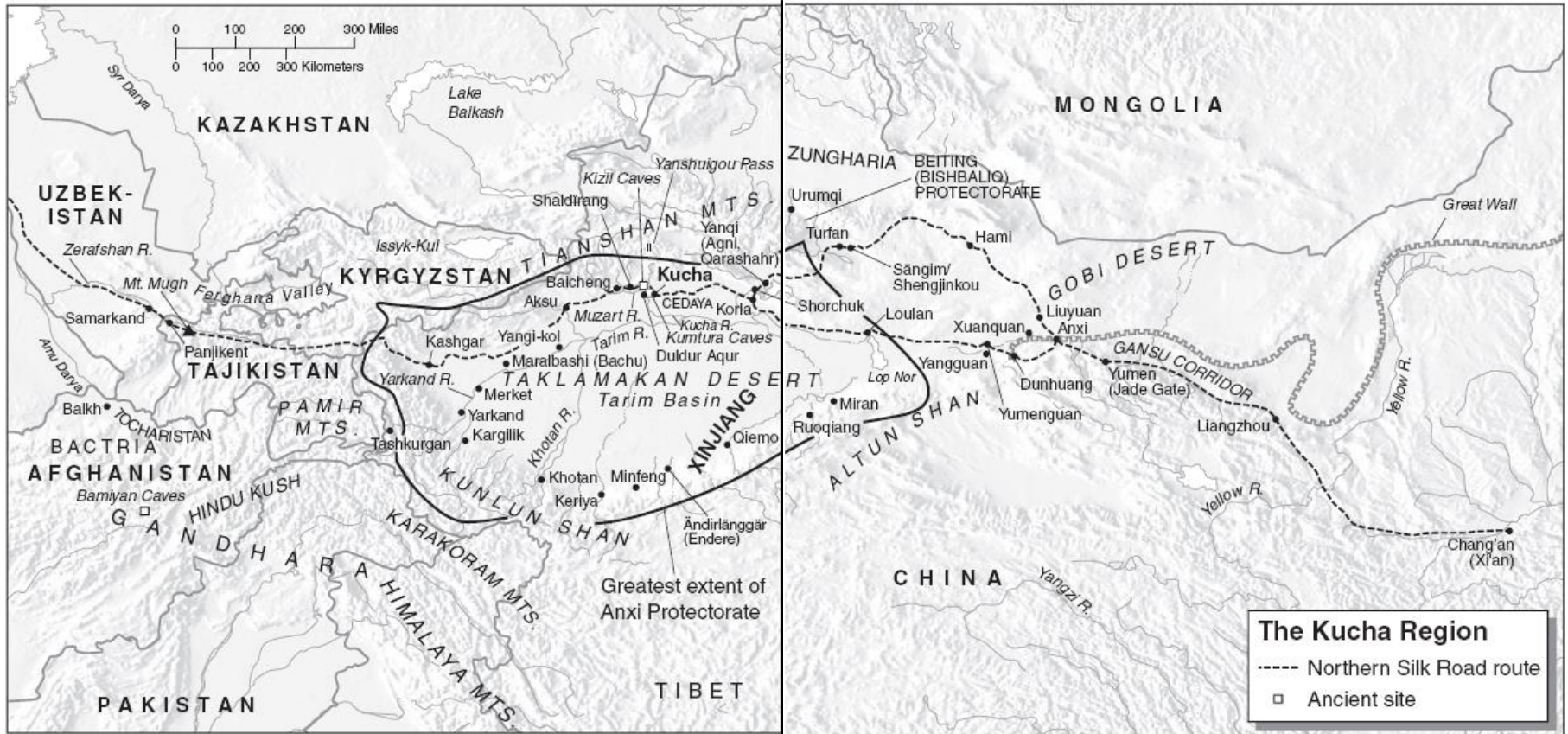
## Other consonants

ᠳ	ᠰ	ᠷ	ᠨ	ᠯ	ᠲ	ᠬ	ᠬ	ᠳ	ᠪ	ᠳ
nd	n̄/nj	nč	z	š	n̄/ng/ŋ	m	p	ič/či	č	yq/qy
								ᠪ	ᠳ	ᠳ
								baš	ot/ut	ld

# Uyghur script

Initial												
Medial												
Final												
Latin	e	a/e	w/v	y	o/u	ö/ü	z	ž	x	q	y/i	
Initial												
Medial												
Final												
Latin	k/g	d	m	n	b/p	č	r	s	š	t	l	

# Kucha and Turfan regions



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# Indian languages and scripts

Semitic			Indic		
Value	Phoenician	Aramaic	Value	Kharoṣṭhī	Brāhmi
ʾ	𐤀	𐤁	a	𑀀	𑀠
b	𐤁	𐤂	ba	𑀁	𑀡
g	𐤂	𐤃	ga	𑀂	𑀢
d	𐤃	𐤄	da	𑀃	𑀣
h	𐤄	𐤅	ha	𑀄	𑀤
w	𐤅	𐤆	va	𑀅	𑀥
z	𐤆	𐤇	ja	𑀆	𑀦
h	𐤇	𐤈	gha		𑀧
t	𐤈	𐤉	tha	𑀇	𑀨
y	𐤉	𐤊	ya	𑀈	𑀩
k	𐤊	𐤋	ka	𑀉	𑀪
l	𐤋	𐤌	la	𑀊	𑀫
m	𐤌	𐤍	ma	𑀋	𑀬
n	𐤍	𐤎	na	𑀌	𑀭
s	𐤎	𐤏	sa	𑀍	𑀮
ʿ	𐤏	𐤐	e		𑀯
p	𐤐	𐤑	pa	𑀎	𑀰
ṣ	𐤑	𐤒	ca	𑀏	𑀱
q	𐤒	𐤓	kha	𑀐	𑀲
r	𐤓	𐤔	ra	𑀑	𑀳
ṣ	𐤔	𐤕	śa	𑀒	𑀴
t	𐤕	𐤖	ta	𑀓	𑀵



# Indian languages and scripts



## Indian languages and scripts



Coinage of the Indo-Greek kingdoms: Apollodotus I

## Spread of the *kharoṣṭhī* script



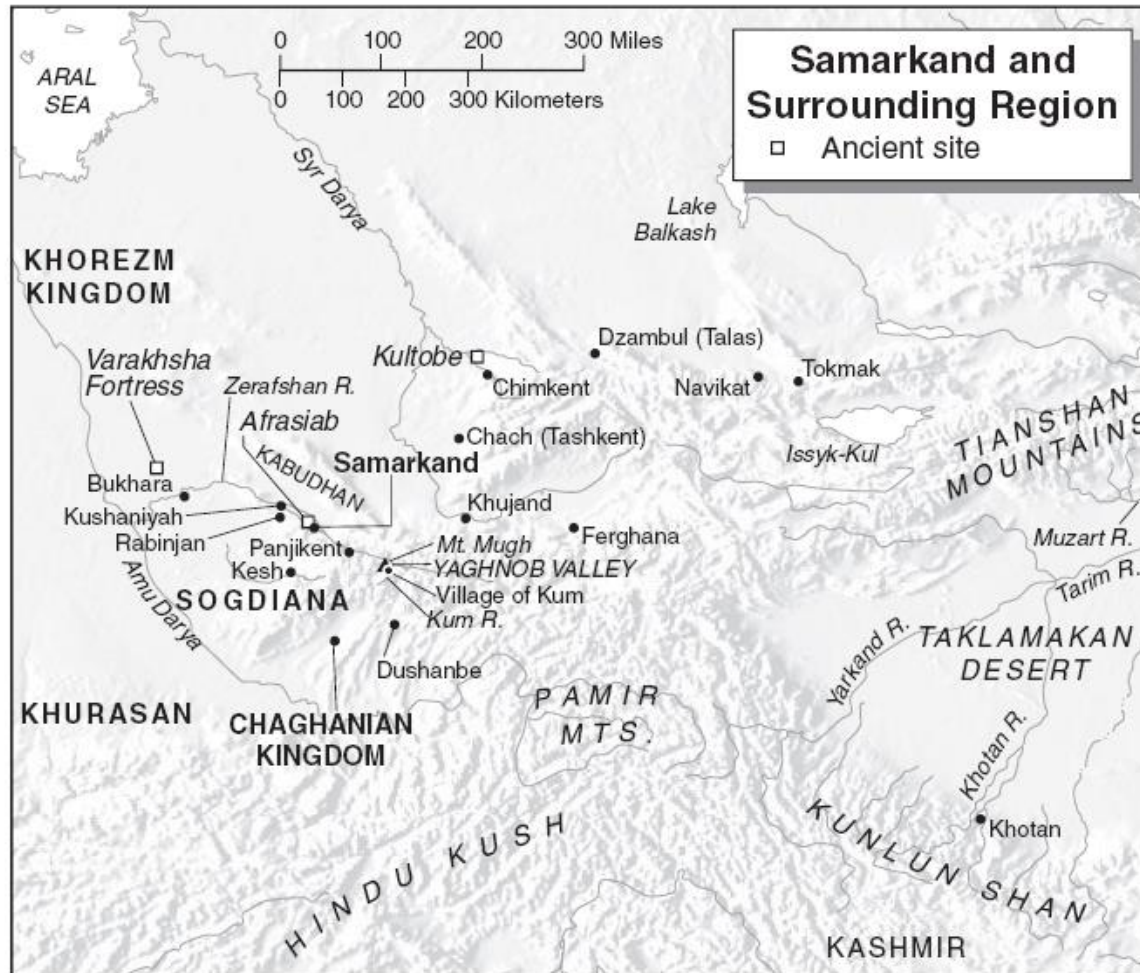
### DOCUMENTARY EVIDENCE OF CULTURAL EXCHANGE ON THE SILK ROAD

This wooden document represented an entirely new writing technology that migrants from northern Afghanistan and Pakistan introduced around 200 CE to the residents of northwest China, who had no writing system of their own. Using two pieces of wood, they crafted a base (shown here) with a top that slid over it like a drawer and protected the contents. These wooden documents written in the Kharoṣṭhī script of their homeland, which include contracts, royal orders, letters, and rulings in legal disputes, make it possible to reconstruct this early encounter of people from radically different backgrounds. The upside-down label gives the date and name of the site, Niya, where the wooden slip was found. Courtesy of the Board of the British Library.

# Iranian languages

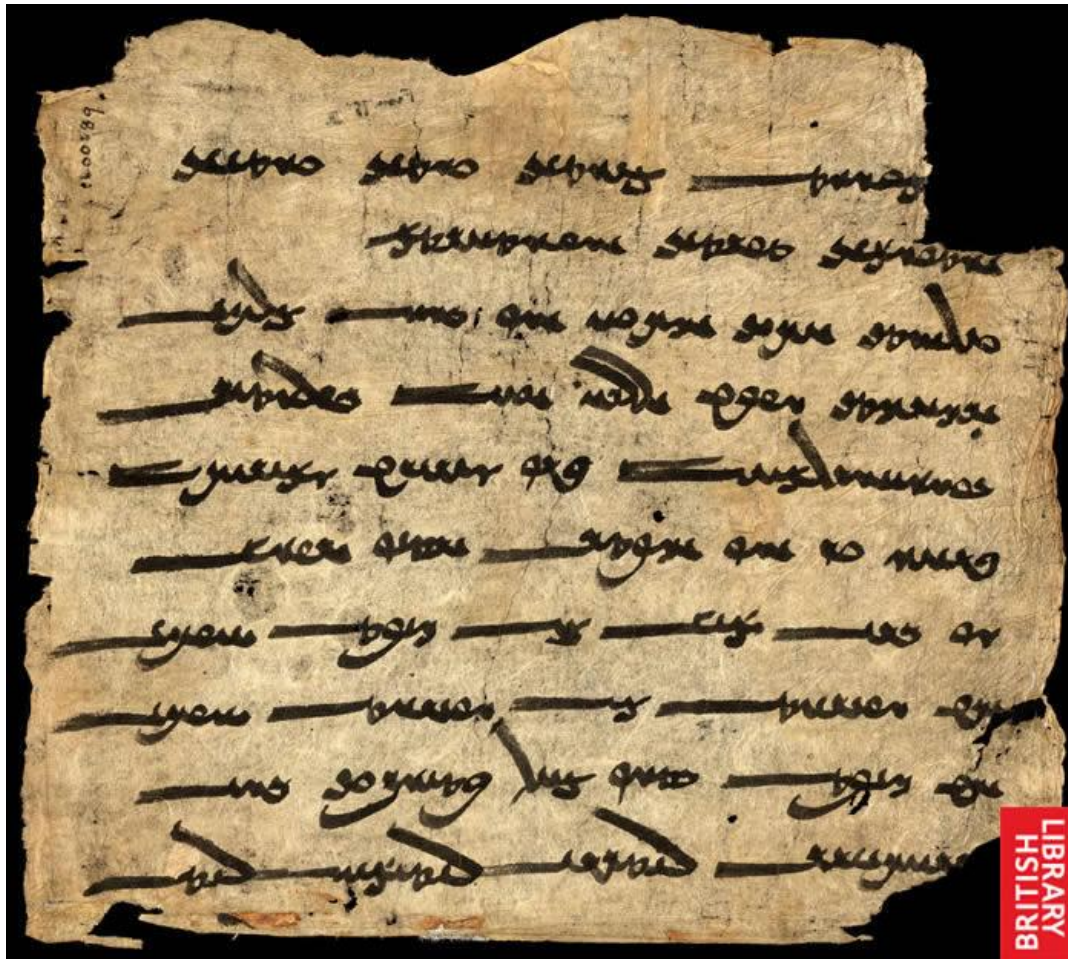
- EASTERN LANGUAGES:
  - Sogdian, Khwarezmian
  - Bactrian, Khotanese and Tumsuq
  - Sarmatian, Alanic
- MIDDLE LANGUAGES:
  - Parthian
  - Middle Persian

# Sogdian



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# Sogdian

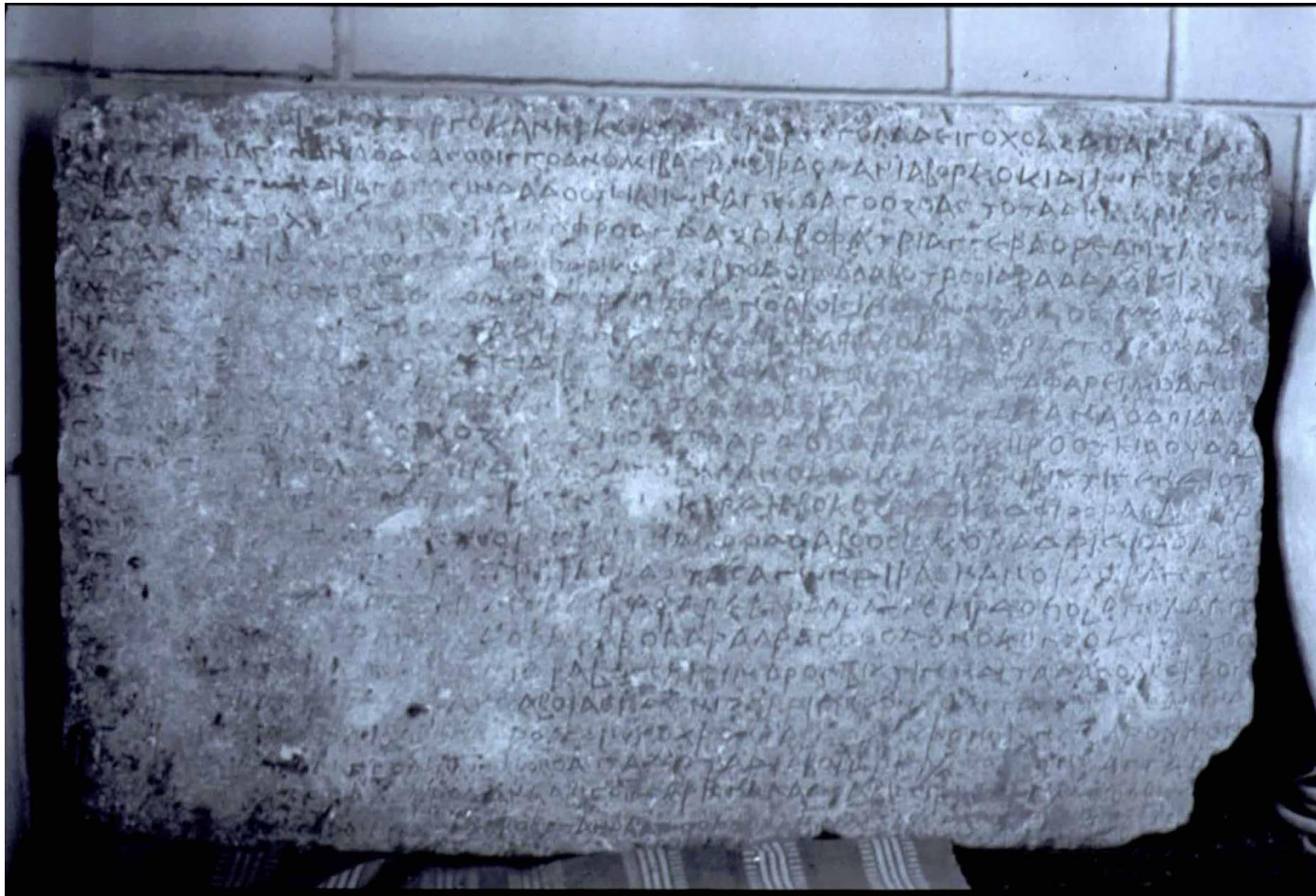


Sogdian manuscript of the Avesta, 10<sup>th</sup> c. AD

# Sogdian

	final	medial	initial		final	medial	initial
a, ε				s			
γ, x, q				š			
g, k				z, ž			
l, y, ī, e, ē				n			
r				b, p			
l				v, β			
t				w, u, ū, o, ō			
δ, θ				m			
č, ĵ				h (final)			

# Bactrian: inscription from Rabatak

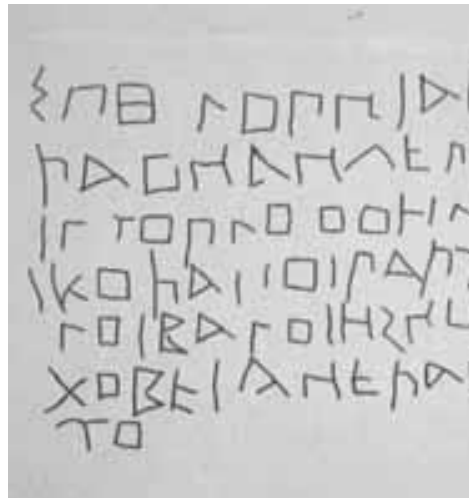




# Kushan empire according to the Rabatak inscription



# Bactrian: Dasht-i Duwar I



1. ΣΟΘ Γορπιαίου ιε  
[Era-year] 279, 15th [day of the month] Gorpiaios.
2. Βαονανο Βαο ι αζαδο  
King of Kings, the noble,
3. οαζορκο Οοημο Τακπισο  
great Ooemo Takpiso,
4. κοβανο ι μαυοζινιγο ι λαδο-  
the Kuṣāṇa protégé of the moon [god], the right-
5. γοι βαγο οζολαδο ειδο  
cous, the Majesty had this prepared,
6. χοζογαργο αβο ζαχφαιο  
he, the benefactor for the welfare.

# Parthian



Naqsh-e Rjab bas-relief, Fars, Irán (Sasanid period, 3<sup>rd</sup> c. AD)  
Trilingual inscription in Parthian, Persian and Greek

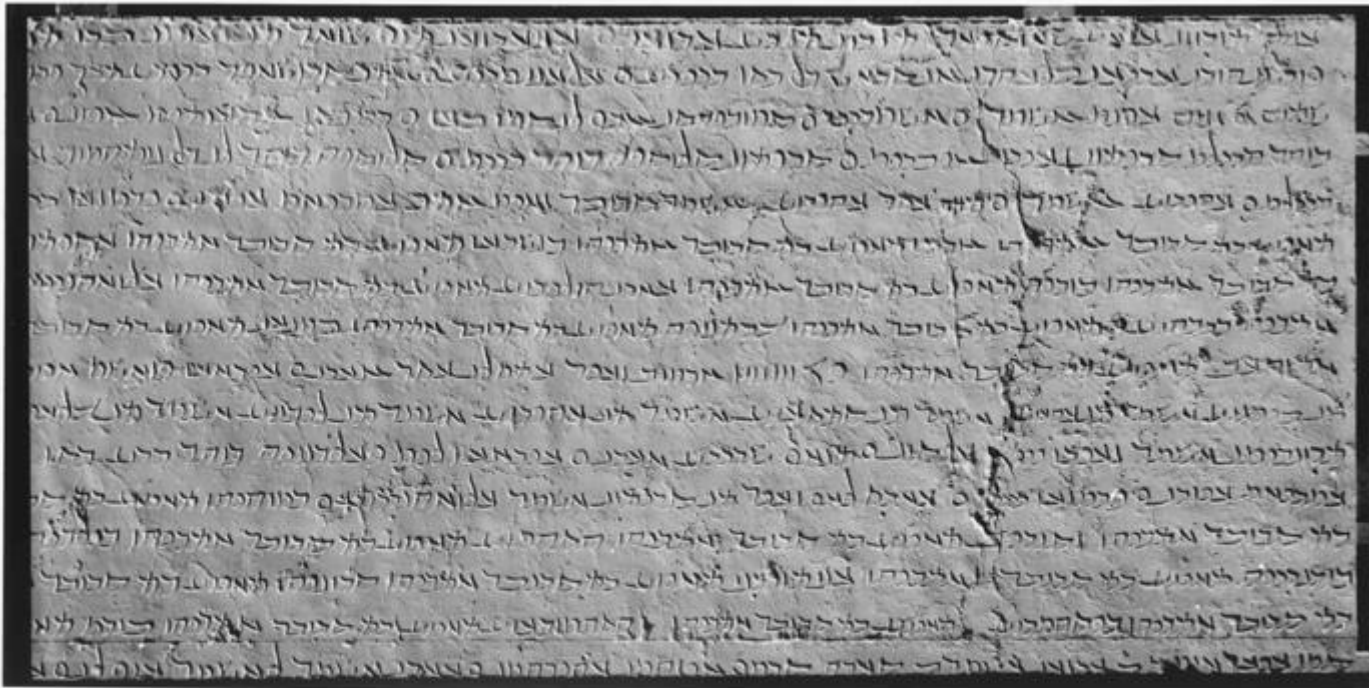
# Parthian



# Parthian



# Parthian




ORINST. PS-1a NAQSH-I-RUSTAM,  
IRAN. A PART OF THE PARTHIAN  
VERSION OF THE INSCRIPTION OF  
SHAPUR I ON THE WEST WALL OF THE  
TOWER.

# Languages spoken in the western part of the Silk Road

- Greek
- (Latin)
- Semitic languages:
  - Aramaic and Syriac,
  - Arabic,
  - Palmyrene, Nabataen, etc.

VALERIE HANSEN

S I L K      THE S I L K R O A D      R O A D



A NEW HISTORY