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Oasis States and Caravan Trade in Central Asia during Pre-Islamic Times(c. 3-9C.)

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Historical Background

The formation of the world history, with the whole area in the world closely linked, started in modern times under the hegemony of the West. However, in the pre-modern times, various parts of “the world” in Eurasia and north Africa have also synchronized occasionally. And, it was the Central Asia that played a major role to the synchronization of “the world”. It might be acceptable that Central Asia has linked its peripheral regions into closer relations with each other, as it has been located at the center of Eurasia.

In Central Asia, the oasis states and the nomadic states of the horse riding nomads lived together, the latter maintained military power and kept giving “the world” a big impact, the former has also had big influence on the east and west exchange of economy and culture through the silk road. In other words, Central Asia was a supply source of the horse riding nomads, who had strong military power to decide movement of “the world”, and the aorta that connected its peripheral regions.

The most active time of the Oasis states in Central Asia was during the 3-9th centuries, though the peak of the movement of the nomadic states was the domination of the world by Mongol in the 13th century. It was owed to the activities of such a Oasis states that Tang empire flourished on the east side, the Arab empire prospered on the west side almost in a simultaneous period (7-8C.).

I . Oasis states and Trade in Central Asia

1 . General idea on Oasis and Oasis State

Dry area occupies the central part of the Eurasian Continent. Especially, the Eastern and Western Turkistan is extremely dry. Huge desert lies to the south of Tianshan 天山-Syr Darya line (almost at the 43rd parallel of the north latitude). Most of the area is just desert, but green belts stretch along the rivers which derive from the snow water from high mountains. Those green belts are oases. First of all, an oasis can be defined as ‘a stretch of arable land’, with no regard to the scale.

Oases vary greatly in size, but closely resemble each other in structure. Every oasis has a village or town, sometimes a walled city at its center. Larger oases may have several such towns. These centers serve as market places for farm produce. In the larger centers, there are also artisans such as blacksmiths, carpenters, coppersmiths, cobblers, and wheel-wrights. Smaller centers, which cannot support many permanent shops,

have their market day on different days of the week and the merchants and artisans visit them in rotation.

Around these centers are the farms, each with its own homestead. An important function of an oasis center is the distribution of night soil to the farms as fertilizer, and the farms which are nearest to the centers and therefore receive the most night soil, form a zone of intensive garden cultivation, producing vegetables and fruits for sale to the nonfarming population. In Kucha, a fairly large oasis, fertilizer is generously applied within a radius of five miles from the center city. Within this zone there is one orchard of seventy-five acres which produced apricots as a cash crop for the market. Beyond this inner zone, the amount of fertilizer applied decreases rapidly, and two other zones may be distinguished. In the near one, rice, corn, wheat, and cotton may be grown and wheat and corn, when manured, may be grown in rotation. In the third zone practically no fertilizer is used and here hardier crops such as millet, kaoliang (sorghum millet), and potatoes are planted, and fallowing must be practiced. When some fields must lie fallow, the small farm is at a great disadvantage in competition with the larger farm. In this zone the cost of transport to market rises rapidly, and the price of land falls.

Beyond this third zone there is usually no water and the desert begins abruptly. Sometimes on the fringe of an oasis, however, there is a thin zone of grazing. Sheep are pastured here, and at the edge of roads, and in land within the oasis too rough for irrigation.

Oasis states were established in such 'stretch of arable lands' and their surroundings. Their economical ground was basically agriculture and pasturage. There was a limit in extending cultivated land, however, due to the amount of water flowing in to the oasis. Consequently, some inhabitants had to make their living not by agriculture or pasturage, but by trade and handicrafts. Therefore, it is easy to suppose that trade was very popular in the oasis states.

2. Oasis States around the Tarim Basin

Oases widely exist on the edge of the Tarim Basin, which is situated between the Tianshan Mountain and the Kunlun 崑崙 Mountain. In the center of large-scale oases, big cities such as Kucha 龜茲, Kashghar 疏勒, Khotan 于闐 were established. Oasis states once prospered placing capitals on those cities.

In the Hexi 河西 region, the western part of present Gansu 甘肅, oasis cities have existed since the Earlier Han period, and they have connected the Tarim Basin and the interior of China. The oasis states were established in those cities at times.

Each oasis state around the Tarim Basin was ruled by the king, the supreme ruler,

and the throne was passed down by succession. The famous examples are the Qu 麹 family of the Gaochang 高昌 and the Yuchi 尉遲 family of the Khotan Kingdom. The king, residing in the capital city, established the own ruling system and governed oases dotted in the territory.

In the beginning of the Christian era or thereabout, there existed a number of oasis states, counting 'thirty-six' or 'fifty-five', it is said, but later, they were integrated into about five main states, Gaochang, Karashahr 焉耆, Kucha, Kashghar, Khotan and Shanshan 鄯善.

The population of those cities normally reached tens of thousands, but it did not extend far beyond a hundred thousand. While the exact ratio of occupation is not acquired, high percentage of soldiers in population was a feature of the social structure. It is not clear, however, that those soldiers were career military.

Needless to say, though the merchants and the craftsmen existed in the city. However, the merchant did not socially occupy a special position in these oasis states, and we cannot confirm the existence of native merchants who conducted the long-distant overland caravan trade. I suppose that most of the merchants of the oasis states around the Tarim Basin were the local merchants who conducted their business only in the territory of the oasis state they lived.

Also, in these oasis states, Buddhism was eagerly professed. Large oasis states, such as Gaochang and Kucha, had thousands of Buddhist priest population.

And the taxes and labour services collected from inhabitants have been the main support of the finance of the oasis states.

In Turfan oasis, we can confirm that not only were households and temples treated as units of taxation, but taxes and labour services were also levied on landowners in accordance with the size of their landholdings. And the cultivation of extensive government-owned farmland and the maintenance of the canals that were the lifeline of the oasis were sustained by these taxes and labour services. Taxes and labour services were closely linked to the ownership of farmland irrigated by canals that were under the control of the government. This formed a distinctive model of taxation of an oasis state.

3. Oasis States in Sogdiana

Oasis states in Sogdiana (the Western Turkistan) had almost the same size of population as those around the Tarim Basin, though some of them were quite large in scale. However, they had some features not admitted in those around the Tarim Basin.

The king or lord, the supreme ruler, was not always a hereditary monarch, but a representative of the wealthy class. Oasis states formed a loose federation, with

Samarkand as the principal political power. The king of Samarkand claimed the title of 'King of Sogdiana, Sovereign of Samarkand'.

It is most remarkable that each oasis state produced merchants who conducted the long-distant overland caravan trade carried out over a very wide area.

It is said that the inhabitants of those oasis states were divided into three classes, the nobles (or the knights), the merchants and the handicraftsmen. Not only the merchants but the nobles were also involved in the commercial activities.

It is needless to say that the farmer existed around the city. However, it cannot be confirmed to have levied the taxes and labour services on them like the oasis states around the Tarim Basin.

And it is very interesting that Sogdian society was full of free and rational spirit. For example, according to contract document of marriage, it is possible for either party to divorce if the property decided beforehand was passed to the other party. Moreover, if either party was found guilty for a crime and became a slave, the other party and their children were not made to assume the responsibility for it. The status of women seen here is remarkable.

It is also remarkable that each oasis state produced merchants who conducted the long-distant overland caravan trade carried out over a very wide area.

What Sogdiana was located in a traffic strategic location that ran to north, south, east, and west was the background in which Sogdian trade activity was prosperous.

4. Caravan trade

Caravan is a famous word meaning a group of merchants who goes over desert, but Sogdian merchants were not using this word. Instead, they used Sart, a word that is derived from Sārtha of Sanskrit. But for convenience' sake, I use the word of caravan in this lecture.

Caravan trade was conducted over a very wide area and was carried out beyond the territory of each oasis state, connecting the distant regions. Therefore, from the viewpoint of oasis states, a caravan can be defined as 'a party of merchants who provided channels to the outside world'.

As mentioned above, Sogdian oasis states produced merchants who were engaged in the long-distant caravan trade. They dominated the caravan trade on the Silk Road. For the inhabitants of the oasis states around the Tarim Basin, they were basically foreigners coming from the outside world.

There was a clear distinction between the merchants who were engaged in the long-distant caravan trade and the local merchants who conducted their business only in the territory of the oasis state they lived in. First of all, the merchandise they

handled was different. The former dealt in the luxury goods such as slaves, silk, fur, gold, silver and so on. On the other hand, the latter dealt in the daily necessities.

And these two types of the trade admitted in oasis states make us recollect the theories of Pirenne, H. and Polanyi, K.. They pointed out that the international trade in the market called Portus was quite irrelevant to the regional trade in the market that was set regularly in region. In a word, Portus was a trade place for the long-distance trade opened toward outside, and it was completely different from the regional market limited to the trade at the daily life level.

Moreover, the caravan, which traveled across the desert, faced severe danger, regardless of the distance they traveled. For example, one caravan party lost almost 30% of its draft animals in round trip between Dunhuang 敦煌 and Hami 哈密. Caravan trade was a high risk, but it produced huge profit.

Also, the long-distant caravan trade conducted over a wide area should be considered as a kind of investment enterprise. Caravan is something like a mutual company managed by the merchants who conducted the commercial activities directly and the investors (kings, monarchs, high-rank officials, etc.) who expected profit.

II. Sogdian as international merchants (1)

1. Ancient Letters

There are documents, found to the west of Dunhuang, which show us a part of Sogdian commercial activities. They are written in Sogdian character and Sogdian language, and are called the 'Ancient Letters'.

One letter, written in not long after 311, was composed by a man called Nanai-vandak who lived in Guzang 姑藏 (武威 Wuwei) oasis and was addressed to Varzakk (and his farther Nanai-thvār) in Samarkand, Sogdiana. In the part [A] of the letter, following the greetings, Nanai-vandak wrote that the confusion had occurred in China (the invasion of nomads, the escape of the emperor from the capital and so on), and that because of the confusion, he hadn't heard from his local agents or subordinates in China and was not able to carry on the business related to China. He also mentioned the commercial activities in the Hexi region. The context of this letter so far should be regarded as a report on the business to Varzakk and Nanai-thvār. It is inferred, therefore, that Varzakk and Nanai-thvār were entrepreneurs and Nanai-vandak may have been their agent stationed in the Hexi region.

In the part [B] of the latter, Nanai-vandak asked for the management of money he left in Samarkand. He requested Nanai-thvār and Varzakk to entrust the money to someone for investment and to use the profit to raise his son he left in the homeland.

At the end of the letter(【C】), he wrote that he instructed the distribution of musk belonging to his farther who had already died.

2. Way of Trade

From this letter, it became clear that some Sogdian resided in the Hexi region as agents of Sogdian merchants or nobles in Sogdiana in order to carry out the caravan trade. It was important for the wealthy merchants or nobles in Sogdiana, such as Nanai- thvār and his son, to send agents there, because the Hexi region was a base for the commercial activities with China, which produced huge profit. Even in an unsettled situation, they kept sending merchants to China to promote trading business.

Moreover, it is known from this letter that there was the long-distance trade in another form, besides the long-distance trade managed by the agents stationed in the local for wealthy merchants or nobles in Sogdiana. That is, it was the long-distance caravan trade organized at each contract made by the investors and the merchants who conducted the commercial activities directly.

Fundamentally, the long-distant caravan trade conducted over a wide area should be considered as a kind of investment enterprise. Caravan is something like a mutual company managed by the merchants who conducted the commercial activities directly and the investors (kings, monarchs, high-rank officials, etc.) who expected the profit. The role of merchant was to gather the capital, to conduct the caravan trade, to return the principal and distribute the profit to the investors. The part 【C】 mentioned in the Ancient Letter was probably an example of such investment enterprise. And the merchants not only distributed the profit with the investors according to the invested amount of money after completing the business, but also sent the exclusive commodity procured in the local directly to the investor.

According to another documents, it also became clear that when Sogdian merchants conducted the long-distant caravan trade, they scarcely carried the same merchandise throughout the journey. They frequently conducted trades at oases on the way and made profit. And their business partners were usually Sogdian who settled in the oases.

3. Sogdian Settlements

For the Sogdian merchants, backing of Sogdian who settled in the oases was necessary to carry out the caravan trade. Therefore, they founded settlements along the caravan routes and at the destinations. Their settlements were usually established away from the central town in order not to be intermingled with other people. In big cities such as Chang'an 長安 or Luoyang 洛陽, they established their

own residential zone within the city wall and lived there.

Concerning the population size of those settlements, a settlement in Dunhuang had 300 households with 1400 people. Judging from this and other examples, the average population size of those settlements was several hundred households, except for one in big cities. Not all the inhabitants were engaged in trade, and there were farmers and handicraftsmen as well.

Sogdian settlements in China were ruled by community officials called sabao 薩宝. Sabao was a transcription of a Sogdian word s'rtp'w, which meant 'leader of caravan' or 'leader of merchants'. In the oasis state of the Gaochang Kingdom, an official called sabo 薩簿 existed. Sabo was probably a variant of s'rtp'w. It suggests that variants of the title s'rtp'w were widely seen in the oasis states as a title for the leader of Sogdian merchants. Under sabao, an official called silu 司錄 was appointed. Silu was a post for the record keeper or the chief scribe. In Gaochang, he was called ḡp'yrptw 'chief of scribes'.

In a settlement in Dunhuang, a xian 祆 temple (a temple of local Zoroastrianism) was built. Since many Sogdian believed in Zoroastrianism, such Zoroastrian temples must have built in other settlements as well. Those Zoroastrian temples were under the charge of ḡynptw, 'master of the temple'.

Those posts were not set up by the local ruler, but by Sogdian themselves to rule their autonomous settlements. Under the direction of s'rtp'w, ḡynptw and ḡp'yrptw were in charge of religious and secular life of inhabitants in each settlement.

4. Sogdian Commercial Network

Sogdian widely established their settlements along the caravan routes or at the destinations of trade to the east of Sogdiana. Sogdian settlements were set up not only along the oasis route, but also along the steppe route, which connects the Mongolian Plateau, the Kazakh steppe and the Southern Russian steppe. In China, settlements were found not only in the capital cities but in the local cities.

Those settlements functioned as commercial bases for the Sogdian merchants who conducted the long-distant caravan trade and supported their commercial activities. They were important not only for the caravan coming from Sogdiana, but for Sogdian merchants residing in the Hexi region as agents or business partner of the merchants in Sogdiana. Local Sogdian merchants in those settlements were also engaged in trade, and those settlements were of course their commercial bases. Sogdian settlements along the caravan routes were the place for trade as well the place to gather information.

The network of the Sogdian settlements covered a wide area from Sogdiana to China

in order to support the Sogdian commercial activities in the East. It worked as a commercial network for trade, transportation and finance until the first half 8th century when the Islamic power conquered Sogdiana. This network was also a network of informational and cultural exchange.

Some Sogdian who moved in China served as soldiers, and through the military service, they obtained high official ranks. This suggests that the Sogdian commercial activities might have had the backing of those Sogdian who went into the political world in China.

5. Tang Empire and Sogdian merchants

Probably, it was during the Eastern Han Dynasty that Sogdian merchants began to visit China, and from the Northern Wei Dynasty of the fifth century to the Tang Dynasty saw the surge of their activities. As mentioned above, they set up settlements along the roads for their caravans and in the destinations of their trade, and with those settlements as their bases, they made transactions. However, we can not overlook a big change in the situation of their settlements after the establishment of the Tang Empire.

In northern dynasty before Tang era, these Sogdian settlements were indirectly ruled through the s'rtp'w, but in Tang empire, Sogdian people in the settlements had become "baixing 百姓"(permanent residents enrolled on general household register) of the Tang, and the Sogdian settlements were incorporated in the administrative organization of Tang.

Moreover, in the Tang Empire, the communication artery system (consisting of post roads and canals) running all over the territory of the Tang Empire was established, enabling direct contacts between the capital city Chang'an of Tang Empire and Central Asian region. And Sogdian settlements were found in major cities along the post roads from the capital city to Central Asia and to Youzhou 幽州, Yingzhou 營州, Taiyuan 太原 in the Circuit (Dao 道) of Hebei 河北, Hedong 河東 in the empire's north and northeast(refer to the map behind).

It is needless to say that the complete metropolitan grid within the territory of the Tang Empire brought the personal movements and material circulation of the empire to a new height.

The region around the capital city Chang'an with a huge inhabitant population deserved the name of the largest consuming metropolitan of that time. With an enormous consumption need it attracted flows of commodities via merchants. Moreover, the domestic products in Tang China greatly flowed to the surroundings.

The peak of Sogdian commercial activities during 7th-8th centuries was formed under such a new situation occurred in the Tang Empire.

III. Sogdian as international merchants (2)

1. Sogdian in The Gaochang Kingdom

Before the establishment of the Tang Empire, it was important for Sogdian merchants to connect with the local rulers for maintaining their trade activities without difficulties. On the other hand, it was necessary for the local rulers to be tied up with Sogdians for acquiring not only economical wealth but also the western culture and information. Such affiliations had been completed in various places before the Tang. The good example of the connection between the king of an oasis state and Sogdian is that of the Gaochang Kingdom of Qu family.

A basin called Turfan lies to the south of the eastern part of the Tianshan Mountain. The nomadic power of the north and the Chinese power of the east had fought over this basin since the Han period, but in the 5th period, Chinese who migrated to this basin established an independent kingdom. Dynasties frequently changed at first, but Qu family came to the throne in the beginning of 6th century, and their regime continued until the conquest by the Tang in 640. A series of those Chinese dynasties is the oasis state called the Gaochang Kingdom.

The Gaochang Kingdom placed its capital in a walled city of Qara-khojo and ruled over 20 oases in the basin. In an oasis city called Toyuq, situated to the east of the capital, a Zoroastrianism temple was found. Sogdian settlement was probably established in this oasis. Sinicized Sogdian probably did not live in this settlement and were intermingled with Chinese.

In this Kingdom, how were Sogdian merchants from abroad conducting their trades?

There is a document, found in Turfan, which was a contract for the sale of a female slave. A female slave from Samarkand was on sale at a market in the capital, and the vendor was a Sogdian and the purchaser was a Chinese monk living in the Gaochang Kingdom. The contract closes with the names of Sogdian witnesses and the signature of ḡp'yrptw "the chief scribe" to approve the contract.

The vendor was not a merchant living in Turfan, but a caravan merchant from Samarkand. It is well known that Sogdian caravan carried both male and female slaves.

Judging from their name, witnesses were probably non-sinicized Sogdian. They must have been inhabitants of the Sogdian settlement in Turfan, considering their role as witnesses. This suggests that ḡp'yrptw was also a Sogdian living in the Sogdian Settlement in Turfan.

Political and social systems of the Gaochang Kingdom derived from those of China.

In China, contracts were drawn up when slaves and livestock as well as real estate were dealt, and the official approval was needed to conclude the contract. On the document mentioned above, $\delta p'yrptw$ signed to approve the contract. However, such signature was not usually found on the contract when the vendor and the purchaser were both inhabitants of the Gaochang Kingdom. Therefore, it is supposed that the document mentioned above had the signature of $\delta p'yrptw$ on it, because it was drawn up under a special situation which the trade was conducted between a local Chinese and a non-inhabitant Sogdian, and the local Sogdian had to guarantee the contract.

The Gaochang Kingdom imposed a commercial tax called *chengjiaqian* 称價錢 on the trade of luxury goods. This tax was imposed on each merchandise according to the amount of dealings. It was collected from both vendors and purchasers, and their name was written on the register submitted to the king. Judging from their names, the trade was usually conducted by Sogdian merchants. Even when a non-Sogdian merchants took part in the trade, the merchant he dealt with was Sogdian. Therefore, the commercial tax called *chengjiaqian* can be defined as a tax imposed on the trade of luxury goods conducted by Sogdian merchants. Such trade was conducted not at the market for the domestic trade but at the special market set up to control the external trade.

In the Gaochang Kingdom, a special market for the external trade was set up in the capital city. The trade was usually conducted by Sogdian merchants. However, when the trade was carried out by the Sogdian merchant from abroad and the local Chinese, the local Sogdian had to work as intermediary.

2. King and Sogdian

As mentioned above, in the capital city of the Gaochang Kingdom, a special market for the external trade was set up, and a commercial tax called *chengjiaqian* was imposed on the trade according to the amount of dealings. The tax was collected in silver, and the revenue was sent to the royal treasury. This suggests that a part of the royal finance depended on the Sogdian commercial activities.

Probably, a passage tax was also imposed on Sogdian merchants. Passage controlling system of the Gaochang Kingdom is not clear, but the oasis state of Kucha set up checkpoints and checked the travel pass in order to watch their passage.

It is remarkable that some Sogdian served king as officials in the Gaochang Kingdom. They were appointed the post of *shilang* 侍郎 whose job was to assist the king in both political and non-political affairs. It is known from a document excavated from Turfan that a Sogdian who was appointed *shiliang* went to the adjacent oasis state to transport cargo, using official ox-drawn carriages with the approval of the king. This

suggests that the king, or the royal family, and Sogdian were allied to conduct the commercial activities.

Sogdian merchants were of great importance for the rulers of the oasis states. They were a subject for taxation, and at the same time, they played an important role in supporting their finance. Sogdian were also a transmitters of information, because of their commercial network. It is no wonder, therefore, that many states, including oasis states, sent Sogdian as ambassadors to abroad.

Sogdian mission from the oasis state was basically sent by the king, and the foreign trade in alliance with Sogdian was probably on the initiative of the king. Sogdian merchants sent as a mission brought king the huge profit, and the king augmented his prestige with the wealth. Especially, the caravan sent as a tributary mission to China provided a good opportunities for the long-distant trade which produced huge profit.

Since they traveled a long distance, such caravan also was a high risk. In order to send missions to conduct trades beyond their own territory, oasis states around the Tarim Basin had to make an alliance with other oasis states by marriage, or they had to depend on the greater political power, such as the nomadic power of the north or the Chinese power of the east, for security.

Oasis states in Sogdiana, the homeland of Sogdian merchants, established their commercial network and produced international merchants, connecting and being allied with such neighboring powers.

3. An epoch-making change to the commercial activities of Sogdian merchants under the Tang Empire's rule

In 7th century, the Tang Empire's rule extended as far as the oases in Turkistan and exercised effective control over this region. And such a Tang rule brought an epoch-making change to the commercial activities of Sogdian merchants.

First of all, we can point out that the commercial tax in the market was abolished with the transit tax under the Tang Empire's rule. Needless to say, this became a major advantage for the trade activities of Sogdian merchants.

And then, before the establishment of the Tang Empire, Sogdian merchants were needed the permissions of the rulers in the oases when coming and going in the oases, however, with the foundation of the Tang Empire, the restrictive factors previously seen to accompany wide-scale movement of Sogdian merchants were fundamentally swept away. In the Tang, with a communications network forming the various connections between the capital and all cities including Central Asia set up in regular, the institution of passage authorized by the state, which managed public and private travel, came to function substantively.

As I mentioned before, the Sogdian communicational mechanism, which had been established long before, was reinforced by the transit system of the Tang Empire. And this transit system supplied two kinds of traffic travel permits called guosuo 過所 and gongyan 公驗 installed and perfected by the Tang Empire. Through the examination of Turfan documents, it became clear that gongyan guaranteed the passage within the territory of any prefecture(local city) and its validated period was limited in accordance with that of the official journey. In contrast, the guosuo passport, having no limitation of spatial and temporal validity, was issued for journeys of greater scope than the territory of a prefecture, that is, whole territory of Tang empire. This Tang travel permits enabled Sogdians to complete long-distance travels, communication and transportation with speed and safety.

In principle, the administration of the Tang Empire did not permit foreign merchants to frequent the Empire. However, Sogdian merchants were an exception. With a pass guosuo gained in Central Asia, a Sogdian merchant who had nothing to do with diplomatic missions could come to Chang'an without difficulty. Within the complete traffic network of the Tang Empire, Sogdian merchants, no matter whether their residences were in China's inland or not, could make transactions while keeping close contacts with the authorities of different prefectures who were authorized to grant guosuo. And Sogdians as the "baixing 百姓"(permanent residents enrolled on general household register) also acquired this guosuo, however, it have been extremely limited.

Moreover, in 8th century, the growth of the military economy, that is to say, delivery of military supplies to the garrisons stationed in Central Asia, expanded to an enormous scale. The military supplies practically all consisted of silk levied as tax, whence they were transported to depots at Liangzhou(Guzang) for transshipment and then successively were sent to the army garrisons stationed in Central Asia. And by utilizing the trade merchants (not only Sogdian merchants but also Chinese merchants) whose activities spanned Central Asia, huge scale transportation of military supplies could be guaranteed. Because these military supplies(silks) functioned as money, a kind of war(munitions) boom happened for that in Central Asia.

The golden age of the silk roads trade(the commercial activities of Sogdian merchants) arose in these conditions under the Tang Empire's rule.

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Quiz

I. Oasis states and Trade in Central Asia (Dec. 12)

1. What is the cause for which Sogdian merchants used not "caravan" but "sart"?

II. Sogdian as international merchants (1) (Dec. 19)

1. How did the Sogdians conduct their long-distance trades?
2. What did the establishment of the Tang Empire bring to the activities of the Sogdian merchants?

III. Sogdian as international merchants (2) (Jan. 9)

1. In what background, the silk roads trade (the commercial activities of Sogdian merchants) was prosperous during 7-8th century?

