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Sogdian Traders and Others along the Silk Roads

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Some terms

Zoroastrianism/Mazdaism (Mazdeanism): the ancient religion, historically, of speakers of mostly Iranian languages; currently practiced mainly in Iran, India and the diaspora (US, UK, Australia).

Adherents are called *Zoroastrians* or *Mazdayasnians (Mazdeans)*. We will make a distinction between Zoroastrians in Sasanian Iran and Mazdeans in Sogdiana.

Avesta: a collection of texts that originated in oral form as early as the 2nd millennium BCE when Iranians were still in Central Asia. Its oldest part is the "Old Avesta," which consists of the *Gathas* and others texts and is contemporary with the Oldest Indic texts, the *Vedas*. The "Young(er) Avesta" comprises texts probably from the first half of the 1st millennium BCE when several Iranian tribes migrated into the area of modern Afghanistan and the Iranian plateau.

Avestan texts were transmitted orally and not written down until (probably) the early 7th c CE and onward, although the earliest manuscripts known are only from the 13th and 14th centuries.

Ossuary (ostodān: "bone-receptacle"): a container for the defleshed bones of the deceased after removal from the *dakhma* (a high open-air setting; in Islamic times, "towers of silence") where the corpse was exposed to scavenger birds.

Sabao: leader of a Sogdian (and other Central Asia) community in China.

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