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**Archaeological Evidence of the Literary  
Contacts along the Silk Roads**

Usually the archeological material is not very important for the historians of literature because the specialists in this field are able to study great many written and oral sources and only small additions to their conclusions may be given by those archaeologists who have found illustrations to some of the texts. The interconnections between the literary traditions of Greece and Iran, Iran and India, India and China in the early middle ages are well known, however there are many blank spots on the map because from all Central Asian regions we have only fragmentary texts, representing mostly the religious but not secular literature. Several short fragments of the Sogdian tales were published by Walter Bruno Henning and some other sogdologists. These texts had been found in Xinjiang, and it is difficult to say how typical they are for Sogdia (the country around Samarkand) because in the metropoly the cultural situation was not the same as in the eastern settlements of Sogdian emigrants.

Fifty seasons of excavations in Panjikent in Tajikistan change the situation radically (this archaeological site lies just near the modern town with the same name in the Zarafshan valley). In the rooms of Panjikent building there are great many murals with illustrations to epics, fables, fairy tales and so on. The dates of the secular illustrative cycles vary from the 6th to the first half of the 8<sup>th</sup> century. (The red spots on this analytic plan of the ancient Panjikent are the rooms with murals. Among them there are many reception halls in the private houses). After several decades of study late Professor Alexander Belenitsky and the present author have recognized among these murals illustrations to 42 stories.

In every Panjikent reception room there were compositions of three different kinds: the great scene of workshop on the wall opposite the entrance, the long I meter high friezes in three registers and the lowest frieze half-a-meter high. In several rooms high friezes were occupied with the epic illustrations whereas the low one was divided into a lot of rectangular compartments with an illustration to some short story in each of those.

First of all, I will speak on the illustrations to these short stories. The date of these illustrations is about AD 740. Among them there are the illustrations to Aesop's "Fables" one of those you can see now. This is a fable of the goose with golden eggs. The owner is stabbing the bird in order to get all its gold together, but there is no gold in the goose!

The pessimistic moral of this fable is typical for Aesop's philosophy. In great many folk tales with this motif the killer of the bird became a king, such a happy end has an Iranian version too. For all folklore traditions the happy end is necessary, and that is why we can say: in Panjikent we see the illustrations to literary text and not to some oral folktale. Therefore the Sogdians had a hook with Aesop's "Fables". Henning has recognized another Aesop's fable in one of the Xinjiang sogdian texts. There are more "Aesopian motifs" in Panjikent but in those cases we cannot say whether this is actually Aesopian or the folk tales were illustrated by the painters. The other famous collection of stories is the "Panchatantra". There are several Indian versions of this hook. In the 6th c, AD Burzoe translated one of them into Middle Persian about AD 750. Ibnu'l- Muqaffa' translated the text of Burzoe into Arabian. His version is the famous "Kalilah and Dimnah". In Panjikent there are several illustrations to the "Panchatantra", which are slightly earlier than the "Kalilah and Dimnah". Ibnu'l- Muqaffa' mentioned that his book had been illustrated so one may think that the Sogdian painters were inspired by some book illuminators. The story of the lion and the hare we meet on the wall of the Panjikent house and in many medieval manuscripts. The story tells that the Lion saw its own reflection in the well. "It is your rival" – say the Hare. The Lion jumped into the well for fighting and perished there.

Now you see the same episode but in the 14<sup>th</sup> century Persian manuscript. Henning has written that most of the Sogdian tales had been translated from Middle Persian or Parthian. Burzoe's text might be known in Sogdia and the Panjikent painter could illustrate some Sogdian translation of that Middle Persian Sasanian version. However in Panjikent one can find the illustrations to those later recensions of the "Panchatantra" which are far from the Indian prototype of the "Kalilah wa Dimnah". The story of the wise men and the dead tiger belongs to this group. It is represented in the murals in two different Panjikent houses.

In one of these murals there are three men, a tiger, attacking one of them, and a corpse of some tiger below. In the "Panchatantra" four Brahmans found the bones of a lion. Three of them were extremely learned whereas the fourth Brahman was ignorant but rational. The first Brahman put the bones in order and restored the skeleton, the second recreated the flesh, skin and blood. The third one had an intention to raise the lion from the dead. "Don't do it because this lion will kill us" – cried the rational Brahman. However, the third learned Brahman raised the lion from the dead, and the beast ate him first and his friends after him. But the rational Brahman climbed onto the tree and saved himself. "Common sense is better than Science: It is the moral of the story. How actual is this idea today! In both Panjikent versions there are only three Brahmans and the tiger instead of the lion. However one can see that the Sogdian story

was connected only with some Indian source and had no Sasanian (Middle Persian) prototype. Only much later in the fourteenth century this "Panchatantra" story was borrowed by the Persian author of the first "Tuti-nameh" who lived in India and knew some Indian languages. Many Panjikent illustrations have no identic counterpart among the texts.

For example, I show this slide. You see the blacksmith in his workshop. His helper is an ape who is killing its master with a hammer. The wish of the animal was good because it wanted to kill only a fly on the master's head. This is one of so many stories about the dangerous foolish friends. The ape is an animal typical for the Indian stories of this group, but in the "Jatakas" and the "Panchatantra" the man is not a blacksmith.

One of the Indian stories illustrated in Panjikent twice, is the tale of the chief of monkeys. This story was widespread in India (several literary and folklore texts with its different versions were published). There are also two Persian variants in the "Sindbad-nameh" and the "Letter of Tansar".

Both of them had the Sasanian (Middle Persian) prototypes of the 6<sup>th</sup> century. The "Sindbad-nameh" story is most similar to the subject of the Panjikent mural.

The main hero of this story is the chief of the monkeys. From their hill he saw how a maiden played with a ram. "We must leave this hill" – said he to his people – because her habit is dangerous for us. However, only he and his wife were wise enough and departed (you see them in the left part of the screen). The other monkeys stayed on the hill. Once the maiden sat in front of the fire-place, the ram suddenly butted her. She strokes it with her poker. It is wool enflamed. The burning ram ran to the king's elephants, and they also were burned (These events are depicted in the right part of the composition. The preservation of this part is very poor, but the fire-place, the sitting woman, the ram, running from her, the legs and trunks of two elephants above the ram, and the yellow tongue of flame between the ram of the elephants are visible). The king sent his warriors to catch monkeys and extract their father best remedy for the elephants (there are two figures of the king and his counselor – in the centre and a figure of the warrior, putting a monkey into the cauldron, you can also see the tongues of flame below the cauldron).

Only one composition can be an illustration to the Sogdian text a fragment of which has been published by Henning. The fragment has preserved the beginning of the tale whereas the mural has preserved two episodes of its middle part. The end of the text is unknown yet. In the text the old man who was in the ship during the terrible storm, promised the first that he would meet in the native land to the spirit of the Ocean. The storm stopped. Then the man thought: "my beloved daughter may meet me first".

In the right part of the screen you see an Indian old man and a girl. In the left part there are the same girl at the sea-shore, the Spirit of the Ocean in waves and two dolphins near him. It is easy to reconstruct the events: the old man sent his daughter to the shore of the ocean and the Spirit of the Ocean appeared before her.

In this case the Sogdian text is partly preserved, but the origin of the story must be Indian, because the ocean is far from Sogdia and the appearance of the old man is Indian. There are no illustrations to Chinese stories in Panjikent. However those Indian stories which are known only after their Chinese renderings are present there. You see the drawing of the 6<sup>th</sup> century mural with a figure of the milkmaid, holding an empty pail and going away from the cow. The subject of this mural may be Story 2 from the Chinese “Sutra of a Hundred Parables” (Pai ju chin) which was compiled in the 5<sup>th</sup> century.

There is also the earlier Chinese translation of the same story (see the “Different Parables Collected from All Sutras” Story 6). This is a story of a fool who did not milk his cow during a month. His intention was to save the milk inside the cow and extract it at the moment when his guests would come. The Indian appearance of the fool's wife or servant depicted by the Sogdian painter is obvious.

The mural from the 8<sup>th</sup> house is an illustration to the story of a wise judge. You see the judge seated on the folding chair with the ruler, the balance and the measured vessel before him. There are also two litigants here. One of them gives some yellow ball-like object to the judge.

I know only the Russian translation of the Chinese folktale the plot of which may be similar to the subject of this painting. In this tale the porter (the right figure in the mural) sold an ingot money changer. The latter paid him less than the price of so heavy piece of gold. However after a moment the money-changer recognized that the ingot was not golden. Then he said to the judge that the porter deceived him with the fake. The judge took the ingot from the money changer (This moment is depicted by the painter) and the price of the ingot from the porter. After balancing the judge said: “The money-changer bought the other ingot because this one is too heavy for its price. Therefore the porter is not guilty” (note, please, the Indian appearance of judge). Near the right vertical border of this panel you see the part of the neighbouring one with figures of a jackal, a wolf and a bear.

Now I show the whole composition. The battle of the horsemen is depicted here but in the left part of the field there are these three animals. Among them only the jackal is still alive, but the wolf (below) and the bear (above) are killed. I do not know the whole story but

there is one Pamirian (Sarykol) folk tale with the same motif: in that tale a shahzadeh has strange allies: three beasts and a hawk.

I cannot even list all illustrative compositions in the lowest friezes. The examples which have been discussed today, have demonstrated how important is Panjikent archaeological data for the comparative history of the parables and folk tales. The upper registers are very interesting too. Among the epics, illustrated by the Panjikent painters, there is the heroic tale about Rustam's Seven Exploits. This cycle was published several times, and I want only to remind you this famous work of art.

This is the Rustam hall M in the Hermitage museum (Saint-Petersburg). In the lowest register you see the rectangular panels which have been demonstrated in the first part of my paper.

Above them in the long frieze the figure of the warrior on the bay (in the painting red) horse is repeated several times. He is the protagonist of the epic; you see Rustam and his men before the first battle. In the Sogdian text Rustam is a solitary hero, but this painting, illustrating another Sogdian version. You see Rustam lassoing his adversary whose name in the "Shahnameh" is Avlad. This is the single combat with the dragon. One detail is important: the red and white colour of Uno: li Il-Rakhsh (the word "Rakhsh" is the denomination of such a colour). The leopard-skin attire of Rustam (his palangin jamch in the Shah-nameh "and pardanak charm" in the Sogdian "Rustam fragment" is important for the attribution of the hero too.

Here you see victorious Rustam after the battle with the dragon. The head of Rustam has no analogues in Sogdian and Sasanian art. As Richard Frye told me about twenty years ago in the Hermitage Museum this type of heads is typical for the coins of the Hephthalites who were the masters of Zabul. In the "Shah-nameh" Rustam's dominion are Cistan and Zabul. It is possible that the Panjikent mural had the southern prototype. Maybe not only the iconography reached Panjikent through Tokharistan, but the text which was known in this town came from the South too. There is a flying fantastic being before the face of Rustam. This being is placed before his face several times.

The winged lion with its dragon's tail must be the celestial protector of Rustam. So we see Simurgh or Senmurv who helped Rustam and his father Zal. It is different from so-called Sasanian Senmurv. The other heroes are shown with their own celestial protectors.

You see the quite different dragon in this mural from the same hall, but from the upper register. In another house there is a cycle of illustrations to the story of the unknown hero, who killed the three-headed demon and liberated the girl. In the part of this composition

which you see now, there are figures of the enthroned king, the kneeling couple (the hero and the girl before him). And Rostam who stands near the king's tent. He wears the Jeopardy kafetan typical for him. His role in this story is enigmatic but I am sure that he played a part in some early epic which was forgotten in the time of Firdowsi. Among the epic cycles there are illustrations to the fourth book of the "Mahabharata". Belenitsky and the present author suggested this interpretation in 1981. Literon Gregory Semenov wrote a special article, confirming it.

Most of the epic subjects of the Panjikent murals are local without any analogues in Iran or India. I wish to show you only one example of such murals. There are two scenes with the same heroes in the part of the long frieze which you see on the screen now.

Instead of the gate of the castle there is a Sogdian text. Vladimir Livshits has here read the names of the heroes: Thwenak and Bagy.

These names are completely new for the history of Iranian literature. I hope that the further investigations in Panjikent will supply us with new illustrative murals which will be important not only for the archaeologists and art historians, but also for the historians of the world literature.