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Edition of Sogdian epistolary fragments discovered in Turfan as well as a wide-ranging comparative analysis of Sogdian epistolary formulae.

An important part of the Sogdian corpus which have come down to us as epistolary texts: both the earliest substantial Sogdian documents (the Ancient Letters) and the early substantial nomad corpus found in Turfan itself (the Magh documents). The Turfan collections of (locally) Berlin, Kyoto, and St. Petersburg, also preserve a number of letter fragments. Altogether, these texts attest different phases of a Sogdian epigraphical tradition spanning over some seven centuries. The edition and analysis of both well-preserved and fragmentary texts can contribute to efforts to reconstruct parts of these traditions—and eventually connect them with those of Central Asia and Iran more broadly. The first part of this work is an effort to present a comprehensive edition of the Sogdian epistolary fragments in the Turfan collections of Berlin, Kyoto, and St. Petersburg. In the second part a comparative study of Sogdian epistolary texts is undertaken, based on the edition made in the first part, together with previously published work on other Sogdian epistolary corpora, including studies of layout, external addresses, and stamps. Additionally, an appendix by Simone-Christian Raschmann contributes to the larger study of epistolary culture in Turfan with the edition and study of three Old Turkic fragments (two letters and one order) which shed light on the use of stamps.

Adam Benkato is a Humboldt Fellow at the Freie Universität Berlin and was previously a researcher at the Turfanforschung, Berlin-Brandenburgische Akademie der Wissenschaften.

Edition of Sogdian epistolary fragments discovered in Turfan as well as a wide-ranging comparative analysis of Sogdian epistolary formulae.
This volume completes the publication of the Christian Sogdian texts of the Berlin Turfan Collection begun by F. W. K. Müller in 1909. Several Syriac texts also included, in particular a series of liturgical texts in Syriac with Sogdian rubrics (edited in collaboration with J. F. Coakley).

The texts edited here are mostly short but extremely varied and interesting. The Syriac biblical fragments are some of the earliest surviving witness to the liturgy of the “Church of the East”, though the Sogdian rubrics accompanying them show that those who performed them were not native speakers of Syriac. Other texts connected with the liturgy include a Sogdian version of the Gloria in excelsis and a text explaining how to calculate the date of Easter or Lent. Hagiographical texts which accompany them show that those who performed them were interested in the practice and traditions of monasticism, and in particular a series of liturgical texts in Syriac with Sogdian rubrics (edited in collaboration with J. F. Coakley).

Nicholas Sims-Williams is Emeritus Professor of Iranian and Central Asian Studies at SOAS University of London. His research is focused on Sogdian, Bactrian and other Iranian languages of pre-Islamic Iran and Central Asia. His research focuses on the ascetic life. This volume contains an edition and translation of all the texts, most of them previously unpublished. Mostly preserved in the Berlin Turfan collection, these unique texts were unearthed in the Turfan region and in the vicinity of Dunhuang. Comprising a range of administrative records and other documents with links to the postal system, they provide multiple snapshots of its operation at a local and regional level. Their study therefore enables us to examine the postal system from a completely different point of view than that found in previous reconstructions, which tended to focus on narrative sources. Exposing administrative strata and regional nuances, the work sheds new light on this vital aspect of imperial Mongol rule. The book concludes with a bibliography, indices and tables of concordance. This work will be of interest for specialists in Turko-Mongolian studies, medieval Central Asian history, information history and the study of imperial Mongol rule.