
[All of the following reviews are by
Daniel C. Waugh]

Morris Rossabi, ed. and introd. *From Yuan to Modern China and Mongolia: The Writings of Morris Rossabi*. Leiden; Boston: Brill, 2014. vii + 701 pp. ISBN 978-90-04-28126-4 (hardback); 978-90-04-28529-3 (e-book).

There are many reasons to admire Morris Rossabi and this collection of his essays, even though, as I shall suggest in conclusion, one might wonder about the rationale for the publication of such a large and expensive collection of previously published material. Starting back with his dissertation project and the string of important articles that began to appear building on it more than four decades ago, as any major scholar should do, he raised serious questions about the then accepted master narratives about Chinese relations with and attitudes toward the outside world. As he explains in his introduction to this self-selected collection of his writings, he then went on to other important (some of them related) topics, including the study of the history of religious minorities in China (specifically Muslims and Jews), the history of the Mongols and in particular that of the Yuan under Khubilai Khan, and then the modern history and current affairs of Mongolia itself. It is rare to find a scholar with this chronological and thematic breadth of interests with the impressive command of languages and such a well developed analytical acuity in the treatment of his sources. Some might wonder how or why a scholar whose initial specialty had been what we might loosely term “medieval history” would or should end up writing about current affairs. I guess I would argue that choice only strengthens the overall quality and perceptiveness of his work in general.

Importantly, his knowledge of the earlier history provides a depth to his analysis of recent events that most commentators on them cannot begin to match.

Not the least of the reasons for admiring his work is his skill in writing not just for stuffy academics but in a way that is accessible and in part deliberately aimed at a general audience. My sense is that, over the years, specialists on the subjects he knows so well have somewhat marginalized his work, because he deliberately avoids indulging in abstract theoretical constructs and thus comes across as somewhat “old-fashioned” in his approach. Analysis and judgment there are, but always clothed in good narrative prose. Of particular value in this regard is his appreciation of how biography can reveal some of the important historical developments he discusses. He cares about his people and tries to help us understand them. Hence his excursions on Mongol women, on Ming specialists in foreign affairs, his biography of Khubilai, and his evocative sketches of the lives and thoughts of modern Mongols based in the first instance on interviews and memoirs.

Finally, amongst the reasons I so value Morris Rossabi is his commitment to public education. He is one of the most generous of colleagues in this regard, a real *mensch*. He has contributed to many museum exhibits, to educational websites, and to the creation of teaching and learning resources for schools. Scholars should be concerned about sharing with more than the handful of other scholars who work in their fields, but how many display the kind of commitment Morris has shown, which goes beyond the college classroom?

The volume under review contains a number of those seminal essays which require us to re-think older ideas about a lack of interest in China in foreign trade and far-off places. The chronological focus here is the Ming, where it has been all too easy for earlier scholarship to note the brief outward-looking enterprises such as the Zheng He expeditions into the Indian Ocean but then highlight the friction with Timur (Tamerlane) and, as the 15th century wore on, the closing of minds and borders as the Ming allegedly turned inward. Connected with such views is another of the broader misconceptions in historical and popular literature about the Silk Roads: the idea that the opening of the European sea routes to the East at the end of the 15th century led to the rapid and fatal decline of the overland trade. Rossabi’s approach to dealing with these issues in the first instance was to mine the Ming sources for evidence about diplomatic and commercial exchanges of the Ming with their northern and western neighbors in the first century or so after the dynasty took power. This evidence then suggests a different conclusion: that the Ming were very concerned about overland contacts in Asia, that there were a lot of diplomatic and commercial exchanges,

and that even as we move into the 16th century, at least the shorter-distance caravan routes in Inner Asia remained active.

To appreciate these arguments, the reader might wish to start here with the more recent overviews Rossabi has written (essays 1 and 6) before going back to the more detailed earlier ones (essays 2-5). Essay 7 is one I always assigned to my students over the years, on the alleged “decline” of the Central Asian caravan trade, since it presents so clearly the argument that internal politics of Inner Asia and the rising protection costs for keeping caravans safe, rather than European maritime ventures, were the real cause for the diminution of the long-distance trade.¹ Those who still glibly place an end to the Silk Road at the end of the 15th century would do well to read this article, first published a quarter century ago.

Having so praised it though, I would offer a few words of warning. As Rossabi himself admits, we have precious little hard data to document the rise and fall of economic undertakings along the trade routes. In the first instance, his arguments here seem to hinge on what is generally known about political disruption and the indications in the Chinese sources that fewer and fewer diplomatic missions were being undertaken. Rossabi also is emphasizing what he sees as a decline in long-distance trade, even though he admits that shorter-distance exchange seems long to have prospered. We might ask (as has, for example, Valerie Hansen in her controversial book on the earlier history of the Silk Roads) how really important (ever) was long-distance trade in an environment that might always have favored shorter-distance exchanges linked into something larger. So I guess I come away from Rossabi’s essay wondering whether we might not want to take a fresh look at the subject, examining more closely the evidence we have for the 17th century and beyond about overland routes and products (the ones through southern Siberia and across the northern steppe routes get short shrift here, for example). Moreover, it is essential that we learn more about the interrelationship between the overland and maritime routes. While Rossabi notes that there continued to be strong demand in the Middle East and eventually in Europe for Chinese porcelain, at times he at least seems to imply that the overland routes were perhaps the primary ones involved in its transport. It would be easy to correct that mis-perception. Possibly my concern over such matters and this particular article reflects the fact that I am currently deluged with questions from middle-school students writing on the Silk Roads for History Day. Among those questions is inevitably the one of when the Silk Road ended. I tell them the answer (as I think Morris Rossabi so clearly has helped us to appreciate) is far from a simple one.

Another section of Rossabi’s collection that I find of particular interest includes his work on the Yuan and more generally the Mongol Empire.² Here his essay on the women in Khubilai’s family is a classic, one surely not superseded by a recent commercial book on Mongol women. Rossabi’s work on Rabban Sauma’s mission to the West is likewise significant, since too often the focus of attention on Mongol-era travelers has been on those who went East, and, moreover, the importance of the Church of the East (a.k.a. “Nestorians”) has been under-appreciated.

Of course here, as in the case of the Chinese missions to the Timurids, one would dearly love to have readily available for teaching and learning not just Rossabi’s analysis but also at least good excerpts from the texts themselves. Only some of the essential “primary source” texts are currently available on line and few in the best recent translations; one important one we lack in that form is Ch’en Ch’eng’s description of his mission to the Timurid court at the beginning of the 15th century, from which Rossabi translated the key part, a translation available only in print form or at a price.³

While I had read through Rossabi’s recent substantial book on modern Mongolia,⁴ in some ways the most compelling parts of his collection here are the essays based on the research and interviewing he and his wife Mary did there with some of the very interesting figures who bridged the pre-Communist, Communist and now post-Communist periods. The interpretive thrust of Rossabi’s work on modern Mongolia has been to criticize severely the impact of “shock therapy” approaches imposed by outside institutions in the post-Communist period. What these life stories reveal is a rather complex mix of the good and bad in ordinary lives in all of the modern era, where one has to be inspired by how people adapted and survived, even flourished despite all the obstacles there were to overcome.

The final section of the book has some short “pedagogical essays” which are useful as a reminder of how all this interesting history might productively become part of our school curricula in an era when it can be very difficult to get students to look beyond their friends on Facebook. These essays though are but a thin reflection of the substantial effort Rossabi has devoted to public education.

So the book is worth having and reading, no question. But who in fact is the audience, and can we expect it will ever be much used? I think a collection like this has to raise serious questions as to the rationale for such books in an era when there is such rapid change in communications that are affecting how people access information, the role and budgets of librar-

ies, and the traditional economic models that have prevailed in the publishing industry. Brill, which has a distinguished record of being a leading publisher of new scholarship and essential reference works in often “exotic” fields of “non-Western” history, continues to publish some of the most important scholarship for anyone interested in the Silk Roads. By pricing its books at a high level, presumably it can cover costs of small editions bought by few; we can be thankful for this, in an era when university presses seem increasingly to let the bottom line dictate what they will or will not even consider tackling, unless they receive large subsidies. The crunch here comes when even major libraries, their budgets shrinking, often feel they cannot afford the pricey volumes; certainly most individuals cannot. While Brill does offer discounts for subscription, including subscription to e-book versions of many of its publications, the list price for the e-books is the same as for the hard copy ones (in the case of Rossabi’s essays a princely \$295.00). Yes, one can order electronic reprints of individual chapters at something like \$30.00 a pop, but that still is not necessarily going to attract many takers. So, where do we turn? Authors often circulate privately electronic versions of their chapters or essays, which may be the only easy way to obtain them unless one is connected with an academic library that may have a mechanism for obtaining such copies.

Where a book such as this one contains only reprints then, the question arises, are there other ways of obtaining the original articles? In fact, libraries with a wide range of electronic subscriptions (but restricted in access), such as my university library, enable me to obtain on-line nine of the 27 essays. All four of the pedagogical ones are freely available on-line from the sponsoring institutions. And, of course, most (granted, not all) of the rest can be found on the shelves here in Seattle. I suppose for many not near a major library, interlibrary loan is an option, but it comes at a cost. Among the essays in the Rossabi collection, the modern Mongol biographies may be among the most difficult to get, but I suspect that for all but a few readers, Rossabi’s good book on modern Mongolia and its tribulations will suffice. So, should I recommend this book to our library? In good conscience, probably not, unless it can be obtained at a steep discount (eventually, I can donate my review copy). That the book has Rossabi’s autobiographical essay and a bibliography of his publications is hardly enough enticement. The articles have been newly typeset with continuous pagination, which is nice, but there is no indication of any significant changes from their original content, and the few, largely non-essential photographs in the pedagogical essays are so poorly reproduced as to be of little interest. Having the index here though is a real plus.

At very least, the book clearly cannot serve to make Morris Rossabi’s work more readily accessible or better known to most who might wish to read it. Which is too bad, since his still vigorous scholarly and pedagogical contributions are so deserving of our attention. Ultimately, I think open source publishing is the only way scholars may be able to hope in the future that their work really be available to a wide audience, if in fact they care at all about its being so.

– DCW

Notes

1. “The ‘Decline’ of the Central Asian Caravan Trade,” in: James Tracy, ed., *The Rise of Merchant Empires* (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Pr., 1990): 351-70.
2. It is impressive that his *Khubilai Khan: His Life and Times* (Berkeley, etc.: Univ. of California Pr., 1988) has been translated into seven other languages, is available in Braille and has been reprinted several times.
3. “Ch’en Ch’eng’s *His-yu fan-kuo chih*: A Translation,” *Ming Studies* 1983: 49-60.
4. *Modern Mongolia: From Khans to Commissars to Capitalists* (Berkeley: Univ. of California Pr., 2005).

Hermann Kreutzmann. *Pamirian Crossroads: Kirghiz and Wakhi of High Asia*. Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz Verlag, 2015. 559 pp. ISBN 978-3-447-10449-4.

This magnificent volume deserves the attention of anyone interested in the mountain knot of Central Asia that we call the Pamirs. The book brings together the author’s work of nearly four decades in the area that encompasses what is now northern Pakistan, northeastern Afghanistan, eastern Tajikistan and southwestern Xinjiang.¹ While it is hard to know these days whether disciplinary labels are very meaningful, Kreutzmann holds a distinguished position as a geographer at the Free University of Berlin. His approach to “geography” combines study of the natural environment, cartography, history, ethnography, political economy, and more. Most importantly, the book distills what he has learned on the ground – the map of his travels in the region between 1977 and 2015 (p. 13) makes one think that no one previously has ever so thoroughly explored the difficult terrain, where he has not just passed through but also spent significant time living with the Wakhi and Kirghiz in order to learn about their lives.

The historian, and especially one interested in the early history of the region in the era of the so-called Silk Roads, might well ask what here demands attention. The author does invoke Xuanzang and Faxian, but there is little on the (granted, still limited) archaeology in the region. He obviously knows the extensive

work on the rock art and inscriptions that have helped to document the “capillary” routes through the mountains connecting south and Inner Asia.² But that is not his subject, although much of what he does provides a comparative perspective which may help us to understand aspects of the early history and interactions across these landscapes.

He provides here what is probably to date the most thorough mining of the record of early (and more modern) European exploration and description, much of it based on archival research.³ The bibliography contains several pages of citations to the files in London. I had the experience years ago of writing a short essay that drew on some of the British files to paint a picture of trade through this region in the early 20th century, only to discover Kreutzmann had done it all much more thoroughly than I ever could have imagined (in an article I had not seen).⁴ Curiously his bibliography here has no explicit listing of text files in most of the other archives he indicates he has consulted. Even though he credits personal information from Russian colleagues, a good deal of Russian material was being translated by the British a century ago, and there are a good many published Russian exploration accounts, I have to imagine there is a lot of interest still to be had from the Russian archives, some of it still locked away from scholarly scrutiny.

In relying on this kind of evidence, he is very explicit about the fact that the Europeans depended heavily on local informants and guides. Wherever possible, he emphasizes the observations and viewpoints they provided. He certainly is aware of the post-colonial criticism of Eurocentric treatments of such material, but then, sensibly, he does not flog that issue and instead takes a practical approach of mining the sources for every last bit of information they contain that cannot be found elsewhere. Readers should be warned though that his approach is to quote in extenso and provide multiple variants from different observers in sequence, even if, arguably, some of what is quoted might well merely have been summarized. A few of the quotations are in German or French, usually with some explanatory summary but no translation. The result is almost overwhelming, but then it hugely enhances the value of the book as a lasting reference source.

His excavations in the archives have brought together a fascinating array of early photographs and sketches and, thanks to Markus Hauser’s Pamir Archive Collection,⁵ what has to be the most complete collection anywhere of historic maps of the region. Supplementing the historic photos are his own and those of professional photographers who have recently visited in the region. Unlike in many books where

captioning to illustrations is limited, here the captions, often long, enhance the value of the images, pointing out particular details that merit attention. This is especially useful with the maps, where for most readers, their significance may not be immediately obvious and where on some, the internal captioning is not in English.

Indeed, one of the pleasures of the book is its design, all Kreutzmann’s doing, though his wife, Sabine Felmy, who has also done important scholarship on the region and accompanied him in much of the travel, is indicated as co-editor and well deserves the book’s dedication. Such close attention to visual presentation and integration of images both to enhance the general appeal and make the material meaningful for the reader is something other authors and publishers might well emulate. Maps (usually their absence) are a prime example of this. Apart from the historic maps that are reproduced in color and usually occupy full, large-format pages or a two-page spread, Kreutzmann has created numerous maps and diagrams to illustrate specific points. Even though some are small, they are all very clear.

As a geographer (if one thinks of that designation in a now dated and narrow sense of the term), Kreutzmann is certainly interested in the physical environment of the region, where he emphasizes that the ecology of the often widely separated areas which the Kirghiz and Wakhi have occupied in many respects is quite similar. However, what emerges from his study is in fact a nuanced picture of differences. Some of his elegantly designed maps include graphics illustrating regional variations in temperature or precipitation, which may explain the different local economies. He makes it clear though (see his explicit criticism of Ellsworth Huntington’s geographic determinism, p. 345) that ecology is less important than “politico-societal developments” in explaining the different trajectories in the histories of the local Kirghiz and Wakhi. The patterns of settlement and interaction that existed before the establishment of modern state boundaries and the imposition of state-sponsored projects of modernization were very different from what then has emerged in modern times. The response to this interruption of traditional patterns has most often been migration; in their new homes, to which Kreutzmann has followed them, the lives of the Kirghiz and Wakhi have fundamentally changed. The livelihoods and to a noted degree, the spatial distribution of those who remained behind also have changed.

Much of the history here then is that of the impact of Great Game rivalries, the settlement of state boundaries, and the quite different emphases of state policies (Afghanistan and Pakistan representing one extreme,

Russia/USSR and China another). He is familiar with various analytical models for understanding the impact of the modern state, but as with the matter of post-colonial criticism, he does not belabor the reader with details of what those involve. Of course some of his material is hardly new (he gives appropriate and ample credit, for example, to M. Nazif Shahrani's pioneering study of the Kirghiz), but then Kreutzmann has updated and extended all the earlier work in part by personal observation and extended interviewing. If one wishes, it is easy enough to skip over the exposition of the often misguided modernization projects such as collectivization, and learn instead from the personal histories and descriptions of daily life here what the result of those projects was.

As a curious traveler on the Silk Roads, where I always have felt experiencing the terrain and the people, even through the distorting lens of modernity, is essential to my appreciation of the earlier history, I have been privileged, however briefly, back in the 1990s, to visit some of the areas that are the focus of Kreutzmann's book (see the photos appended below). I am still in his debt for an introduction he provided that got me into the Baltit fort in Hunza when it was under restoration. I just wish now I could turn the clock back, having absorbed this volume (weighing in at nearly 2.8 kilos, it is far too bulky to stick in a backpack or carry on a mountain bike), since it would have opened my eyes to a great deal that I missed as I visited the Kirghiz in the mountains south of Kashgar, went through Tashkurghan and Dafdar and down through Hunza. Much has already changed just in the

last couple of decades, but to his great credit, we now have a solid foundation for any future study of the Pamirs and some of the people who live there.

– DCW

Notes

1. His publications, listed in the bibliography, include many articles in journals such as *Die Erde* and *Geographical Journal*, in various edited collections and a substantial monograph, *Ethnizität im Entwicklungsprozess. Die Wakhi in Hochasien* (Berlin, 1996).
2. For example, his valuable edited volume, *Karakoram in transition. Culture, development and ecology in the Hunza Valley* (Oxford etc., 2006) includes an essay by Jason Neelis, who has studied that evidence. I first learned about such studies from papers at a conference in Islamabad which Kreutzmann had brought to my attention in 1995.
3. For those who want a concise overview of explorations in the heart of Asia, I recommend Kreutzmann's "Der weisse Fleck auf der Landkarte—geographische Forschungsreisen entlang der chinesischen Seidenstrasse im Umfeld des 'Great Game'," in: *Reise zur Verbotenen Stadt. Europäer unterwegs nach China. Eine Ausstellung der Universitätsbibliothek 16. November-12. Dezember 2004. Katalog*, ed. Rainer Plappert. Erlangen: Universitätsbibliothek, 2004: 75-94.
4. See his "The Chitral Triangle: Rise and decline of trans-montane Central Asian trade, 1895-1935," *Asien-Afrika-Lateinamerika* 26/3 (1998): 289-327.
5. On the Pamir Archive, see Markus Hauser, "Aufbau einer Pamir-Datenbank" linked at his website <<http://www.pamir-adventure.com/pamirarchive/hmc2000.pdf>>, and his "Das Pamir-Archiv und Kartenprojekte im Pamir," in: *Wakhan: Talschaft zwischen Pamir und Hindukusch*, Ed. Robert Kostka (Verlag der Technischen Universität Graz, 2011): 57-65.

Glimpses of the Pamirian Crossroads

The Pamir Kirghiz, here at Subashi near L. Kara Köl, Xinjiang



Photos 1996 by Daniel C. Waugh





Returning to Subashi from the summer herding camp.

Photos 1996 by Daniel C. Waugh



Lake Kara Köl near Subashi.



Kirghiz hospitality, upper Karatash Valley.



Photos 1995 by Daniel C. Waugh

Families at Dafdar in the Sarikol region (Taghdumbash Pamir), Xinjiang. A break during the winnowing. Dafdar was founded as a Wakhi settlement in 1894, though today it has a mixed population including Tajiks and Kirghiz. See Kreutzmann, esp. pp. 392–96.





Looking toward the eastern end of the Wakhan Corridor from Sarikol, south of Dafdar.

The northeastern approaches to the Khunjerab pass.



The challenges of life and travel in the Pamirs: (above) looking toward Gulmit in the Hunza Valley, Pakistan, in 1995, before the landslide of 2010 which continues to block the river, resulting in flooding of the lower town and cutting of the Karakoram Highway.



The approach to Karimabad in the Hunza Valley.



Photos 1995 by Daniel C. Waugh

The challenges of life and travel in the Pamirs: (left) decaying remains of an old suspension footbridge over the river at Gulmit in 1995; (above) snaking across the upper part of the photo, the perilous footpath (rafik) clinging to the cliffs high above the Hunza River not far from Karimabad.

Akademicheskaiia arkheologiia na beregakh Nevvy (ot RAIMK do IIMK RAN, 1919-2014 gg.). [Otvetstvennyi redaktor-sostavitel' E. N. Nosov]. S.-Peterburg: Dmitrii Bulanin, 2013. ISBN 978-5-86007-764-5. 416 pp. + 88 photo plates.

This large-format official chronicle of the Institute for the History of Material Culture of the Russian Academy of Sciences (IIMK RAN) is the continuation of a two-volume publication issued in 2009 to celebrate the 150th anniversary of the founding of the Imperial Archaeological Commission. The chapters in the current volume, which takes Russian archaeology (at least as practiced by the members of the Institute in St. Petersburg) through the Soviet period and up to the present are at least nominally authored for the most part by the division heads within the Institute. There are surveys of the major regional or thematic divisions (Central Asia and Caucasus, Slavonic and Finnish, Classical Culture...) and surveys of the work of the special laboratories and the archive. Much here is documented by citation of the Institute's archive.

While I have found some parts of this valuable tome even a decent substitute for my usual bedtime fare of detective fiction, readers should be warned that a great deal (notably in the section on Central Asia and the Caucasus) is little more than an annotated listing of what expedition under whom went where and when, usually with some summary statement about its major discovery. For details, one obviously would have to go to published reports, if they exist. What redeems the prose are the many biographical sketches and the unvarnished comments on the tragedies of the period of the Purges and the impact of shock therapy on the budgets after 1991. I have always felt that for us to appreciate fully the monographs and collective studies we read, we really should know as much as possible about their authors. Of course the biographies here are short — about what one would expect in an encyclopedic dictionary — but they are nonetheless revealing about the routes many of the famous (and also many lesser-known) archaeologists in St. Petersburg took to arrive at a prominent place in their profession.

Comments about individuals can be surprisingly frank, witness the treatment of Mikhail Konstantinovich Karger (1903–1978), one-time head of the Institute, who is known for his big volumes on the excavations in Kiev and his work on Novgorod. The judgment seems to be that he was and still is respected for his scholarship, at the same time that he was a pluperfect SOB in his dealings with colleagues and especially the underlings whom he exploited and did not credit when he incorporated their work into his own. An example of the latter is Marianna Vladimirovna

Malevskaia-Malevich (née Dement'eva) (1918–2011), daughter of a *sibiriak* and a French woman, who first studied in the ballet school in Leningrad, and while she never became a ballerina, “her uncommon grace never left her even in her old age” [redkostnoe iziashchestvo ne izmenialo ei dazhe v glubokoi starosti]. She completed the work for a *kandidat* degree in the history of architecture but never defended the dissertation, not for its lack of quality. In fact, Karger in essence preempted the defense by incorporating a lot of it in his volumes on Kiev, never even mentioning her in those books. She was not the only one of his “assistants” whom he never would let off the leash to publish their own work. After the appearance of his first volume, she finally quit his tutelage and then managed to carve out a career working with other noted scholars and independently, leaving her mark on the study of the architecture of the 13th and 14th centuries.

Of course in the Stalin years, most promising careers were derailed, all too often ending tragically. Among those arrested in the 1930s were S. I. Rudenko, M. P. Griaznov and S. A. Teploukhov. The first two survived (Rudenko because his knowledge of hydrology was put to use when he was sent off to work on the infamous White Sea Canal) and went on to produce extremely important work in the archaeology of Central Asia and southern Siberia. Teploukhov, who had done significant excavation in, e.g., Mongolia, committed suicide while under interrogation in 1934. In 1936, Karger, who had been working with G. F. Korzukhina in Novgorod, was with her accused by Novgorod colleagues of destroying artefacts, although it appears to have been a trumped-up case mainly so that the Novgorodians could get rid of the obnoxious Mikhail Konstantinovich. N. N. Voronin (later known for his work on Vladimir-Suzdal' architecture and at the time Korzukhina's husband) intervened on behalf of the accused, but what seems to have saved them, as Karger later would recall probably with some glee, was the arrest of their accuser. Thus Karger finally received his *kandidat* degree (which the affair had postponed). He served as a volunteer during the War in the *politotdel* of the 8th Army outside Leningrad; perhaps it is significant that one of the photos in the book shows him in his military uniform.

There is much more here to be learned about the Institute and its history (I have but skimmed parts of the book). Readers should be warned though that it is in a sense a very narrowly focused volume. Important as the Institute was and is, it has been only one of many organizations in the Soviet and post-Soviet period doing archaeology in that former imperial space. So, for example, we learn about the beginnings of the excavations in Sogdian Panjikent (Tajikistan) inaugurated by

IIMK archaeologists, one of whom, Valentina Raspopova, continued to work there when the direction of the excavation was turned over to her husband, Boris Marshak, based in the Hermitage. What Marshak accomplished is left for the Hermitage to tell. There are only occasional hints here about the sometimes strained relations with the equivalent Academy of Sciences Institute of Archaeology in Moscow. The book laments the breakup of the Soviet Union, which then meant that archaeology in Central Asia came under the purview of the academic institutions in the newly independent states. V. A. Alëkshin, writing about the work of his department covering that region, has no qualms about stating that, apart from the value of exchanging scholarly expertise, the contacts between the Russian and non-Russian scholars “will assist in preserving the areal of the Russian language and in the final analysis will facilitate the preservation of the cultural and political influence of Russia in that region” [pomogut sokhranit’ prostranstvo russkogo iazyka i v konechnom schete budut sodeistvovat’ sokhraneniui kul’turnogo i politicheskogo viliianiia Rossii v etom regione]. Surely a statement to warm the heart of the current Russian head of state. Thus there is little here to reveal what such administrative and political changes meant in terms of accomplishment at the sites whose excavation extended through these decades. Similarly, while various international initiatives are touted — including a growing number of working conferences — we never learn who the foreign archaeologists were or what their Russian colleagues might have learned from them.

In some ways, the most delightful part of the book is the archival photos. A great many are formal portraits of unsmiling academics. There are occasional photos of work at excavations and formal group pictures. Over time though, one sees some of the stiffness soften — hints of a smile or even a broad grin (such as that on T. S. Dorofeeva in 2003, where she is wearing a crown of wildflowers). In 2007, E. V. Bobrovskaia posed with a bunch of vegetation in one hand and the other around the neck of the camel she is hugging. That archaeologists did and do have fun while on a dig, for all of the hard work it involves, is not surprising. And to emphasize the importance of the social interactions and informal gatherings by members of the Institute, the concluding essay is N. V. Khvoshchinskaiia’s “Ne naukoï edinoi” [Not by scholarship alone] which recalls the many “kapustniki” [student/staff parties] and publishes some of the verses that would be declaimed at such gatherings. The economic pressures following the collapse of the Soviet Union in fact undermined a lot of the collegiality and interaction, only some of which now has been revived, as the institute members had to scramble to find outside

work to supplement their meager salaries.

I for one wish I could have made the personal acquaintance of many of the archaeologists highlighted in this book. Except maybe Karger.

[Copy of review first posted to H-EarlySlavic 9 October 2015]

—DCW

The Silk Road: Interwoven History. Vol. I. *Long-distance Trade, Culture, and Society*. Ed. Mariko Namba Walter and James P. Ito-Adler. Cambridge Institutes Press; ACANSRS: Association for Central Asian Civilizations & the Silk Road Studies, 2015. xxvi + 374 pp. ISBN 978-0-9910428-0-7.

This is a very promising beginning for a new venture, where three subsequent volumes are promised, dealing respectively with Buddhism, Islamic societies, and languages in Central Asia. As an editor, I can appreciate why it took some four years to get the first volume in print, given the obvious attention to detail and, as is hinted, a fair amount of editorial re-writing. The time-line for the subsequent volumes to appear is some six years. I must leave it to others to provide a detailed review, but here are some brief, preliminary observations.

The opening essay (“Mapping the Silk Roads”), by geographer Tim Williams, ostensibly is to introduce the Silk Road mapping project which he has supervised for UNESCO and the International Council of Monuments and Sites (ICOMOS), whose full report is now available on line. His essay here so clearly encapsulates many of the larger questions that anyone interested in the silk roads should ponder, it merits being readily available on-line, assigned to students in the burgeoning number of courses on the Silk Road, and read by those who blythely invoke “Silk Road” for any and all purposes that have nothing to do with whatever it was in history.

Most of the other contributions to the volume do an excellent job of surveying important topics which too often have been slighted in studies of the Silk Roads. While he insists he has limited goals (given an increasingly extensive literature on the Parthians), Leonardo Gregoratti’s “The Parthian Empire: Romans, Jews, Greeks, Nomads, and Chinese on the Silk Road” will open new doors in particular because of what it tells us about the Jews. The important and too often neglected Jewish presence on the routes across Asia is the subject of Ulrike-Christiane Lintz’s “Judaeo-Perisian Tombstone Inscriptions from Djām, Central Afghanistan,” which makes available a nice sampling of the actual inscriptions, after contextualizing and

summarizing the body of them currently known. While much has been written on Palmyra and its trade (notably by Michal Gawlikowski, who is generously drawn upon here), Eivind Heldaas Seland ("Palmyrene Long-distance Trade: Land, River and Maritime Routes in the First Three Centuries CE.") not only provides a good overview but contextualizes the subject with reference to ecology and offers new perspectives on the relationship between maritime and overland routes. While her essay is one of the more narrowly focused ones in the book, Rachel Mairs' "Heroes and Philosophers? Greek Personal Names and their Bearers in Hellenistic Bactria" serves as a good reminder of how important linguistic analysis and learning about naming practices are if we are ever to hope to fill in some of the lacunae in the more accessible kinds of sources often tapped in Silk Road studies. In particular, she is interested in how these data might enable one to determine the ethnic composition of local populations, but then the cautionary note here is that the choice of personal names may reveal nothing about ethnicity and instead tell us about some other aspect of local culture.

How one might periodize the so-called Silk Road and its history is a matter that calls for serious re-examination. This comes out in Bin Yang's "Cowry Shells and the Emergent World Trade System (1500 BCE-1700 CE)," a somewhat revised reprint of an article first published in the *Journal of World History*. Clearly both in chronological and geographical scope, the use of cowries in exchange and with important ritual purposes as prestige objects was very extensive. Since so much of his discussion concerns their use as money, it would have been helpful to have had at the outset a clear indication of how one might proceed to determine monetarization. One of the loose ends the author admits is so far difficult to tie off with hard evidence concerns how cowries came to be so abundant in Shang China, if the source of them was the Indian Ocean. At most here, he can suggest some vague notion of their being traded over Inner Asian routes.

Michael Laver's "Silver and Silk in Japan's Trade with Asia in the 16th and 17th Centuries" should prod readers to re-consider when and whether the Silk Road came to an end on the cusp of the early modern era and also to recognize that integrating Japan into histories of the Silk Road is a necessity (something that, of course, Japanese scholars have not ignored, even if too often others have).

How one can most effectively introduce ethnographic research into Silk Road history is a good question. Gerald Roche's "The Mangghuer Nadun: Village Ritual and Frontier History on the Northeast Tibetan Plateau" is a model of nuanced interpretation about

cultural complexity, clearly informed by theoretical perspectives and an understanding of how to use historical data. Unfortunately the same cannot be said for Djamilya Kurbanova's "The Musical Culture of Turkmenistan: From Ancient Merv to Modern Times" and Borbala Obrusanszky's "Nestorian Christianity in the Ordos in Inner-Mongolia."

One can appreciate the careful editing here, resulting in very readable text and proper bibliographic citation, even if one has to wonder occasionally about omissions of important literature. As an editor, I know that critiquing one's own writing often is a challenge. Mariko Namba Walter, who deserves accolades for the project, might have done better with her own introductory essay. The decision to include a good many illustrations, embedded within the essays, not grouped as an insert, certainly is laudable, though, given the smallish (normal book) format, it would have been better for clarity to have run many of them full page. Also, to reproduce Internet-quality images is not always going to meet the standards of resolution needed for sharp printing.

May the promised next volumes in this series appear without undue delay and prove to be as stimulating as is this first one.

— DCW

Susan Whitfield. *Life along the Silk Road*. 2nd ed. [Oakland, CA:] University of California Press, 2015. xx +288 pp. ISBN-13: 978-0-520-28059-5.

Susan Whitfield, the overworked and ever prolific head of the International Dunhuang Project (IDP) at the British Library, was writing the first edition of this book at the time when, late in my career, I was first "discovering" the Silk Road. In the intervening years, where my void in knowledge has gradually been filling, even if one might judge the glass is still largely empty, her perspective on the subject has also been evolving significantly. Not the least of the virtues of her engagement with the subject is the fact that she tries to visit so many of the locations that were important in that long history; in the last 15 years, the scope of her travel has been truly impressive. A personal acquaintance with the geographical and cultural contexts (even if in their modern configurations) contributes a great deal to one's ability to contextualize meaningfully the earlier history. Unlike many who write on the Silk Roads, she also brings to the task an informed sensitivity about how to employ evidence from the arts and objects of material culture.

The distinctive feature of this book is her attempt to create for the general reader a sense of life in earlier times through a series of lightly fictionalized syncretic portraits of individuals who might have then existed. These are “types”—a merchant, an official, a soldier, a nun...—whose experiences as related here involve encounters with the history and cultures we can actually document from the surviving evidence. So, most of what we have here is fact, carefully researched and massaged to create a narrative. Whereas the first edition (and its paperback reprint) lacked notes, one of the main differences in the second edition is that we now have nearly forty pages of them, providing leads for further reading and demonstrating just how assiduously Whitfield has done her homework. The notes include references to work more recent than the original 1999 edition, reflecting the fact that in the last decade and a half, “Silk Road studies” have proliferated, and the new research is forcing us to re-think some of what we thought we knew two decades ago. Some re-writing in the original chapters incorporates this new knowledge.

The expanding world of Whitfield’s Silk Road has also resulted in new chapters here, moving the story beyond her initial East and East Central Asia focus, even though the bulk of the book retains that earlier emphasis. So we open with an Axum merchant involved in the maritime trade through the Indian Ocean, and later we encounter a learned Arab looking at his world from Isfahan, a world that has in fact been documented in some of the important geographical works of the late first millennium. The brief, new epilogue is very different from that in the original edition, pointing the reader ahead into the later centuries of the Silk Road, even though by conscious choice, Whitfield has not altered the focus of the book on the last two and a half centuries of the first millennium. As with the earlier edition, the narrative is enhanced by a good number of well-chosen illustrations, many line drawings by the author depicting original artefacts, others photos, some in color, where the selection now is rather different from that in the original edition. Now, for example, there are several Islamic book illustrations.

In a brief review I wrote of the original edition, I expressed some qualms about its fictionalization, which struck me as somewhat awkward and artificial. In taking a fresh look, I am less bothered by that issue. However, if anything, in the new sections, general readers may be more challenged. While feeling it important to provide the historical documentation in the notes, the author seems also to have fallen into wanting to put a little too much detailed historical narrative into the text. The result is to move away from trying to create compelling personal case histories to more of a

textbookish attempt to be sure there are enough definite historical reference points to cover the bases. Of course as a historian, I should applaud this, but I think this runs the danger of undercutting the appeal of the book, which by all accounts achieved her goal, if its adoption in courses on the Silk Road is any indication. Few attempts to distill the Silk Road (whatever exactly that is) for a general audience have been very successful, Whitfield’s book being one of those rare exceptions.

In a world where interest in the distant past seems to diminish under the more pressing political and economic concerns of the present (which perversely result in diminishing support for meaningful education in the humanities), we need ever more and more imaginative such attempts to catalyze inquisitiveness about earlier and for most, culturally very different times. Teaching and learning about the Silk Roads thus offers a challenge and a wonderful opportunity.

— DCW