



SOGDIANA I. THE NAME

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i. The Name

The name of the ancient and medieval land around [Samarqand](#), which is usually rendered in European languages as Sogdiana, Sogd, or Sogdia (sometimes written with *gh*, as commonly in the German adjective *soghdisch*), has been attested in a series of mutually related forms in many languages of Antiquity and the Middle Ages, including Sogdian itself. These attestations have been collected recently by Xavier Tremblay (p. 133); for Chinese names, see details by Kurakichi Shiratori (esp., p. 143) and Kazuo Enoki. A short outline may be presented as follows:

1. The forms similar to **suyd-* / **suyδ* are found in Avestan (*Suyda*), Old Persian (*Sugda*, *Suguda*), Akkadian (*Su-ug-da*), Elamite (*Šu-ug-da*), Greek (*Sughdianē*), Latin, Syriac, Parthian, Old Turkic (*syd'q*, *soydāq*, see Kāšgari, s.v. *syd'q*, *soydāq*), Bactrian (family-name *Sogdokano*, see Sims-Williams, 2000, ag2-3, which can be either a transcription of a Sogdian name or a local Bactrian development; *Sogdianagoon* a Bactrian inscription from [Afrāsiāb](#), the site of medieval Samarqand in the heart of Sogdiana; see Livshits, 2006, p. 71; see below, 4, for a different form), Pre-Tang Chinese **Su-yi* (粟弋; Old Chinese pronunciation *sʰuk-dʷək*), later *Sute* (粟特, Early Middle Chinese *suawk-dək*), Tibetan *sog-dag* (Kumamoto, p. 296), Tumshuquese Saka *sudana* (cf. Henning, 1936, p. 13, with the remark of Konow in n. 3), Arabic (*Ṣoġd*, *Soġd*), Persian (*Soġd*,



- never with the final “d” in Persian or Arabic) and Sogdian itself.
2. The form **s(u)γuδ-* with an added vowel in the second syllable or **sγu* with metathesis (cf. Gershevitch, sec. 421) is found in Old Persian, Sogdian, and possibly in Chinese Sage, Suoge, Xue-ge (薩索薛 葛; Tang-time pronunciation **sat-kat*, *sak-kat* and similar; see Pulleyblank, pp. 343-44; Kiyohiro, pp. 59-60; these forms, however, do not agree with the vocalism of the original and, moreover, are applied not to Sogdians of Sogdiana, but to a Turkic tribe with supposed Central Asian origin, so their relation to the name Sogd is open to question).
 3. **subd-* **suβd-* **sovd-* **sūd-* was in use in Middle Persian, from which terms were also borrowed into medieval Greek, Syriac, Armenian (while ***swtʿyk* in Sogdian is a ghost-word; see Yoshida, 2003, p. 37 n. 4).
 4. **Suyl-* is found in the Chinese form Suli (速利, *sawk-lih*, Tang times), in the Manichean Middle Persian rendering *swylyy*, and in the Bactrian place-name Bonosogoligo, if it means “land (*bono*) of a Sogdian.”
 5. **Sūl-* is attested in Sanskrit (Puranic *śūlikā*, see Gauthiot, p. 542, de la Vaissière, pp. 74-75, n. 15, 18), Niya Prakrit, Khotanese (*sūl(i)ya-*, probably corresponding to Tang Chinese Hu “western barbarian, [Sogdian] trader”; cf. Emmerick, p. 149, Kumamoto, pp. 191-19, 291-29) and Xuanzang’s rendering Suli (窣利, Early Middle Chinese *Swət-lih*).
 6. The Avestan form *suxδəm* (*Yt* 10. 14; *AirWb.*, col. 1582) with the voiceless “x” standing apart. Old Iranian forms witness that it was a thematic *a*-stem, while in Sogdian only suffixed forms are attested, which do not permit any decision of whether the stem was light or heavy, but from a formal point of view one would expect the former; moreover, the adjective *sγwδyʿnʿk* has the suffix *-yʿnʿk*, which is attested otherwise only attached to *ʿyk-* “?” and *kš-* “Kesh” (Sims-Williams, 1992, p. 44), the first stem is probably and the second one definitely light.

Several proposals have been made to etymologize the name Sogdiana, but none is accepted universally. As early as in 1877, Wilhelm Tomaschek (pp. 74 ff.) proposed deriving it from Old Iranian **suxta-* “burned, pure, holy” (as in Ossetic *syǰdæg*), and this etymology was repeated in several later major reference works. However, as soon as Sogdian was deciphered, it became clear that Old Iranian **xt* normally developed into a cluster which was always spelt with the letters <γt> in the Sogdian national alphabet, and never <γδ>, while we always observe δ in the form *swγδ-*/*sγwδ-* (see Szemerényi, pp. 34 ff.; Livshits, 2003, p. 80 n. 15; Tremblay, p. 134). Oswald Szemerényi’s suggestion (pp. 39-40) that **sugda-* is a syncopated form of the earlier **sukuda-*, which is,



in its turn, an anaptyctic variant of **skuda-* “archer, Scyth,” meets a serious hindrance in the fact that the Old Iranian cluster **sk* remains *sk* in Sogdian (Tremblay, p. 134).

O. I. Smirnova (1963, pp. 24-26, following a remark by Vjatkin; cf. also Khromov) proposed linking the land-name with the Persian (and Tajiki) *soğd* meaning “low-lying ground where rain-water collects” and “low-lying swampy place; tilled locality rich in flowing water” (so in Tajiki, where it is pronounced *suğud*). This word occurs in Persian dictionaries, modern North-Tajiki dialects, and a few medieval texts from Transoxiana. Although from the geographical viewpoint, the middle and lower part of the Zarafšān valley perfectly falls within this denomination, the absence of any comparanda, etymology and early attestations of Persian/Tajiki *soğd/soğod* renders Smirnova’s suggestion questionable (rather, the opposite, the land-name *Soğd* with its abundant waters is responsible for the Persian common noun? cf. *Jayhūn* “the River Oxus,” used also in the sense of “large river” in several classical Persian texts; see Lurje, 2006, pp. 414-15). *Soğoti / soğdi*, the name applied today to the agriculturalist population of the lower parts of the Hissar and Kaška Daryā valleys by their neighbors (see Oransky, p. 151; Karmysheva, pp. 56-59), probably originates in Tajiki *soğod*.

Mention should also be made of Xavier Tremblay’s suggestion (esp. pp. 134-35) that **suγδa-* represents Old Iranian **suxθa-*, a parallel form for **suxta-* “burnt.” The development of **xθ* into *γδ* is regular in Avestan, but since there is no other example known so far of how **xθ* was realized in Sogdian, Tremblay’s etymology remains hypothetical as well.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

see [Sogdiana ii](#).