A note on the Syriac and Persian sources of the pharmacological section of the Yōuyáng zázū

[Una nota sobre las fuentes siríacas y persas de la sección farmacológica del Yōuyáng zázū]

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Resumen: Este artículo trata acerca de las palabras siríacas y persas registradas en transcripción china en la sección botánica del Yōuyáng zázū y las fuentes de los informantes de su autor, Duàn Chēngshì. Duàn cita a un monje de Fūlín (= sogdiano Frōm < 'Pōm'). Este podría ser el informante, o uno de los informantes, en los nombres de plantas persas y siríacos (Duàn lo considera la lengua de Fūlín). Sus fuentes probablemente fueron vocabularios griego-siríaco-árabe-persa como los descriptos por Al-Bīrūnī en su Libro de Farmacia. Por primera vez se presenta una lista completa de todas las palabras siríacas registradas en la sección botánica con transcripción en chino medio y notas bibliográficas.

Abstract: This article deals with the Syriac and Persian words recorded in Chinese transcription in the botanical section of the Yōuyáng zázū and the sources of Duàn Chēngshì’s informants. A Fūlín (= Sogdian Frōm < 'Pōm') monk cited by Duàn could be the informant or one of the informants on Persian and Syriac ("Fūlín name") plant names. His sources probably were Greek-Syriac-Arabic-Persian vocabularies used in Central Asia such as those described by Al-Bīrūnī in his Book on Pharmacy. For the first time is presented a complete list of all the Syriac words recorded in the botanical section with Middle Chinese transcription and bibliographical notes.


Introduction

We know about six embassies from 拂林 var. 拂林 to the 唐 court (A.D. 643, 667, 701, 708, 719, 742), all of them previous to the 安史之乱 (A.D. 755-763). In 2007, 林 Ying 林 suggested the Fúlín envoys came from a Central Asian Melkite community. Perhaps one of the most interesting points she makes deals with the botanical section of the 酉阳杂俎, written by 段成式 in the second part of the 9th century. It brings about the discussion on the Syriac and Persian glosses noted by F. Hirth in 1909 and B. Laufer in 1919. This brief article deals with the sources of 段成式’s Fúlín informant.

段 collected data on 22 plants of five different geographical regions (No. 783-804). The first two entries (No. 783-784) contain descriptions of two trees.

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1 I am much obliged to 林 Ying 林, professor at the Department of History of the Zhōngshān University 中山大学 at Guǎngzhōu 广州, for her invaluable help in preparing this article. She kindly gave me illuminating data and discussed with me the major points of this work. I extend my gratitude to Pablo Ubierna and Alfonso Hernández Rodríguez who provided me relevant bibliographical references. I am also obliged to Damián Salgado for his help in proofreading the English version of this article.


7 B. LAUFER, Sino-Iranica: Chinese contributions to the History of Civilization in Ancient Iran (Chicago: The Field Museum of Natural History, 1919).

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from Magadha (摩伽陀 Mā-qié-tuó EMC *Ma-gi-da, *Ma-gja-da)\(^9\), showing certain knowledge of Sanskrit and of the Chinese sources on the region. The entries No. 786-787 and No. 791-792 describe plants with a Persian (波斯 Bōsī MC *Pa-si,*Pa-sje) origin, excepting No. 785, which comes from Pōli\(^10\)婆利, No. 788, from the Kingdom of Zhēnlà 真腊 (present day Cambodia), No. 795, from Magadha and No. 796, finally, which comes from Gāgūluō 喀古, but Duàn adds a subsidiary Persian origin in each of the first three entries. The “Persia” mentioned in the entries No. 785, 788, 790, 799 and probably No. 793 is Bōsī, a state placed somewhere in the frontier with the Pyu city-states\(^11\).


At last, the entries No. 790, No. 793-794 and No. 796-804 describe plants whose origins are Persia and Fúlín or just Fúlín. The uniform structure of the entries No. 785-790 is different from that of the two entries dealing with trees from Magadha, placed in first place; Lin Ying noted an evident divergence with the Chinese pharmacological tradition which could suggest a non-Chinese origin. On the other hand, Laufer noted certain Persian influence at the end of the entry No. 787.  

The identified languages used in the entries (vide Appendix) are Sanskrit (No. 790, 797 and probably 799), Persian (No. 794, 798, 800, 804) and Syriac (No. 794, 798, 800, 801, 802, 803, 804). Those entries with unidentified words are No. 790, 793, 797 and 799.

Duàn mentioned his informants or at least some of them in two entries because the divergence in their opinions. In No. 788, two Persian envoys and a Zhènlà envoy are quoted. In the next entry, he records the data provided by a monk from Fúlín named Wān湾 (湾) and a monk from Magadha.

It is probable that for most entries Duàn had used one or various Persian speaking informants. We could exclude the Persian envoys of entry No. 788, cited in a discussion on a Zhènlà/Bōsī plant name, as probably South Asian 'Persian' envoys. The point of this article is that Wān could have been the informant or one of the informants on such matters related to plants and plant names of Fúlín and Persian origin.

Which was the origin of Wān? As Lin Ying points, since Hirth onwards the envoys of Fúlín were identified with Nestorian monks. The toponym Fúlín, which we found for the first time in the Liáng梁 Dynasty (A.D. 502-555), is a transcription of Sogdian Frōm or Persian Frōm.

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12 B. Lauer, Sino-Iranica, p. 368.
13 The first known appearance of Fúlín is found in the Zhí gòngtú职贡图 (‘Portrait of Periodical Offerings’), written by Xiāo Yì萧绎 around 541 AD, and included in the Liáng sì gōng jì梁四公记.
14 Cf. P. Pelliot, (communication à la Société Asiatique), Journal Asiatique Onzième Série, Tome III (1914, 1), pp. 498-500; K. Shiratori, “A New Attempt to the Solution of the Fu-lín Problem”, Memoirs of the Research Department of the Tōyō Banko 15 (1956), pp. 156-329; F. Hirth proposed to identify Fúlín (Middle Chinese *Phjutlam) with the toponim Bethlehem, applied, by assimilation, to all the Byzantine Empire and his capital, but this seems improbable to us, cf. the
Lín Ying suggests that the change in the name of the Nestorian community, from a Persian to a Dàqín 大秦 religion in 745, should be viewed as the entry to China of a new form of Christianity coming from Fúlín, namely the Melkite Christianity. These Christians come from the State where Jesus born, so the change to Dàqín (the oldest name of the same kingdom) probably confers more prestige to the Nestorian christians on Chinese eyes.

On the base of gifts brought by these Fúlín envoys and the presence of certain Tokharian assistants, Lín Ying finds their origin in a Central Asian location. A king (王 wáng) of Fúlín whose name is Bō-duō-li 多利 (MC *pa-ta-li, *pa-ta-li; LMC *pua-ta-li̯k) is recorded as sending the first embassy (A.D. 643), and an unnamed king is mentioned in the last one (A.D. 742). The sender of the Fúlín envoys is styled 主 zhǔ “lord” in the record of the embassy of A.D. 719. The word 王 wáng is polysemic and should be translated in this case as “lord”15. As respects to Bō-duō-li, it can be either a name or a title16.

The Central Asian Melkite Christians17 are known mainly through Bīrūnī’s description of their liturgical calendar18. The Khwarezmian sage knows Melkite communities in Merv19 and Nishapur20, and records their use of the Semitic Syriac reconstruction following E. G. Pulleyblank’s Lexicon (Lexicon of Reconstructed Pronunciation in Early Middle Chinese, Late Middle Chinese and Early Mandarin [Columbia: University of British Columbia Press, 1991], pp. 95, 194), as follows: Early Middle Chinese: *Fūlim’, Late Middle Chinese: *Fjtlim var. *Futlim, Early Mandarin: *Putlim. The mention of this toponym in entries No. 790, 799 and probably 793 is unclear. The language does not seem to be Syriac. This could be a mistake by Diān or less probably a mention to a South Asian Fúlín. The Fúlín name recorded in entry No. 799 could be a Sanskrit word (vide Appendix).

15 Shuāngdì Zhāng 张双棣 Guàidì Hányù Zìdàn 古代汉语字典, p. 816.
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calendar\textsuperscript{21}, suggesting us a Syriac \textit{milieu} of these probably Sogdian or Persian speaking people.

On the other hand, we have an account on the Melkite catholicos of Central Asia recorded in the \textit{Life of the Melkite Patriarch of Antiochia Christophoros}, composed by Ibrahîm b. Yuḥanna\textsuperscript{22}. In this hagiography, Ibrahîm recounts the transfer of the Melkite christians of Vēh Andiyōk Khusraw\textsuperscript{23} (near Ctesiphon) to Rūmagird\textsuperscript{24} (\textit{Paουαυρυς}, in a letter of Peter III of Antiochia)\textsuperscript{25} in A.D. 762.

Thanks to this text, N. Edelby was able to locate Rūmagird as a quarter of Shash (present day Tashkent, in Uzbekistan).\textsuperscript{26} The Melkite community of Rūmagird remains active almost until the 14\textsuperscript{th} century\textsuperscript{27}, but the Catholicos’ seat was moved to Merv, probably in or before the 10\textsuperscript{th} century\textsuperscript{28}.

The name Fūlín, as a phonetic transcription of Sogdian Frōm (Rome), could make reference to both the Byzantine Empire and Rūmagird, while the 王 of Fūlín could be the Melkite catholicos of Vēh Andiyōk Khusraw or of a Central Asian location. J. M. Fiey suggested, on the base of a Sassanian seal bearing the titles of the Great Catholicos of Hułwan and Balasagan, that a Melkite community

\begin{thebibliography}{99}
  \bibitem{23} This city was known as Rūmagān (Persian) or Rūmiyya (Arabic), cf. Ch. JULIEN, “La minorité chrétienne “grecque” en terre d’Iran à l’époque sassanide”, in R. GYSELEN (ed.), \textit{Chrétiens en terre d’Iran}, p. 115.
  \bibitem{25} N. EDELBY, “Note sur le catholicosat de Romagyris”, \textit{Proche-Orient Chrétien} 2 (1952), p. 39.
  \bibitem{26} N. EDELBY, “Note sur le catholicosat de Romagyris”, \textit{Proche-Orient Chrétien} 2 (1952), pp. 39-46.
\end{thebibliography}
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could be found in Central Asia prior the transfer of the Melkite Christians to Shash by al-Mansūr in A.D. 762.29

This is the probable origin of Wān, a Central Asian Melkite Christian. What could we know, then, about the intellectual mileu where he obtained his pharmacological knowledge? Another of Birûnî’s works can help us here.

1. Al-Birûnî and the origin of Wān

Greek pharmacology was brought to the Sassanian Empire by Christians both in its Greek original and in Syriac translation.30 In the IX cent. A.D., with the new Caliphal capital in Baghdad, begins the translation of these pharmacopoeia from Greek and Syriac into the Arabic language.31

In the Kitâb as-Sydra, Birûnî32 writes about the difficulties related to the reading of these Arabic translation of Dioscorides, Galen,33, Paulus, or

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33 دیوید گاتاس
34 دیوید گاتاس
35 دیوید گاتاس
Oribasius\textsuperscript{36}, whose consonantal writing fails in transcribing the original sounds\textsuperscript{37}. In order to solve these spelling problems, his Muslim contemporaries used a vocabulary called \textit{Dahnām}\textsuperscript{38} with the equivalences in ten languages of the Arabic plant names contained in the afore mentioned translations\textsuperscript{39}. Birūnī warns the reader about the low quality of this work. On the base of its name, we can suppose this vocabulary was composed in a Persian speaking \textit{milieu}.

Birūnī continues his description with two vocabularies which were used by Central Asian Christians. The first one, whose name was \textit{Foshāq samāḥī}\textsuperscript{40} was written in Syriac, but is known by his Persian name \textit{Chahār nām}\textsuperscript{41}. As its name indicates, this vocabulary contained the name of the same plants in four languages, namely: Greek, Syriac, Arabic and Persian. Birūnī treats with consideration this vocabulary and even seem to have had in his possession a partial copy of it\textsuperscript{42}.

The second vocabulary described by Birūnī was an extensive Syriac \textit{Likṣīqānā}\textsuperscript{43} with Arabic running side by side. It contained encyclopedic entries on various difficult words. The structure of the chapters allowed them to be copied individually or as a whole. Birūnī also had a copy of the correspondent chapter on Ptolemy’s \textit{Astronomical Tables}. He knows about other two books with equivalences between Arabic and Greek names, but he only had partial copies, and hoped to find the manuscripts again in order to obtain the rest of the text\textsuperscript{44}.

The word used by Birūnī for Christians (شامى) does not reflect any kind of particular Christian identity\textsuperscript{45}. Birūnī could refer there to both Melkites or Nestorians. If the association between the Fūlín envoys and a Central Asian Christian community proposed by Lín Ying is right, we could place Wān’s origin among the Melkite Christians recorded in Birūnī’s works.

Then we have a probable community, a probable place and a probable intellectual \textit{milieu} for the man or men who brought Central Asian pharmacologic

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\textsuperscript{36} Oribasius
\textsuperscript{37} Book 1, chapter 5 (without number), cf. H. M. Said, \textit{Al-Biruni’s Book on Pharmacy}, pp. 8-9 and p. 14 of the Arabic text.
\textsuperscript{38} \textit{Dahnām} is a transcription from Persian \textit{dah nām} “ten names”.
\textsuperscript{40} \textit{Foshāq samāḥī} is a transcription from Syriac \textit{fisqamāhā} “Explanation of the names”.
\textsuperscript{41} \textit{Chahār nām} is a transcription from Persian \textit{chahār nām} “four names”.
\textsuperscript{42} H. M. Said, \textit{Al-Biruni’s Book on Pharmacy}, p. 9 and p. 15 of the Arabic text.
\textsuperscript{43} \textit{Likṣīqānā} is a transcription from Syriac \textit{lkṣīqānā}, a borrowing from Greek \textit{lexikón}.
\textsuperscript{44} H. M. Said, \textit{Al-Biruni’s Book on Pharmacy}, p. 9 and p. 15 of the Arabic text.
\textsuperscript{45} For the use of \textit{شامى} by Birūnī cf., ex. gr., R. Griveau, \textit{Martyrologues}, p. 293.
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knowledge to China. A Vocabulary like the Chahar nām could be the source of Wân.

2. Appendix: Syriac Glosses in the Yŏuyáng zázǔ

NB. Those entries marked with an asterisk have Fulin words of easily confirmable Syriac origin. Entries marked with a double asterisk have words of unknown origin (entry No. 790 has a probable Sanskrit word). Entry No. 840 has a word attested only in modern Aramaic.

790** [Artocarpus integrifolia]

— Entry name: 婆那娑 pó-nà-suō
  (EMC *ba-naʰ-sa, LMC phiua-naʰ-sa).
— Persian name: 婆那娑 pó-nà-suō
  (EMC *ba-naʰ-sa, LMC phiua-naʰ-sa).
— Persian: —
— Fulin name: ë-bù-chán
  (EMC *ʔa-bawʰ-ʔæː:n, LMC *ʔa-phəʰ-ʔæː:n) <cf. fig. 1>.
— Syriac: —


793** [unidentified]

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— Entry name: 滨ゐ pán-nū-sè
  (EMC *ban-nū-šīk, LMC phuan-nua*-šīa’k).
— Persian name: 滨ゐ pán-nū-sè
  (EMC *ban-nū-šīk, LMC phuan-nua*-šīa’k).
— Persian: —
— Fulin name: 羣漢 (var. 群漢) qún-hàn
  (MC *gūn-xan*, *gūn-xanH, LMC *khyi-xan*).
— Syriac: —

Notes: It remains unidentified; cf. Laufer (1919), p. 435.

794* [Olea europaea L.]

— Entry name: 齐燉 zī-tūn
  (EMC *tsi-tuan, LMC *tsẓ-tun)
— Persian name: 齐燉 zī-tūn
  (EMC *tsi-tuan, LMC *tsẓ-tun)
— Persian: zayt (the Chinese transcription seems to be more related to Farsi zaytūn)
— Fulin name: 齐须 zī-tū
  (EMC *tsi-tu, LMC *tsẓ-tu).
— Syriac: —


797 [Peper longum L.]

— Entry name: 蒽撥 bì-bō
  (EMC *pjii-pat, LMC *pjii-puat)
— Magadha name: 蒽撥梨 bì-bō-li
  (EMC *pjii-pat-li, LMC *pjii-puat-li)
— Fulin name: 阿梨訶他 ē-li-hē-tā
  (EMC *ʔa-li-xa-ta, *ʔa-li-xa-tha, LMC *ʔa-li-xa-ta)
— Syriac: —

Notes: The character 虚 should be readed xū, but a gloss in the Yōuyáng zāzū (ed. Fāng Nánshēng 方南生, p. 179; B. LAUFER, Sino-Iranica, p. 415) suggests the 反切 fănqiè tāng. In entries No. 797 and 798 we used, for typographical reasons, the character 億 instead of the original <cf. fig. 3>.

47 The character 虚 should be readed xū, but a gloss in the Yōuyáng zāzū (ed. Fāng Nánshēng 方南生, p. 179; B. LAUFER, Sino-Iranica, p. 415) suggests the 反切 fănqiè tāng.
48 In entries No. 797 and 798 we used, for typographical reasons, the character 億 instead of the original <cf. fig. 3>.
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798* [Ferula gummosa]

— Entry name: ㄆi-tz
  (EMC *pjí-t-tsi, LMC *pjí-t-tsz) <cf. fig. 2>²⁹
— Persian name: ㄆi-tz
  (EMC *pjí-t-tsi, LMC *pjí-t-tsz)
— Persian: bīrzai (Laufer, p. 363)
— Fulin name: 頓勃梨他 ㄏán-bó-li-tā
  (EMC *xan-bat-li-ta, LMC *xan-phua-li-ta)
— Syriac: ــلاـنـبـاـلـتاـ (halbanitā), Payne-Smith, p. 1275, Löw, p. 163.

799 ** [Cassia fistula L.]

— Entry name: 沒 mò
  (EMC *mt *mwot, LMC *mut)

800* [Myrtus L.]

— Entry name: mò
  (EMC *mt *mwot, LMC *mut)

²⁹ For the varia lectio of the character for ㄆi cf. B. Laufer, Sino-Iranica, p. 363, n. 2 and Fang Nánshēng 方南生, pp. 179, 182 (n. 22). Laufer cites the reading of Kangxi’s Dictionary, 康熙字典, p. 429, but does not introduce it in his text.
— Persian name: 没 mò
  (EMC *mòt *mwat, LMC *mut)
— Persian: mòrd
— Fulin name: 阿縒 ē-cī
  (EMC */a-tqī*, LMC */a-tqīh*)
— Syriac: ܐܒܗܬ (āhsah), Payne-Smith, p. 291, Löw, pp. 50-51.

801* [resinous gum of Commiphora opobalsamum]
— Entry name: 阿勃參 ē-bó-shēn
  (EMC */ʔa-bwot-srim, LMC */ʔa-phut-sam)
— Fulin name: 阿勃參 ē-bó-shēn
  (EMC */ʔa-bwot-srim, LMC */ʔa-phut-sam)

802* [Narcissus L.]
— Entry name: 捺祗 nà-zhī
  (EMC */nat-ʨi*, nat-tsyīj, LMC */nat-ʨi)
— Fulin name: 捺祗 nà-zhī
  (EMC */nat-ti*, nat-tsyīj, LMC */nat-ʨi)
— Syriac: ܢܐܪܟ (nāḵš), Payne-Smith, p. 2470-2471, Löw, p. 265.

803* [Jasminum L.]
— Entry name: 野悉蜜 yě-xī-mì
  (EMC *jiā’t-sit-mjīt *yaeX-sit-mīt, LMC *jiā’t-sit-mjīt)
— Fulin name: 野悉蜜 yě-xī-mì
  (EMC *jiā’t-sit-mjīt *yaeX-sit-mīt, LMC *jiā’t-sit-mjīt)
— Syriac: ܝܫܡܢ (yāšmanīn) (Persian: یاسمان), Payne-Smith, p. 1609

804* [Ficus carica L.]
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— Entry name: 阿驛 ē-yì
(EMC *ʔa-jiajk *ʔa-yek, LMC *ʔa-jiajk); var. 底稱 dī-chēn
(EMC *tej՚-ʨʰiŋʰ *tejX-trin, LMC *ṭiaj՚-tɕʰiɔʏ’)  
— Persian name: 阿驛 ē-yì
(EMC *ʔa-jiajk *ʔa-yek, LMC *ʔa-jiajk)
— Persian: ānjr
— Fulin name:底稱 dī-chēn
(EMC *ṭeji՚-ʨʰiŋʰ *tejX-trin, LMC *ṭiaj՚-tɕʰiɔʏ’)  

* Notes: Greek: σοκή. Cf. Hirth (1909), p. 20; Laufer (1919), p. 411. The word tēnā is attested in modern Aramaic, but this could be the transcription of the Classical Syriac plural form ti’nē “fig trees”. The reading of Fāng Nánshēng’s edition is 底稱, with the varia lectio 底珍. Hirth and Laufer knew the second reading, but they took 底珍 as a much more probable lectio (cf. Hirth, p. 20).

Figures

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Recibido / Received: 05/03/2008
Informado / Reported: 21/05/2009
Aceptado / Accepted: 14/11/2009