

Based on the Sogdian Ancient Letters: The Struggle of Sogdian Women in Sogdian Commercial Organizations from the Perspective of Organizational Behavior

Zihan Zhong

*School of Macau University of Science and Technology, Macau, China
158010292@qq.com*

Abstract: From the perspective of organizational behavior, in the fourth century AD, the Sogdian commercial organization was decentralized. It has the characteristics of great volatility in a volatile environment. The war and looting background prevalent in the late Western Jin Dynasty caused the instability of organizational operations. As a large international trade organization, the Sogdian commercial organization solved the problem of management uncertainty by adding a social relations department, such as establishing diplomatic relations with the official Chinese government at that time to obtain goods such as silk. Miwnay, a Sogdian woman in the Sogdian ancient letters, as a noblewoman, had certain rights of self-determination in the Sogdian commercial organization. At first, she voluntarily followed her husband to Dunhuang, but later, she could not achieve self-concordance due to the unequal family status of men and women. which meant that Miwnay's reason for coming to Dunhuang was not consistent with her intrinsic interests and core values, but with those of her husband who first proposed to move to Dunhuang. During the war period of the Yongjia Rebellion, accompanied by the instability of the operation of the Sogdian organization, the Sogdian female slave trade, which became a historical precedent, forced her to obey the unreasonable orders of the organization. In the end, Miwnay was reduced from a Sogdian noblewoman to a debt bondage.

Keywords: Organizational Behavior, Sogdian Ancient Letters, Sogdian Women, Sogdian Commercial Organization, Silk Road

1. Introduction

The Sogdians had formed a large-scale Sogdian network in the distant 4th century and played a significant role in the trade of the Silk Road. In 1907, British archaeologist Mark Aurel Stein discovered the Sogdian Ancient Letters, the important document for studying Sogdian commerce, in Dunhuang, China. There is a typical protagonist in the Sogdian Ancient Letters No.1 and No.3: the Sogdian woman in the Sogdian commercial organization. This article wants to explore why Miwnay angrily accused her husband in the Sogdian Ancient Letters but chose not to resist the unreasonable organizational orders.

Organizational behavior is an emerging interdisciplinary subject that was gradually perfected in the 20th century, and there are few interdisciplinary studies with traditional history. However, many historical articles are studying the Sogdians and Sogdian commercial organizations in the Sogdian

ancient letters. The book *Sogdian Traders* describes some inferences about ancient letters and Sogdian commercial organizations in detail. However, ÉTIENNE DE LA VAISSIÈRE 's research focuses more on the Sogdian merchant group and organizational structure and rarely describes female figures in Sogdian commercial organizations. There are also papers focusing on individuals within Sogdian commercial organizations. Meicheng Chen proposes that aristocratic diasporic Sogdian women enjoy a relatively high social-economic status, but they are still restricted from using resources and connections to enforce their privileges [1].

This paper intends to use the knowledge of organizational behavior and case analysis to study Miwnay's struggle in the Sogdian commercial organization in Sogdian ancient letters. Using organizational behavior to analyze history can provide a deep understanding of the decision-making of historical organizations in specific environments and the emotional feedback of historical figures.

2. Organizational behavior and the Sogdians on the Sogdian network

The Sogdian ancient letters and organizational behaviors were separated by a long distance in the 16th century. This section will explore the rationality of the connection between the two. Organizational behavior is a field of study investigating the impact that individuals, groups, and structures have on behavior within organizations [2]. A group of Sogdian merchants gathered and lived in cities along the trade routes, forming a base. The bases of multiple different trading cities formed a dense network, which is the Sogdian network. Two or more Sogdian merchants would seek to profit from the huge price difference between Eastern and Western goods in the trade routes of the Sogdian network. Therefore, Sogdian merchants formed organizations on the Sogdian network. The Sogdian merchants and their families in the organization can be individuals or groups gathered in the Sogdian network. So far, the Sogdians on the Sogdian network have met the basic requirements of the organizational behavior perspective.

3. Internal structure and external environment of Sogdian commercial organizations

The interesting point about the internal structure of the Sogdian organization is that it is a decentralized organization structure. In the fourth century, when the ancient Sogdian letters were written, the noble bureaucrats of the Western Jin Dynasty, after taking a breather from the shock of the chaotic times, quickly turned their anxious psychology into the pursuit of wealth, and it was common for bureaucrats to engage in business at this time [3]. When bureaucrats were engaged in business in the Western Jin Dynasty, the feudal system and the Nine-Rank System dispersed political power. From this, it can be reasonably inferred that the commercial organizations in the Western Jin Dynasty were also influenced by political decentralization and were decentralized organizations. The Sogdian commercial organizations hoped to integrate into countries that could obtain silk and form decentralized organizations. From the perspective of organizational behavior, companies with overseas organizations often need to decentralize. Because Sogdian business organizations are international trade organizations, they often need to send people to work abroad. The decision-makers of Sogdian business organizations sent to Dunhuang need to adjust their strategies according to the business environment and characteristics of the Western Jin Dynasty to open up new markets.

From the perspective of organizational behavior, this paper analyzes the external environment of Sogdian commercial organizations during the Sogdian ancient letter period, focusing mainly on the volatile environment caused by volatility. In terms of volatility, war, and looting were factors that led to the unstable operation of the Sogdian commercial organization. Based on the scenes of war and famine described in the second Sogdian ancient letter from the fourth century AD (between 312 and 313 AD) [4], it can be inferred that the Sogdian merchants and women in Guzang, Dunhuang, and other places in China were experiencing the Yongjia Rebellion of the Western Jin Dynasty (311AD).

In addition, robbery was also one of the problems encountered by Sogdian business organizations during the Western Jin Dynasty. "The Book of Jin·Biography of Shi Chong" mentions that "在荊州, 劫遠使商客, 致富不贖。" [5]. Shi Chong, as a senior official of the Western Jin government, took the lead in robbing wealthy merchants. From this, it can be inferred that theft against merchant caravans had become a bad social trend during the Western Jin Dynasty. The volatile environment required managers of Sogdian commercial organizations to work hard to reduce uncertainty, such as by establishing diplomatic relations with official governments. There is a record in the "Twenty-Four Histories" as evidence, "八月丙戌, 行幸河西。粟特國遣使朝貢。" [6]. The Northern Wei Dynasty was the dynasty that followed the Jin Dynasty. Therefore, it can be inferred that after experiencing the wars of the Western Jin Dynasty, the managers of Sogdian commercial organizations added a social relations department as a means to reduce management uncertainty when the political situation of the new dynasty stabilized.

4. Women's struggles in Sogdian commercial organizations

There is a typical protagonist in Sogdian Ancient Letters No.1 and NO.3: a Sogdian woman in a Sogdian commercial organization, Miwnay. Sogdian women had different social statuses, such as nobles, priestesses, slaves, dancers, and ordinary people [7]. In Meicheng Chen's view, Miwnay revealed her aristocratic status in the description of "free women" in the letter's historical context. However, Miwnay was abandoned by her husband and could not return to Samarkand. From the surface, this article uses the input, process, and output model in "Organizational Behavior" to analyze it. The input is the organizational culture and structure, that is, the culture of family cooperation and the structure in which women have a lower status in the family than men. The process is that the individual's emotions and moods become negative. The output is that the individual's attitude deteriorates, and the pressure increases. When things happened, her negative emotions turned into negative moods, specifically anger turned into a depressed mood. According to affective events theory, Miwnay had negative effects from being abandoned and unable to return to Samarkand, which was reflected in her behavior and satisfaction with the organization. So, she chose to write a letter to accuse her husband and reduce her trust and expectations in the organization. Deep down, affect is just a symptom, and motivation is the key to understanding the reasons. Self-determination theory holds that people enjoy a sense of control over their actions. Sogdian women had the freedom to choose their place of residence after marriage [1]. When Miwnay was in Samarkand, she voluntarily chose to follow her husband to Dunhuang. This shows that she was still in control of her life at that time, and her initial organizational life in Dunhuang was fresh and enjoyable. Why didn't Miwnay achieve self-concordance? The superficial reason is that it was her husband's decision to move to Dunhuang, which was a reflection of her husband's intrinsic interests in getting rich and his core values, not Miwnay's. The root cause is the unequal family status of men and women. Because women had a lower status than men, she was unable to return to Samarkand due to the lack of a male companion after being abandoned by her husband and eventually became debt bondage.

Why did Miwnay decide to accept unreasonable organizational orders? In terms of organizational constraints, historical precedents were the main factor influencing the decision-making of Sogdian commercial organizations. The only Sogdian sales contract from Turfan is concerned with the sale of a young girl from Turkestan. Sogdian slaves are mentioned on several occasions in the documents from Turfan [8]. This shows that the trafficking of female Sogdian slaves to China was a historical precedent at the time. Unfortunately, due to the limited unearthed documents on Sogdian commercial organizations, this article cannot use formal regulations to look at the specific internal rewards and punishments of the organization.

5. Conclusion

From the perspective of organizational behavior, decentralized Sogdian business organizations reduce management uncertainty by adding a social relationship department in a volatile environment. Miwnay, a Sogdian woman in ancient letters, initially had the right to self-determination in the Sogdian commercial organization but ultimately could not achieve self-concordance due to the unequal family status of men and women. The Sogdian female slave trade became a historical precedent, making it impossible for her to refuse the unethical orders issued by the organization.

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