

On local deities in the medieval Turfan area, as attested in Sogdian and Old Turkic texts

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Letters and documents in the Turfan collections provide us with interesting information about matters such as mercantile activities and daily life in the cities and towns of the medieval Taklamakan region. Some documents, such as the well-known Manichaean letters, mention the activities of religious communities. Others, however, allude to matters of religious life not encountered in the Manichaean or Christian religious texts. For example, some Sogdian and Old Turkic fragments mention "protector deities" of the city of Qocho and of other locations in the larger Turfan area. In this presentation, I will gather examples where such "protector deities" are invoked, and attempt to draw a few larger conclusions about the nature of local beliefs outside of what is known from the Manichaean and Christian texts.