

TRADING CITIES ON THE CARAVAN ROUTES OF THE GREAT SILK ROAD THROUGH CENTRAL ASIA

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Abstract. This article discusses some of the shopping centers of ancient Central Asia along the Great Silk Road and their brief history.

Key words: Taklamakan, Kroran, Kashgar, Turfan valley, Kuchar.

ТОРГОВЫЕ ГОРОДА НА КАРАВАННЫХ ПУТЯХ ВЕЛИКОГО ШЕЛКОВОГО ПУТИ ЧЕРЕЗ СРЕДНЮЮ АЗИЮ

Аннотация. В данной статье рассматриваются некоторые торговые центры древней Средней Азии вдоль Великого шелкового пути и их краткая история.

Ключевые слова: Такламакан, Кроран, Кашгар, Турфанская долина, Кучар.

Studies by Chinese archaeologists over the past 20 years have shown that the Taklamakan Desert was inhabited by peoples with a much higher culture thousands of years ago. As an example, the museum in Urumqi, the center of the Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region of the People's Republic of China, houses mummified bodies of ancient people. The oldest of them date back to 6-4 thousand years BC. The bodies were well preserved along with their clothes. This is because the burial sites are made up of extremely dry and hot sand, and due to the high salt content in the sand, the water in it is quickly drawn away and the microorganisms disappear under the influence of salt. As a result, the bodies were buried in the sand, as if frozen in ice. The youngest surviving body was found in Cherchen, east of the Taklamakan Desert. The frozen corpse seemed to be asleep, dressed in clothes, with its knees slightly raised. His body is white, his hair is reddish-brown, and his eyes are blue. The body's hair was cut in two and had a slight white streak. Based on this, scientists believe that he was about 50 years old.

The bodies of three other women were exhumed at the scene. One of them is particularly well-preserved, with a height of 191 cm, reddish-brown hair and two strands of braided hair.

The body of a young woman was found in Kroraina (Loulan), another ancient city in the eastern part of the Taklamakan Desert. The locals call her "Queen of Kroran", "Sleeping Beauty".

Based on the body's head and hair, Japanese experts have shaped the head of the "Queen of Kroran" into a living form, and based on this, developed a photo of her. In this photo, she looks like a woman who is common among Uighurs, Uzbeks and other Turkic peoples and has no Mongoloid features.

Numerous bodies have also been found on the Red Peak of Kumul (Qumul, Hami) province, one of the ancient cultural centers on the Great Silk Road, north of Kroran. They were not relatively well preserved than the bodies found at Kroran. But you can also see exactly what they look like. The clothes on the bodies were made of woven woolen cloth. Some of them have long-soled shoes that look like a simple leather stitch.

Elizabeth Wayland Barber, a British scientist who studied naturally mummified bodies found in places such as Cherchen, Kroran and Kumul, suggested that they resembled ancient Scots and Irish people and may have been related to their origins. According to recent estimates and conclusions made by European scientists, 8-10 thousand years ago, but several tens of thousands of years ago, due to climate change in the world, peoples moved from west to east. These ideas also show that the history of the Great Silk Road dates back to ancient times.

Wheat was also found in the graves opened in these areas. It is known that 5,000 years ago, the Chinese were not familiar with wheat. They had a rice culture.

The data show that these regions on the eastern side of the Taklamakan Desert had a much higher culture 4-5 thousand years ago, and developed handicrafts and agriculture such as textiles, sewing, and shoemaking. So the

conclusion that these provinces were important trading centers on the eastern side of the ancient trade route is quite valid.

In the first generalized historical work of the 2nd century BC "Historical Memories" ("Shi ji"), Chinese source "History of the First Han Dynasty" ("Chiang Han Shu"), "History of the Last Han Dynasty" Kroran is often mentioned. In the late 19th and early 20th centuries, the state of Kroran and its capital city of Kroran aroused great interest among scholars around the world. For this reason, a number of great scientists have conducted archeological excavations around Lake Lobnor (Lop Nur).

In 1900-1901, the Swedish archaeologist Sven Hedin (Sven Hedin, in Chinese literature Sive Hedin) was the first to find the site of the ancient city of Kroran. Based on the word "Krorayna" in the documents found at the site of the city, it is concluded that "Loulan" in Chinese sources is a transcription of this word. This conclusion is supported by many scientists.

According to Chinese sources, Kroran is the "gateway to the West. This indicates that Kroran has played an important role in international trade.

The intersection of the ancient Great Silk Road and the world-famous cities of ancient trade and culture: Kashgar formerly known as Suli, Suvlik, Suvboshi; it is located north of Eskisarkent, south of the present-day city of Kashgar. The distance between Old Kashgar and New Kashgar is 26 km.

The toponym "Suli" means "wet". In fact, it is the richest province in the Torim oasis in terms of water resources. Rivers such as Tumandarya, Qizilsuv (Kashkadarya), Gazdarya, Talvichukdarya flow near the city. The toponym "Kashgar" appeared in the VIII century and means "nephrite-field". In maps published in the PRC, Old Kashgar is still called Suli.

The exact age of Kashgar is not known, however, it is obvious to say that its history is no less than that of the Great Silk Road. If we turn to Chinese sources on this issue, we can see that our opinion is not far from the truth.

Ancient Chinese sources refer to Kashgar as Suli. It is first encountered in the history of the Western Han (First Khan) dynasty (202 BC – 9 AD) (this is Qian Han). According to the source, during the visit of the Chinese ambassador Zhang Qian to Fergana, the city of Suli was the center of the Suli state and had a highly developed culture.

According to the history of the Western Khan dynasty, when this dynasty was in power, the population of Kashgar was 18,647 people. According to the last Han dynasty, during the Eastern Khanate (25 -220 AD), the population of Suli was 21,000, or more than 30,000. The current population of Kashgar is over 400,000 (2005).

"In the History of the Wei Dynasty" (Wei Shu) informs : "The Suli state is an ancient khanate that existed during the Han Dynasty. The State Khan wears a gold crown with the shape of a lion on his head. Its territory is rich in rice, wheat, millet and hemp, copper, iron, tin and silk satin for women. If you travel more than 1,000 chakirim (about 500 km) west of this country, you can reach the state of Fergana". Prior to Islam, Kashgar was known around the world as one of the centers of Buddhism. According to Chinese sources, Kashgar played an important role in the spread of this religion in China. During this time many Buddhist works were translated into Chinese. After Islam became the dominant religion, Kashgar became one of the centers of Islamic culture.

The development of Kashgar as a trading center is directly related to the development of the Silk Road.

Today much of ancient Kashgar has survived. The narrow and crooked streets here are similar to some in the old city of Tashkent. Dense old one-story buildings on either side of the street, as well as orphanages built on the street, are a sign of overcrowding in the old part of the city. But residents say they are used to living here, and most importantly, by lighting the lights of their ancestral homes. People know each other very well and they help each other when something happens.

The Central Asian Market in Kashgar is one of the modern pilgrimage sites. Founded in 1979, it is popularly known as the Big Market. The total area of the market is about 8 hectares, with more than 5,000 shops. According to official sources, the purpose of the market was to establish trade relations with the CIS countries, Pakistan, Afghanistan and Iran.

In the early years, goods imported through traders and tourists from these countries were sold. Since the 1990s, the market has become a destination for small businesses in various parts of China to export goods to Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Pakistan and Afghanistan.

Located in the Turfan valley, Kuchar is one of the centers of ancient culture on the Great Silk Road. Its age has not yet been determined, but archaeological evidence suggests that Kuchar is thousands of years old.

Kuchar is transcribed with two hieroglyphs that read "Kive-tsie" in ancient Chinese. In modern Chinese, these hieroglyphs are pronounced as "Guyzi" or "Syuyzi". During the Mongol period, this toponym was represented by hieroglyphs called Kushian (Kusyan), Kutsa (Kutsa). After the conquest of Kuchar by the armies of the Sinn (Manchu) Empire in 1758, the name of the city began to be written in official documents in hieroglyphs read as Kuche. Since then, Kuchar's name has been spelled Kuche in Chinese literature. According to the 3rd and 2nd centuries BC Chinese information, Kuchar was a large and powerful state with a population of 80,000 and an army of 20,000. The state capital is the city of Kuchar, which is surrounded by a fortress wall about 3.5 km long. According to Chinese scholars, "the beauty of the city wall was no less than that of the city wall of Chan'an (center of ancient China, present-day Xi'an)."

Kuchar was highly developed economically and culturally from the time it was first known to the Chinese. Evidence of this can be found in the gold, copper, iron, tin and lead deposits of that time. When a tomb was unearthed in the ancient cemetery of Chimbog in present-day Kuchar Province, black and red pottery, iron, copper, wood and bone items were found inside. Scientists have determined that

the tomb dates back to 3,000 years ago. Fabrics and woolen rugs found in tombs excavated in Kuchar province and woven by local craftsmen 2,5-3,000 years ago show that the textile industry has a long history here. There was also a "thick and foul-smelling liquid" flowing around Kuchar. It was later discovered that the spring was oil.

It is known that 2.5-3 thousand years ago, the state of Kuchar had a high level of culture and craftsmanship. This indicates that Kuchar's position in international trade is high.

According to sources, the breeding of thoroughbred horses and peacocks, which have a high position in international trade, is well established in the country of Kuchar. The weaving of carpets from cotton and wool, the processing of animal skins, and the production of various fragrances, powders, and dyes for women are also highly developed.

The second oldest commercial and cultural center in the Turfan Valley was the city of Idikut (Gavchan, gucheng in Chinese sources). Its name is also mentioned in some literature as "Qutchur Fortress". The time when this city flourished was 3 BC-12 AD. Buddhism flourished in Turfan. This is evidenced by the surviving temple at the foot of a mountain 45 km east of Turfan. The temple has 77 rooms, 40 of which have Buddhist paintings on the walls. The total area of the painted walls is 1,200 square meters.

The time when Islam became the dominant religion in Turfan dates back to the 12th century. Until then, there had been fierce fighting between the adherents of the two religions. These struggles caused great damage to the Buddhist culture in Turfan.

It is well known that horticulture, especially grape growing, has long played an important role in Turfan's economic life. Dried grapes, especially clear and light green raisins, is its main export product. That's why the locals pay a lot of attention to the grape harvest. An example of this is the establishment of a large vineyard (Chinese Putou gou) in Turfan. The park consists of a large vineyard, which has

been turned into a place for recreation and tourism. On weekends, it's crowded, and most people sit on the floor with carpets. Concerts are held in several parts of the park. The entrance and exit of the vineyard is turned into a large corridor with a roof covered with vines. It is full of shops and kitchens on both sides. The sellers' offers of soft words and poetic style to appeal to the buyers do not leave the visitors indifferent and do not leave without taking anything.

Along with Buddhist monuments, Islamic monuments have been preserved in Turfan. Of these, the Suleymanhoja Mausoleum (built in 1977) is a major tourist attraction.

The city is located on the southwestern edge of the Taklamakan Desert between Kashgar and Khotan, and is one of the intersections on the ancient Great Silk Road. A road west of Yorkend to Kashgar, a second road south to India via the Karakorum Mountains, and a third road east to Khotan, Krurona, and Dunhuang to the ancient Chinese capital, Chanang. Another sparsely used road, from Yorkend, crossed the western edge of the Taklamakan Desert into Kuchar Province.

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