

Historical Developments of China's Xinjiang Province or Western Region

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Abstract

In this study, the author examines the history of Xinjiang, which has since become a province of China and a vital component of the mainland's culture. This research is entirely based on secondary sources using historical research methods. In addition to the analytical descriptive technique, the functional approach was allotted. According to the findings, ethnic and religious diversity abounds in Xinjiang. Even though Xinjiang has been the site of several conflicts and invasions, the Silk Road has made it a more vital commercial route for the region's ethnic groups and neighboring countries. Xinjiang's residents followed a variety of faiths, including Zoroastrianism, Buddhism, and Islam.

INTRODUCTION

This study examines the Chinese Uyghur Autonomous Region XUAR (新疆维吾尔自治区) or Xinjiang (新疆) from a historical and cultural perspective and poses issues concerning the genuine identity of this region based on human facts. As a former stop on the Silk Road between China and Central Asia, Xinjiang has a unique cultural identity. This study does not advocate any particular political philosophy; instead, it relies only on available historical records and scientific evidence. This study shows that the Uyghur people have been a part of China's history for millennia. Some misunderstandings regarding Xinjiang are dispelled in this report.

It is located in northwest China and has an area of 1 million 664 thousand and 900 square kilometers, which is one-sixth of China's land mass. The Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region is located in Xinjiang. Through the Silk Road and the Belt and Road Initiative, this area serves as China's entryway to the rest of the world. Archaeologists think that Xinjiang dates back to prehistoric periods due to the region's archaeological history. When the Han Dynasty governed China in 206 BC, it was a part of that country (Whitefield, 2004: 27).

Xinjiang's strategic importance is enhanced by its geographical location at the crossroads of Eurasia. There are three mountains enclosing two basins, according to geologists. The Pamir Mountains, which connect the Tian Shan, Kunlun, and Altai mountain ranges, are located at the westernmost tip of the three mountain ranges. Xinjiang has long been regarded both a thriving human settlement and one of the birthplaces of human civilization because of the variety of ecosystems that dot its arid terrain (Starr, 2004: 30).

Agriculture and cattle have always been important in this area because of its climate. After the Qin and Han dynasties, topography played an important role in connecting Xinjiang to the east when it became a part of a unified multi-ethnic China. In this region, East and West Asia were linked together. An ethnic group that has inhabited in this region for millennia, the Uyghurs, have contributed to the harmonious way of life based on their rich cultural and human

legacy (BBC, 2011). Xinjiang's population is overwhelmingly Uyghur, as it has been for millennia, and as a result, life in Xinjiang today is extremely cosmopolitan and diversified. Ethnic minorities in the region include Kazaks and Mongolians as well as the Huis and Kirgizs, Xibes, Tajiks and the Tatars (China.org, 2005)

The sole basis of our investigation is a historical one. The researchers used a wide range of historical literature on China and Xinjiang to get to a conclusion. According to the study project, it is impossible to separate the history of Xinjiang from that of China since it is a component of a larger whole, and so the history of Xinjiang cannot be separated from the history of China itself. Through the use of a descriptive analytic technique, some accessible data was analyzed and correlated to the study topic. In order to address the research question, this study relies on a wide range of sources, including academic literature and government statistics.

It has lately been a hot historical and political issue since many publications and reports suggest Xinjiang has no connection to China and asserts that it is the region of the Uyghur people. Province of Xinjiang is believed to be an integral system in China. The history and culture of China are inextricably linked to this region. China is a large nation with numerous provinces, and each one has its unique history and culture, which the researchers want to study in their research. The significance of this research cannot be overestimated because Xinjiang's unique culture traits cannot be claimed as a reason for isolation or discrepancy.

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

Ancient civilizations in this area may be dated back to between two and three million years ago, which is regarded as a sign of early society and lasts up to the third millennium BC by archaeologists and geographers. These claims are supported by a camel carved from the Huxtagli stone at Hoboksar and other archaeological evidence (Xia, 2019). According to Wang Yongqiang of the Xinjiang Institute of Cultural Relics and Archaeology (XICRA), Bronze Age tomb has been discovered (Global Times, 2019). In Xinjiang, there are several archaeological excavations that show the region's cultural variety and deep historical roots. Archaeologists have found more than 1,000 artifacts, including pottery, stoneware, and metal, from 2,500 square meters of ancient sites.

Both Chinese and foreign archaeologists agree that this place has been occupied for the longest time. Xinjiang's lengthy history as a city may be seen in the writings of Marco Polo. In addition to the carved camel, archaeologists discovered a convex ax and a thin piece of stone fifteen meters below Turpan's surface. The various objects discovered by archaeologists have helped them piece together a picture of life in the area, including evidence of humans hunting, harvesting plants, and engaging in other traditional activities. Archaeological excavations in this region have uncovered Stone Arrow Blades, Stone Knives, and other Neolithic weaponry (Chen & Hiebert, 1995: 243-300).

The Bronze Age began approximately 2000 BC in Xinjiang. The bronze it produced and the uses it found in the arms industry made it popular at the time (Central Government Web Portal, 2014). For its textile and leather industries, it was a well-known name in the world of agriculture. Although there were many different civilizations and physical places, there was no single economic system that dominated the region. In contrast, the civilizations of Andronovo and Xiaohe relied heavily on the production of chickens.

Origins of Xinjiang

Despite overwhelming scientific evidence to the contrary, Xinjiang has been referred to as a Turkish-speaking region. In 1980, archaeologists discovered a female mummy in an ancient cemetery west of Lop Nur. Researchers were able to identify that this mummy belonged to the Bronze Age by analyzing its DNA. Researchers found human remains in Xinjiang tombs as

Well. People with white skin (European strain) and people with yellow skin (Mongol strain) are the two most prominent ethnic groupings, while the rest are mixed-race individuals.

Xinjiang's geography under Qin's rule is documented in various other sources, including Shangshu, Bamboo Records, and Classics of Mountains and Seas. The Chinese emperors enjoyed friendly relations with the people of Xinjiang, according to history. China's first emperor, Mu of Zhou, was renowned for his frequent travels around the country. He crossed the region in order to get to know people on the Silk Road (Chin, 2007). Chinese cultural influences may be seen in several of the Gansu people's traditional crafts in Xinjiang, including a type of jar that has ear protrusions and pottery with sunken lines. Xinjiang's civilizations may have been born in Hami, an area east of Xinjiang, circa 4,000 years ago.

Before the Han dynasty, Xinjiang was known as the "Western Territory" because of the poor social and economic conditions that limited the region's growth (Hill, 2009: 60). For more than millennia, it was called Xinjiang, a name it has retained ever since. An ambassador of the Western Han said that Xinjiang was originally a part of ancient China, but the "Western Region" was really separated into more than fifty kingdoms and awarded noble titles by Emperor Yuan of Han, indicating that Xinjiang was historically part of ancient China.

Residents of the "Western Territory" were classed as nomadic Bedouins and urbanized folk who lived along the Silk Road. Western Territory was home to a number of countries, including Xiongnu and Wu Sun, throughout Han times. "Western Territory" Cultural similarities may be seen between the Qiang and the people of Yarkant. This affects the entire region of Xinjiang. According to "Historical Records: Selected Biographies of Da Yuan," the Han people had lived in the "Western Territory" since antiquity. In the Qin era, the Han dynasty built a unified administration that included Xinjiang as a result of commercial exchanges between the central plateau and the western regions.

¹ He made his journey in 1275, he is considered the most famous Western orientalist, and he has many historical writings that are considered a primary reference.

A Kazak-speaking ethnic minority has existed in northwest China since antiquity, and when the Song of the Yellow Swan was composed for the Western Han princess, it was meant to honor them. Chinese literature's "Song of the Yellow Swan" is a masterpiece. Aloud readings of the poem are given as a sign of respect and peaceful cooperation (Zadneprovskiy, 1994: 458-62).

Historical Developments

A central government was founded as a result of the Han dynasty's unification of western Han and north and south of Mount Tian Shan. The central Han government acknowledged the existence of a unified government in Xinjiang and appointed the first ruler to manage it. Eighteen rulers of the Western Han Dynasty assumed control of the western area's governance following him. Seal of the last rulers of Western Territory's united administration was discovered in Turpan in 1930s. These two events demonstrate that western Xinjiang has joined China as a whole, as the establishment of the Han and the appointment of a provincial governor show. People in Xinjiang have been a member of the Chinese state since the early days of China's existence. It has been the central government's ability to entice all border tribes and nationalities to join it that has sparked political, economic, and social change in the western region over the last few decades. This has been made possible by the unification of the western region's administration in all of these areas (Asia for Educators, 2019).

“Throw away your writing brush and join the military!” (投筆從戎) – “A brave man has no other plan but to follow Fu Jiezi and Zhang Qian's footsteps and do something and become somebody in a foreign land. "How can I spend the rest of my life on writing?" (大丈夫無他志略，猶當效傅介子、張騫立功異域，以取封侯，安能久事筆硯間乎?). "Book of the Later Han" contains some of Ban Chao's most memorable lines. Ban Chao, a poet and writer of the Han dynasty, enlisted in the military to defend his country. Chao is known to have been a political thinker from the western area. Ban Chao was given the title of "Marquis of Dingyuan" after his appointment as governor of the Unified Administration of the Western Territory following the resolution of the crisis. During his reign, he sent envoys as far as the Persian Gulf, opening the door for relations between the East and the West (Grousset, 1970: 42-7).

Xinjiang is part of the Silk Road route. The success of the Silk Road relied on the contributions of the people of Xinjiang. All of Xinjiang and the Central Plains have a long history of trade and connectivity. Xinjiang's emergence and development can be attributed mostly to the Han dynasty's unification of the western province and the Silk Road, which currently connects Chang'an or Xi'an (Schinz, 1996: 428). In “The Book of Han: News of the Western Region,” the name of the “Western Region” or “Xinjiang” is clearly stated as well as the ancient relationship with the Silk Road; “After crossing the Jade Gate and Yang Guan, there are two routes for the western region: the southern road from Shanshan (鄯善县) to the south of the mountain, until Yarkand, as the Pamir Plateau passes through the southern road, all the way to Enshi, while the northern road passes along the northern mountain to Kashgar, the northern road passes over the Pamir Plateau, then goes towards Dayuan (Fergana), Samarkand and the Aral Sea region”. Silk Road commerce opened up new channels of connection between people from the western area of China and other parts of the country. In addition to spreading Xinjiang crops like flax and beans across the country, the Silk Road also brought garlic and grapes to the rest of China.

During the reign of the Han dynasty, the money featured both Chinese characters and the language of the Son, known as the Kharosthi language, which was a mixture of Arabic and Persian dialects (Cribb, 1984). As Zoroastrianism expanded across Persia, the western area of the country embraced it as its own.

Cultural and civilizational advancement in the Western Region is attributed to the Tang Dynasty in large part because of intertribal contact during this time period (Ebrey et al., 2006: 100). Keeping China's economic and cultural ties to the rest of the world in tact was a top priority for the Chinese government. In Xinjiang, during the reign of the Jin emperors, the written Han language was in use, according to archaeological evidence. After the fall of the Eastern Han dynasty, a number of nomadic northern Chinese tribes occupied the western province. Because of the sudden change in leadership, the political and social order has disintegrated. There was a Turkic uprising in 525 that led to the dominance of Turks over a large area of the kingdom.

Uyghur Identity

According to historical research, the Uyghur people may trace their ancestry back to the Uygurlar, who came in China during the Sui and Tang dynasties. Due to Urumqi's tyrannical reign in 487, about a hundred thousand people were forced to evacuate their homes. However, this state only survived until 541 when it was defeated, and they ruled over Kojar and all of Khotan as well.

Turkic people grazed their livestock in the Altai Mountains in the fifth century, when they went there from the steppes of Central Asia. The Turkic Rule was expanded by Muqan Qaan (mùgn khàn), who ordered his brother to travel west and combine with the Persians in order to destroy the dominating kingdom over the western area and Central Asia (Seaman & Marksm, 1991: 96-7). For more than a thousand years, the Turkic State served as a powerful northern pastoral kingdom that expanded from Xinjiang to Central Asia (Haywood, 1998). The Tujue Khanate (Ashina clan of Göktürks 突厥汗国极盛时期的地图 (570年) spread over the Turkic Kingdom.

Nationalities including Sogdiana, Khitan, and Kyrgyz were merged under Turkic control in the western area. All nations began to blend from the third to the fifth centuries, when division and dispersion were abolished. There have been several Han-language texts uncovered in the Turpan region by archaeologists, most of which date back to the Zhou period. Land leasing agreements, thorough inventories of the deceased's possessions, and sets of Confucian texts and other documents are among the items found in the tomb. Han language was widely spoken in Gaochang (or Karakhoja) at the period, and Confucian teachings played an important role (Smith, 2000: 195-224). A significant collection of papers in several languages has also been uncovered by archaeologists.

² Xi'an is a large city and capital of Shaanxi Province in central China. Once known as Chang'an (Eternal Peace), it marks the Silk Road's eastern end and was home to the Zhou, Qin, Han and Tang dynasties' ruling houses.

As a testament to how many different ethnicities were in the western region, trade and Bedouin tribes were frequent visitors. Buddhism, Zoroastrianism, and Shamanism were among the various religions practiced by the inhabitants of the region.

A good example of this is the Xinjiang dance, which started in the western part of China but has since spread throughout the country and is now an essential part of Chinese culture.

As one of China's most prosperous periods, the Xinjiang countries played an important part in the development of the Tang Dynasty. To the west of China, the Tang dynasty was the first. In 640, the western unification period began after crossing the desert to the Turpan Basin (Hansen, 2012: 91). After the death of the monarch, the Turkic policy had altered and they were unhappy with the unification of the western area, which had been a friendly relationship between the Tang dynasty and the Kingdom of Turkic. The Tang Dynasty was essentially cut off from the Silk Road when the Gochng Kingdom and the Khan joined forces to rule it. It was only in 640 that the Tang Dynasty gained control of the province. In 648, a second battle broke out, and the Western Turkics seized control of key military and political territories in Asia. The Tang dynasty was able to provide the groundwork for governance and a unified administration in the western part of the empire. Western Turkic areas were taken over by the Tang in 657. (Skaff, 2009: 183).

Turkic people were under Uyghur rule because of the 745 death of the last Turkic monarch. This period marked the end of the Turkic people's political and military presence in China, as some Turkic people went to Inner Mongolia and others moved across Central Asia and Western Asia, establishing the Ottoman Empire, the Ghazni Kingdom in Afghanistan, and the Seljukian Kingdom through the efforts of their descendants.

As a result of a program enacted during the Tang Dynasty to encourage agricultural and animal production in the western region, China's civilization was stable and homogeneous for many centuries. These times saw the establishment of Silk Roads in the north and the south, which aided in the expansion of commerce between western Asia and its neighbors. In addition to this improvement, there was a cultural, social, and artistic rebirth as a result of the increasing level of national engagement inside China and international connection. Tang Dynasty policies had a profound impact on the unification of Chinese countries and the historical development of China (Lewis, 2012).

Following the fall of the Tang dynasty, the Turpan were able to wage a military conflict for control of the western area because of the peace and stability. The Turban king's authority reached Central Asia, and he engaged the Muslim Arabs in a dispute over Buddhism, preventing Arab progress eastward. During the Five Ages, the Liao dynasty (907-1125) and Western Xia (1038-1227), the Uyghurs enjoyed strong ties with the ruling dynasties (Biran, 2005). Uygur nationality was developed when some of these peoples mingled with the Tarim Basin tribes and lived under Mongol domination for a while. After that, they were divided and later reunited.

³ āshǐnà yàndōu (阿史那燕都) was the second son of Bumin Qaghan and the third khagan of the Göktürks who expanded their khaganate and secured the borders against the Hephthalites.

The advent of border nationalities in the central plains is a significant milestone in cultural and economic unity, just as various countries made their way west. The written language of the Uygurs during the Yuan Dynasty was referred to as the Uygur language for a short period of time. They replaced the Han and Turkic languages as the official language until the 15th or 16th century. In their time in power, it is usually recognized as the best administration in the region. Along with military and economic priorities, they focused on the arts and culture.

When the Tajiks built the Samanid Empire in Central Asia, they did it as adherents of the Islamic faith (Dillon, 2004: 11). Xinjiang was the first region in China to have a predominantly Muslim population as a result of cultural exchanges between the Samanid and Qirkhan kingdoms. Artux Mosque is the earliest mosque in Xinjiang. Islam was formally acknowledged as a religion between the eleventh and early twentieth centuries. Holy Jihad fight resulted in Islam taking control over all territory between Mount Tian Shan and Khotan (Millward, 2006). Despite the fact that it was formerly Buddhist and had a part in the spread of Buddhism over western lands, this tribe is said to be one of the earliest to convert to Christianity (Rosskeen et al., 1998: 677).

Several regulations were formulated by the Mughal Khagans when Genghis Khan designated the Uygur area as one of his fiefdoms in 1225. Genghis Khan's sons were given a portion of his lands. Uygur may refer to the Turpan citizens and others who settled in the "Uygur region," according to Yuan Dynasty documents. A major increase in Islamic religion was witnessed in the western region during the reigns of Tughlugh dynasty. Timur Khan, a member of Genghis Khan's "golden tribe," was born in 1347, and Tughlugh Khan was the first Mongol king to join Islam. It is said that he ruled over 160,000 tribes, all of which were compelled to convert to Islam.

Xinjiang in Modern History

Second-United feudal dynasty of China, the Qing dynasty (1644-1911), formed modern Xinjiang. Their initiatives led to greater economic and cultural ties between the many ethnic groups in China's Xinjiang region, as well as to a more cohesive administrative structure. It was in 1759 when the numerous tribes of Xinjiang were unified under one rule between the northern and southern Tianshan Mountains. Because of these historical ties, Xinjiang has seen a growth in political, economic, and cultural stability. Xinjiang, a Chinese province, was formed in 1884 and has followed the same organizational structure as the rest of China's provinces.

During the opium war of the mid-19th century, Tsarist Russia sought control over Xinjiang. In the face of both internal and foreign challenges, the people of Xinjiang stood up for themselves. Tsarist Russia was able to obtain information about Xinjiang by establishing a consulate in the region and ensuring the legal protection of Russian commerce there. Due to Russian avarice, there were attempts to take control the gold mines by force (Vakar, 1935: 118-23).

It was in October of that year that the Qing dynasty issued an imperial order that officially recognized Xinjiang. In a petition submitted by Zuo Zongtang, commander of the Qing Dynasty, to the emperor, it reads: "The usurped homeland of its people belongs to them

again”, (old land newly returned) (故土新歸), meaning that Xinjiang is originally Chinese territory, and after it was occupied by foreign aggressors, it returns to the homeland again. Hence the name “Xinjiang” (the new frontier), and the term “Western Region - Western Territory” has been discontinued. Thus was the northwestern frontier of China in the modern era.

CONCLUSION

Many different human groups have lived in Xinjiang over the course of its history as a multi-cultural and multi-religious territory. A single ethnic group cannot adequately represent the people of Xinjiang, despite its sizeable Uyghur population. Uyghur history and Xinjiang's Uyghur population are examined in this study. Xinjiang, we argue, is a fundamental part of ancient China, and this is the case here. Xinjiang was historically referred to as the "Western Province" and the "Western Region" during the Han Dynasty. For more than millennia, it was called Xinjiang, a name it has retained ever since.

Since the Silk Road was a major cultural, commercial, and scientific powerhouse, this area has a rich history. Xinjiang's unique location allowed it to become a hub for intercultural communication. It has been inhabited by a variety of civilizations, faiths, and languages from the ancient past, according to study. The Uyghur people, on the other hand, today make up the majority of the region's population. Xinjiang, China's most ethnically diverse province is a shining example of peaceful coexistence and tolerance.

As there are several religious practices, such as Buddhism and others, there is a need for faith. Xinjiang became a center for the propagation of Buddhism once Muslims and Arab traders arrived on the Silk Road. A unique history of religious and cultural diversity can be found throughout the province, as this study demonstrates.

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