



SECRETS OF THE
SILK ROAD

BOWERS MUSEUM
SANTA ANA, CALIFORNIA

CONTENTS

| | |
|--|----|
| Foreword | 8 |
| Peter C. Keller, Ph.D., President Bowers Museum, Santa Ana, California | |
| Foreword | 10 |
| Joel A. Bartsch, Director Houston Museum of Natural Science, Houston, Texas | |
| Foreword | 12 |
| Richard Hodges, O.B.E., Ph.D., The Williams Director University of Pennsylvania Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania | |
| Preface | 14 |
| Sheng Chun-Shou, Director Cultural Heritage Bureau of Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region | |
| Editor's Message | 16 |
| Victor Mair, Ph.D., Professor of Chinese Language and Literature University of Pennsylvania, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania | |
| Publication Sponsor's Message | 20 |
| Donald B. Murray, Chairman and CEO Resources Global Professionals, Irvine, California | |

| | |
|---|-----|
| PART ONE | 24 |
| Essays on the Silk Road | |
| The Archaeology of the Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region | 26 |
| Victor Mair, Ph.D., Professor of Chinese Language and Literature University of Pennsylvania, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania | |
| The Yingpan Man | 54 |
| Ulf Jager, Ph.D. Victor Mair, Ph.D. | |
| Notes on the History of the "Silk Routes" | 58 |
| Lothar von Falkenhausen, Ph.D., Department of Art History University of California at Los Angeles | |
| Early Textiles | 70 |
| Elizabeth Wayland Barber, Ph.D., Professor Emerita of Archaeology and Linguistics Occidental College, Los Angeles, California | |
| Genetic Affinities of the Tarim Basin People | 80 |
| Spencer Wells, Ph.D., Explorer-In-Residence and Director, The Genographic Project National Geographic Society, Washington DC | |
| Timeline of the Silk Road | 88 |
| PART TWO | 90 |
| Secrets of the Silk Road: A Catalog | |
| BIBLIOGRAPHY | 215 |

Archaeology of the Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region

Editor: Mair, Ph.D.

As its name implies, Xinjiang ("New Borders") was a late addition to the Chinese empire. It was not until 1768 that this name was first used, and the Manchus only succeeded in making Xinjiang a province in 1884. Before that, starting from around the second century during the Han Dynasty, this region was known to the Chinese as Xiyu ("Western Regions"). Broadly speaking, Xiyu could refer vaguely to the entirety of Central Asia, West Asia, South Asia, Eastern Europe, and Northern Africa. More narrowly, Xiyu referred to the area that lay to the west of the end of the Gansu Corridor (i.e., beyond Dunhuang and the final passes of the Great Wall system) as far as the Pamir Mountains (the "Roof of the World"). Its northern limits are defined by the Altai Mountains and its southern boundary by the Kunlun Mountains (Qurum Tagh) and the A'erjin Mountains (Altyn Tagh), beyond which was found the vast Tibetan Plateau. Separating the northern part of this region from the south are the formidable Tian Shan (Tängri Tagh, Heavenly Mountains). To the south of the Tian Shan is the Tarim Basin, which is filled with the Tāklimakan Desert, the second largest in the world. In neutral, geographical terms, this region may be referred to simply as Eastern Central Asia, but it has also been called by many other names, such as Eastern Turkestan or Uyghurstan, to designate the ethnic groups who live there. Since the end of the nineteenth century, it has been known to the Chinese, and increasingly by the world, as Xinjiang.

Whatever we call it, this is an enormous area, constituting fully one sixth of the whole of the People's Republic of China. Xinjiang is as big as Britain, France, Germany, and Italy combined, more than 1,600,000 square kilometers. Because it sits in the center of the Eurasian landmass, far from any ocean, and is, moreover, surrounded by high mountains on all four sides, it is one of the most arid regions on earth. This aridity, coupled with extremes of temperature, ranging from -40 degrees centigrade to +40 degrees centigrade, accounts for the extraordinary state of preservation of countless historic and prehistoric artifacts, as well as human remains. The crossroads of Eurasia, Xinjiang is thus not only a treasure house of mineral and other natural wealth, it is also a storehouse of precious materials for understanding the human past, particularly the last four millennia, when the first human settlements were established in this region. The archeological riches of Xinjiang are by no means determined by its central position on the celebrated Silk Road (primarily a medieval phenomenon); there are important sites for every period of prehistory and history from the beginning of the Bronze Age to the present.

Chronology of Human Activity in Xinjiang from Archeological Evidence

There is very little evidence for human activity in the area now known as Xinjiang during the Paleolithic period. Only recently (since 1985) have a few scattered reports of the finding of Paleolithic materials been made. It is noteworthy that nearly all of the sites for these materials are located along the southwest rim of the region, which indicates strongly that they are spillovers from contiguous regions. Aside from a much-disputed skull fragment from the western edges of the region, said to date to 30,000 BP, which no one seems to take seriously any longer, the materials that have been put forward as dating to the Paleolithic are the following:

1. High on the Pamir Plateau, 34 km southeast of Tashkurgan, three separate

places showing evidence of fires made by humans were discovered in a Late Pleistocene stratum on a riverbank. Nearby were collected a large, chipped stone tool and several stone flakes. It has been suggested by the discoverers that these are Late Paleolithic artifacts.

2. More than 10 km south of Hetian, six hammer stones, flakes, and other tools were found in a Late Pleistocene stratum of a riverbank.

3. About 25 km southeast of the Lop County seat, a chipped stone core and a flake were found in a Late Pleistocene stratum of a dry riverbank.

4. In Minfeng County, 15 km north of the confluence of the two main tributaries of the Niyā River, five stone flakes bearing indications of having been chipped by a stone hammer were found.

Questions, however, have been raised about whether any of these finds actually date to the Late Pleistocene. For example, the fireplaces outside Tashkurgan were found not far from modern kilns, and all of the other artifacts mentioned in items 2 to 4 were gathered from the exposed surface, not excavated. Consequently, we must conclude that evidence of human activity during the Paleolithic in Xinjiang is still problematic. Considering the fact, however, that Paleolithic sites have been discovered in the neighboring countries of Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan, and Tajikistan, we can expect that there will eventually be discovered evidence of Paleolithic activity in Xinjiang as well, at least along the western perimeter. Indeed, Late Paleolithic (20,000 BP) stone tools have recently been found in Hoboksar (Qobuqsar) County in the far northwest of the region, but they clearly represent continuity with cultures across the border in the Tarbagatay Mountains of what is now Kazakhstan.

Although evidence for the Mesolithic period in Xinjiang is somewhat more reliable and plentiful than that for the Paleolithic, it is still scanty and dependent almost exclusively on collected artifacts. Interestingly, most of the sites from which supposedly Mesolithic materials have been recovered are in the eastern or northeastern portion of the region.

These include:

1. Qijiao Jing (Yetä Quduq, Heptagonal Well) in Hami (Qumul), which has yielded microliths, flaked tools, and cores, some showing extensive reworking.
2. A much smaller number and variety of stone artifacts, including a core and some microliths, have been recovered from Sandao Ling (Ridge of Three Peaks), also in Hami.
3. More than a hundred flakes and microliths have been found at Dikan'er (Dikhar) in Shanshan (Pichan) County.
4. At Yingdu'erkushi, also in Shanshan County, microlithic blades showing evidence of retouching have been found.

5. From Qichengzi (Seven Cities) have been found 160 stone tools, primarily microliths (cores and blades), but also some larger flaked tools.

Although much work remains to be done to document the Mesolithic in Xinjiang, it would appear that it did exist in the eastern part of the region and that it was tied to a hunter-gatherer mode of subsistence. Nonetheless, its presence in Xinjiang appears to have been sporadic, minimal, and indistinct.

In the early days of Xinjiang archeology, extensive surface finds of microliths, painted pottery, and pebble tools led to the belief that the Neolithic was widespread throughout the region. More sober analysis, however, revealed that the typology and stratigraphy of alleged Neolithic sites and burials were extremely confused and vague, the absolute date (when it could be determined) was invariably in the second millennium BC or later, and there was generally presence of bronze or iron. Such ambiguous Neolithic sites include Astanä (outside Turfan) in eastern Xinjiang, Chaiwopu (Otanliq) near Ürümchi in north-central Xinjiang, the area around Lopnur and Xinge'er (Qinggir) in Yuli County of southeast Xinjiang, and Upal in Shufu (Qäshqär-Konashähär) County of southwest Xinjiang. All of these supposed Neolithic artifacts, including chipped microliths, as well as pottery shards, were pieces collected from the surface. While their shape and nature do not rule out assigning them to the Neolithic, without further corroborating evidence we may only say that they potentially belong to the Neolithic. Furthermore, no settlements are associated with these scattered finds, and they are, in any event, not thought to be older than the early Bronze Age sites south of the Quruk Tagh, i.e., ca. 4000 BP.

The Chalcolithic (or Aeneolithic) is a transitional period between the Neolithic and the Bronze Age. Because the Neolithic remains doubtful and the Bronze Age has only recently been indentified for Xinjiang, it is impossible to speak with any confidence of a Chalcolithic Age in Xinjiang.

The Bronze Age was for long a large gap in Xinjiang archeology because its sites were misidentified as either Neolithic or Chalcolithic. It was only during the latter part of the twentieth century that many sites in Xinjiang were properly identified as belonging to the Bronze Age. Among these are the following: Nanwan Cemetery, Lanzhouwanzi (Kök-turaq), Kuisu (Küysu, or Kirsu), and Shirenzei (Sintash) in Balikun (Barköl) County; Junma Chang (Army Horse-breeding Farm), Yan Chi (Salt-pond), and Ka'ersang (Qaraüzhmä) in Yiwu (Aratürük) County; and Qarakhoja in the area of Turfan City -- eastern Xinjiang; Weisheng Xuexiao (Health-workers School) and cemetery in the area of Tacheng (Chöchäk) City -- northern Xinjiang; Gumugou (Ancient Cemetery Gulch, or Qäwrighul) on the lower reaches of the Könchi River; and Diwu Gongchang Muzang (Fifth Public Cemetery) of Yuli (Lopnur) County -- east-southeastern Xinjiang; Xintala (Yengidala, or Shintala) and Quhui (Chokhur) in Heshuo (Khoshut) County; Haladun (Qaradöng) in Kucha County -- north-central Xinjiang; the vicinity of Aksu City and Kalayu'ergun (Qarayurgun) in Aksu County; and Aketala (Aqtala) in Shufu (Qäshqär-Konashähär) County -- western Xinjiang. Additional Bronze Age sites (to be discussed below) have been discovered during the first decade of the twenty-first century.

The discovery of the Bronze Age in Xinjiang has not only revolutionized our understanding of the prehistory of the region itself, it has transformed our

conception of the dynamics of the development of civilization in Eurasia generally. This is especially the case because many of the Bronze Age sites in Xinjiang are associated with extremely well-preserved Europoid mummies (as well as tremendous amounts of skeletal remains) together with a wide array of artifacts, including bronze implements, pottery, querns and other stone tools, wooden utensils, textiles, basketry, and so forth that enable us to compare and link up East Central Asia sites with cultures in surrounding regions. The absolute date of the Bronze Age in Xinjiang ranges roughly between 2000 and 1000 BC.

As with the Bronze Age, it is only within the last few decades that the nature and extent of the Early Iron Age in Xinjiang have become clearer. It is now known that the Early Iron Age in Xinjiang lasted from approximately 1000 BC through the Han Dynasty (i.e., to around the second century CE), that it had close connections with adjacent cultures, and that society made rapid strides during this period. Population density, agriculture, more elaborate political organization, and many other aspects of human development are all reflected in the archeological record at numerous sites throughout the region.

From the time corresponding to the end of the Han Dynasty in the East Asian Heartland (EAH) onward (i.e., after the second century CE), all later periods of history are well represented in the archeological record. As with other parts of what is now China, massive construction efforts (reservoirs, factories, schools, roads, railroads, etc.) have unearthed an endless stream of materials for research. Because of Xinjiang's location and climate, archeologically recovered materials are plentiful, diverse, and often in excellent condition. With the aid of these new discoveries, the interactions of peoples and cultures in all four directions of the Eurasian landmass for the past four thousand years are becoming increasingly more comprehensible.

Archaeology Of Xinjiang By Area

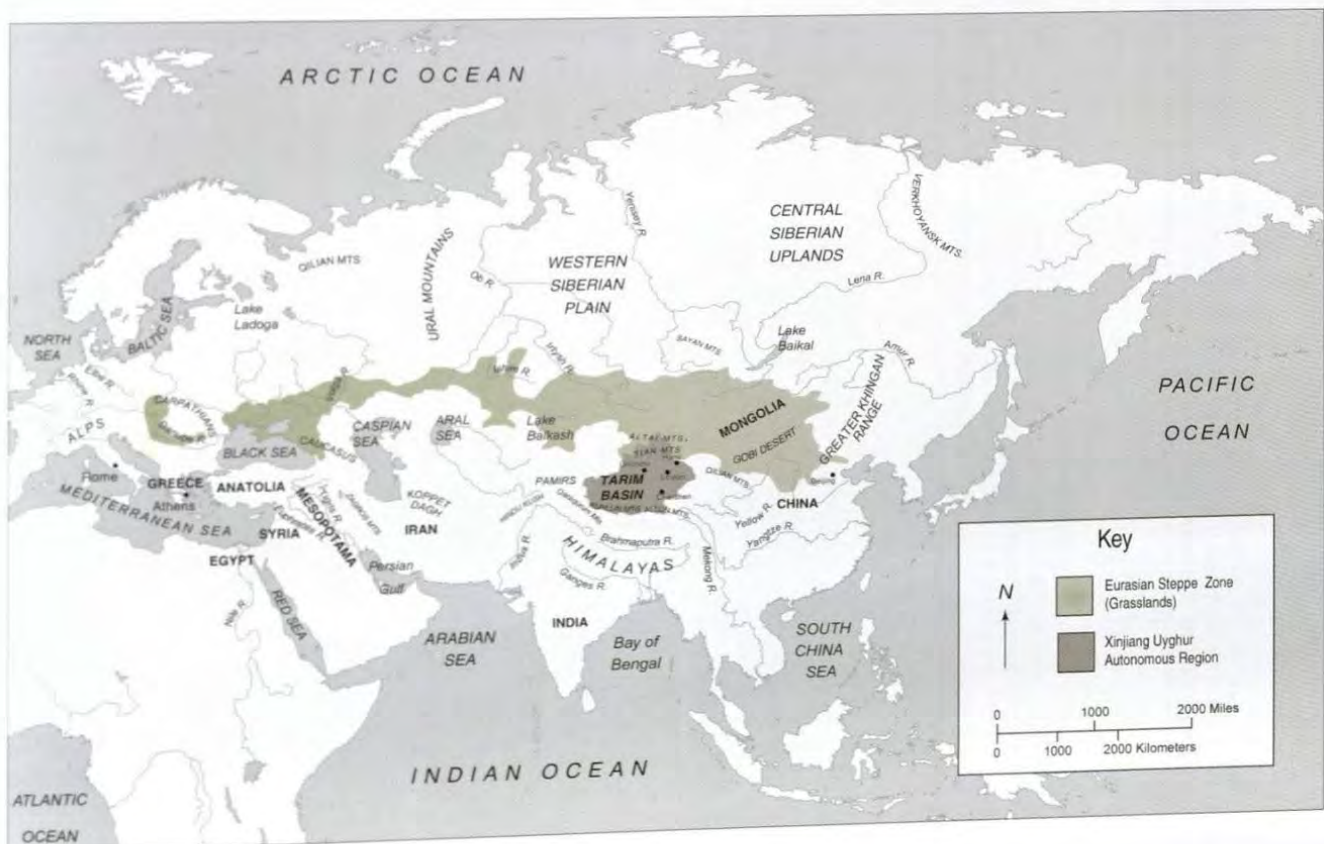
The archeology of the region may also be divided spatially into three main geographical sectors. The north – consisting of the Altai Mountains and the Tängri Tagh (Tian Shan; Heavenly or Celestial Mountains) and their eastward extension, Bogda Mountain, with the Dzungarian (Junggar) Basin and Gurbantüggüt Desert between them; the central portion – consisting of the southern foothills of the Tängri Tagh, the course of the Tarim and associated rivers, which stretch all the way from Kashgar in the west to Lop Nur in the east, the Turfan Basin and Hami area, and especially the Quruk Tagh (Dry Mountains), a low range lying between the relatively new Bosten Lake and the ancient, dried-up Lop Nur; and the southern portion, extending from the Pamirs in the west, along the Qurum Tagh (Kunlun) and Altyn Tagh to the east. The climate, environment, and topography of these three east-west bands of East Central Asia are all different, resulting in different times and types of settlements and cultures. While it would be impossible to name, much less describe, the geography and archeology of all the hundreds of locations in this vast, roughly tripartite region where ancient peoples lived and died during the past four millennia, we may make some general observations and point out several representative sites.

First of all, the center of the earliest, Bronze Age settlements (e.g., Gumugou [Qäwrighul], Xiaohe [Small River]) in East Central Asia lies to the south of the Quruk

Tagh along the Tarim River and its extensions (the Kōnchi, the Quruk / Qum, and so forth). Astonishingly, however, we now have irrefutable evidence that an outlier of the identical early Bronze Age culture existed around the same time (circa 2000-1500 BC) approximately 600 km to the southwest at the so-called Northern Cemetery far out in the desert on an extension of the Keriyä River (see below).

In the northern sector, there are scattered sites at the foot of the Altai, Tängri, and adjacent mountains. These tend to date from the middle to late Bronze Age (ca. 1200-500 BC), though there are also early Iron Age sites in this sector. Particularly noteworthy is the affinity of these northern sites with Bronze Age Afanasevo (3500-2500 BC) and Andronovo or Sintashta-Petrovka (ca. 2300-1000 BC) cultures on the steppe and in Siberia. Another noteworthy feature of the northern zone is that the high, broad intramontane valleys of the Tängri Tagh were home to truly nomadic cultures – quite like those on the steppe. They begin around 800 BC and continue right up to modern times. The horse (together with its sundry trappings) is a conspicuous feature of these first millennium BC steppe and steppe-derived cultures. It is worth mentioning that, like many of the desiccated mummies unearthed in and around the Tarim Basin, some of the frozen bodies discovered in the Altai region have blond or light brown hair, sported blue tattoos (a trait shared with Ötzi, the 5,300-year-old “Iceman” found on the Austro-Italian border high in the Ötztal Alps on the Schnalstal Glacier in September, 1991), wore peaked felt hats decorated with animals or animal carvings, and shared many other cultural attributes (see, for example, *National Geographic* [August, 2007], p. 20).

The middle sector of the region differs sharply in the chronology of its earliest sites.



Starting at the far western end, there are reports of alleged late Paleolithic surface finds, but these have not been securely confirmed by stratigraphic studies. If they are truly late Paleolithic or even early Neolithic, such finds are to be attributed to interlopers and hunter-gatherers from the adjacent regions to the west and northwest. From Kashgar eastward through Kucha and Qarashähär (Yanqi, near modern Korla) to Turfan, the most prominent archeological sites date to the period when Buddhism was dominant (roughly mid 3rd c. through 13th c.). They are clearly associated with influences from the southwest and south. However, there are some sites in the central portion of the middle sector, such as Charwighul, near Khotunsunbul (Hejing) county town, which lie at the foothills of the Tängri Tagh and show unmistakable affinities with the intramontane late Bronze Age-early Iron Age cultures to the north. Lastly, where the eastern end of the Tarim River bends toward the Southwest, we find the most ancient sites of the entire region. Xiaohe, Gumugou (Qäwrighul), and other sites related to the same cultural complex belong to the early Bronze Age and appear to be linked to cultures lying far to the west and northwest.

Finally, the western half of the southern sector of the region is characterized by association with cultures and peoples to the west, southwest, and south. During the historical period, sites such as those around Khotan, Keriya (Yutian), Niyä (Minfeng), and Miran display associations with Indian religions and administrative practices. At the same time, distant influences from Mesopotamia and the Mediterranean show up at Sampul and other sites. During the prehistoric period, most striking is an apparent movement of cultural influences from the north and northwest, with elements of steppe culture being evident at sites in the vicinity of Chärchän (Qiemo) and Charqilik (Ruoqiang).

In sum, geographically speaking, East Central Asia lies at the heart of Eurasia. This centrality of the region manifests itself archeologically and historically in two main ways:

1. Because East Central Asia is far from the littoral (coastal) and riverine routes of early human expansion out of Africa, and, moreover, is surrounded by high mountains and harsh deserts, it was one of the last places on earth to be populated.
2. Once human beings figured out how to traverse the mountains and deserts protecting East Central Asia and learned how to irrigate the oases they formed along the edges of the Tarim Basin and along rivers extending out into the desert, this region – which for the early period of human development was terra incognita – became the nexus of Eurasia.

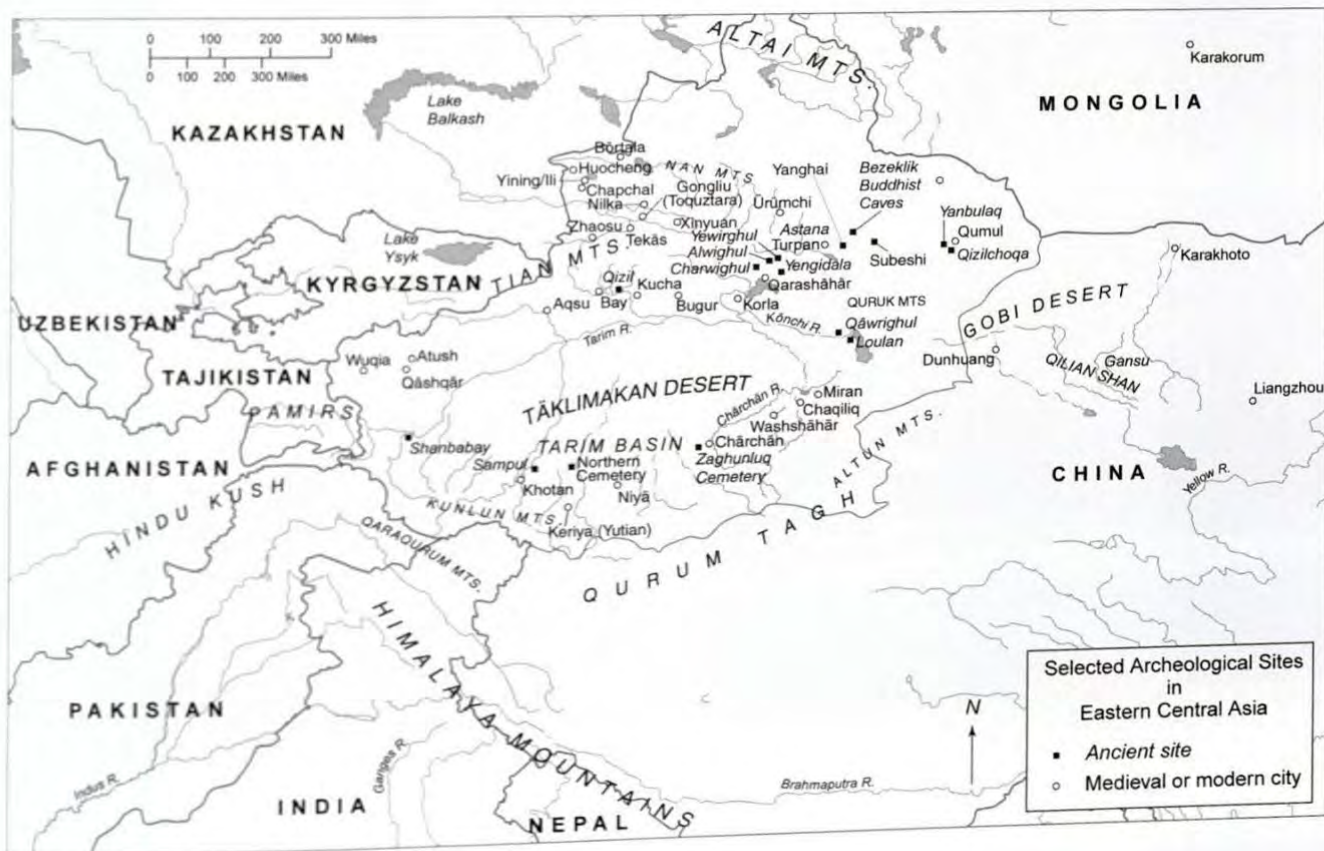
Due to the unique geographical, geological, and climatological conditions of East Central Asia, it has become the unparalleled storehouse of genetic, anthropological, and cultural material of peoples who entered it from all directions at different times during the last four millennia. That is the story palpably told in the magnificent exhibition of mummies and artifacts assembled in "Secrets of the Silk Road."

Representative Sites and Cultures of Xinjiang

Ayding Culture at Lake Aidingu (Ayding) and the Subeshi Cemeteries

Ayding culture refers to a group of sites in the Turfan (or Turpan) oasis and surrounding areas that get their name from Aidingu (Lake Ayding). The lake itself occupies the lowest point in the Turfan region (at 156 meters below sea level, it is the lowest spot on earth after the Dead Sea between Israel and Jordan). According to accounts of the historical period, this was later the territory of the Gushi (Cheshi or Jushi), a people who "lived in tents, followed the grasses and waters, and had considerable knowledge of agriculture. They owned cattle, horses, camels, sheep, and goats. They were proficient with bows and arrows." The Gushi were also noted for harassing travellers moving northward along the Silk Road from Loulan (Kroraina), and the territories of the Gushi and the kingdom of Loulan were linked in the account of the Han Dynasty traveller, Zhang Qian, during the second half of the second century BC, presumably because both were under the control of the Xiongnu (Huns).

There was variation among the different ancient cemeteries of the region, with some burials on wooden platforms or under timber beams and reed mats; other cemeteries revealed burials covered by small stone cairns. Burial was in the extended position, head to the west, and might occur singly or as a double grave. Black-on-red painted handmade ware accompanied the burials and there were also some wooden figures



similar to those found in the Gumugou (Qäwrighul) culture (q.v.). The Ayding culture is dated to c. 1400-700 BC, but most of the Subashi (Subeshi) cemeteries, commonly regarded as being related to the Ayding culture, persist later in the Iron Age to around the third century BC. The portion of the Subeshi cemeteries excavated in 1992 consisted of some forty low stone cairns covering burials set on wooden beds. There were special entrances into some of the burial shafts, and goods from later burials included iron. Evidence of diet was graphically preserved in such forms as a wooden bowl filled with millet and another containing the coccyx of a goat. Among the burials were seven very well-preserved mummies and the partial remains of a dozen or more additional mummies. One of the men wore leather leggings and woolen underpants, and was accompanied by a bow in a leather case and a set of arrows with wooden, bone, horn, and iron tips, apparently fashioned for different intended prey. The archery equipment is similar to that of the Scythians who traveled across the steppes. Among the mummies were several women who wore black hats with very tall peaks, looking much like witches. Some of them were also clothed in magnificent fur-lined cloaks and multi-colored woolen skirts that remind one of the skirts worn by Tibetan women.

The Ayding Lake cemetery itself had been seriously disturbed, although salvage work was done on about 50 tombs. Burial goods were fairly numerous, but by no means extravagant. The pottery was mostly red sandy ware, but there was also a small amount of gray sandy ware. It was hand modeled with a plain surface, but often covered with a red slip and black ornamentation. Stone implements include spindle whorls and whetstones. Bronze wares include a plaque with a pair of facing, recumbent horses, belt hooks, mirrors, arrowheads, hairpins, and so forth. Iron wares include small knives and arrowheads. A couple of gold leaf ornaments have also been recovered from the site.

Charwighul Culture at Chawuhugou

This culture gets its name from excavations carried out at Chawuhugou cemetery during 1983-84. It also includes tombs excavated at Qunbake (Chong Bagh) and Baozidong (Bozdöng). All three of these sites are located in the central portion of the southern foothills of the Tianshan (Tängri Tagh, Heavenly Mountains). Chawuhugou is 30 km west of Hejing district town. It consists of five large cemeteries spread over an area 5.2 km long. Cemetery I alone has approximately 700 burials, and cemetery IV has about 250 burials; there are a total of some 2,000 tombs in the five cemeteries all together. The graves are marked on the surface by stone cairns or low mounds with stone enclosures. The tomb chambers are lined with rounded stones and are elongated triangles with curved sides, oval, or circular in shape, with the shapes changing over the course of time. The mouths of some of the stone shaft tombs were covered by large stone slabs or wood. Some of the tombs have a short dromos (passageway) on one side. Most are multiple burials with the graves having been reopened to admit the accompanying burial.

The skeletal materials at Chawuhugou are plentiful and evidently Europoid in terms of their physical characteristics, but have not yet been studied in detail. Trepanation was common in cemetery IV. When the bones in the graves were not found in a disordered state, the deceased were seen to have been laid on their backs or sides in

a flexed position, oriented to the northwest. Around the edges of the tomb entrance, there is often a smaller attached chamber in which is buried the head of a horse (less often a bovine head) or a child. The attached graves are also lined with large, rounded stones, and generally have only a single horse or bovine skull and several forelegs and hoofs, although occasionally they may have more than one head. The ribs of a small ovicaprid with a bronze knife embedded in them were often buried as a sacrifice in the tomb chamber. The childrens' burials are either single or multiple and could, like the main graves, be reopened to admit later burials on a subsequent occasion.

Burial goods at Chawuhugou consist chiefly of pottery vessels, bronze implements, iron utensils, and tools made of stone, wood, or bone. Pottery types include spouted pitchers, single-handled pitchers, doubled-handled pitchers, jugs, kettles, bowls, single-handled cups, etc. Painted pottery is fairly numerous. Usually a red slip would be applied first, then a second, cream-colored slip would be applied over the area to be decorated in red. A smaller number of painted vessels used black directly onto the red slip. The decorations are mostly painted on the upper half of the vessels. The patterns are generally restricted to a band around the neck or two bands slanting downward on either side from the top. Usual patterns consist of triangles, fishnets, checkerboards, zigzags, vertical lines, meanders, lozenges, oblique stripes, and so on. Bronze implements include knives, arrowheads, hairpins, needles, awls, plaques, horse bits, etc. Iron utensils include kettles, awls, knives, and rings. Stone tools include querns, awls, and spindle whorls. Wooden grave goods include basins, ladles, spindles, arrows, and arrowheads. Bone items include arrowheads, spindles, and beads. More than ten C14 dates from the site range between 1000-500 BC. Thus Chawuhugou may be unmistakably assigned to the Early Iron Age. The people of the Chawuhugou culture were evidently agropastoralists who also engaged in some hunting and gathering. It is, furthermore, likely that in spring and summer they took their herds up into the lush, high mountain pastures that lay to the north of them.

Qiemu area including the Zaghunluq Cemetery in Chärchän County

Located about 400 km southwest of Lopnur in the southeast corner of the XUAR, Qiemu (Uyghur Chärchän; Calmadana in Prakrit documents) boasts some of the best preserved human and other organic remains of the ancient world. One of the reasons for this astonishing state of preservation is that the sandy soil in which several early cemeteries in the vicinity of Qiemu are located has an extremely high saline content. This is particularly true of the tableland cemetery outside the little village of Zaghunluq.

The area, previously well watered by the standards of the Tarim Basin, has since been degraded largely to barren desert except for the strip of small oases around Qiemu. The layer of rock salt at Zaghunluq is a meter thick, attracting the local peasants to come dig it up. As they do, they expose the ancient graves, which leads to tomb looting. This vicious cycle has reduced the large, flat cemetery to a pebbly plain 1.1 km by 750 m, strewn with textile fragments, bones, and other remains ripped from the tombs. In 1985, a team composed primarily of Uyghur archeologists uncovered five tombs, of which two had not been looted, as part of emergency

salvage excavations. One of the tombs, a shallow shaft covered with a willow coffin, contained the body of an infant mummy wrapped in burgundy-colored plain weave wool. Accompanying the infant was a drinking cup made of a goat's horn and what appears to be a sewn-up sheep's teat that was meant to serve as a primitive baby bottle. Nearby was deposited the head of a sheep.

Close by the shallow grave of the infant was a far more spectacular tomb (85QMZM2) which had a large overpit and then a lower pit of smaller (but still relatively large) dimensions. Beneath a thick layer of reeds and wooden planks (with the remains of a sheep skull, cow horn, and pieces of leather), the excavators penetrated through five more layers of covering material. The first consisted of reed mats, a white felt blanket, and then a heavy, brown caftan. After that came another layer of reeds and then a layer of skins of three different animals -- a horse, an ass (?), and a buffalo or yak (there are still yaks in the high mountains to the south of Qiemo). Bound wooden twigs and then timber beams constituted the final covering. Willow mats and branches served for a floor. Within the main burial chamber were the bodies of a man (now known to the world as "Ur-David") and three women. The man and one of the women were in a remarkable state of preservation. They were wearing woolen garments of the same burgundy shade as that of the infant from the shallow grave nearby. The robe of the woman is of particularly outstanding quality, being so tightly woven of fine thread (perhaps containing cashmere, in what is called long-hop twill) that the surface still carries a luxurious sheen.

Grave goods included a round-based clay jar, wooden utensils, a milking pail, knitting needles, arrows, and a variety of textiles. Less than two meters from the burial pit was another pit with the skull and foreleg of a horse, the latter of which had had the bone removed and the hide stuffed with reeds, reminiscent of practices known elsewhere toward the west among ancient Indo-Europeans.

Additional emergency excavations carried out at Zaghunluq in 1989 and then again in 1996 recovered a tremendous amount of extremely well-preserved human remains and associated artifacts, including two harps, a stainless steel needle, what appear to be bundles of divination rods, and a vast array of astonishingly beautiful textiles, including lovely embroideries with fresh colors and gold thread.

The date of the cemetery at Zaghunluq is generally held to be c. 1000 BC on the basis of five C14 readings, but pottery typology and similar considerations would bring it down closer to the range of 800-600 BC. There are other ancient burial grounds in the vicinity of Qiemo that date roughly between 200 BC and 200 CE.

Loulan

Loulan was a fabled kingdom and walled city of the Western Regions, the remains of which are located on the northwest shores of the dried-up lake, Lop Nur (89°55'22" X 40°29'55") in EAST CENTRAL ASIA. During the Han Dynasty (roughly second century BC to second century AD), this was the first city-state a traveller from China would encounter upon entering the Western Regions. To the southwest, the way through Loulan led to Qiemo (q.v.), Jingjue (Niyä, q.v.), and Khotan; to the northwest, the way led to Jushi, Yanqi, Wulei, and Shule. Thus Loulan was a major hub that

controlled traffic on the Silk Road. After the Han emperor Wu Di opened relations with the Western Regions during the second half of the second century BC, embassies and traders travelling westward would have to pass through Loulan.

Although the city has been abandoned for nearly two millennia and subjected to the harsh climate of the windy desert, its neatly laid-out network of streets is still visible, as are its fortresses, monasteries and stupas, marketplaces, residential quarters, and government offices. Among artifacts recovered from the ruins of Loulan are Han Dynasty coins, bronze arrowheads, pottery vessels, wooden utensils, and woolen textiles. Also found at Loulan were documents written in Kharoshti Prakrit, Sogdian, and Chinese. By the fourth century AD, the city had faded into oblivion. At the beginning of the twentieth century, Loulan was rescued from obscurity by European explorers, in particular Sven Hedin.

In recent years, Loulan has once again become famous worldwide. This time, however, it was not for the ancient city-state of the second century BC and following centuries, but for the remains of a Bronze Age woman who lived nearly two millennia earlier, namely, the Beauty of Loulan. She was found in a sandy, shallow grave on the banks of the Töwän River. Her hair was blondish-brown and she was dressed in undyed, plain-weave wool and fur. The beauty's hair was about 30 cm long and was rolled up within a hat made of felt over a woven base that had two goose feathers stuck in it. She was approximately 40-45 years old at the time of her death and was probably about 1.56 meters tall when she was alive. Examination of her lungs revealed a large quantity of soot and silicate dust, undoubtedly the result of wind-blown sand and household fires. Accompanying the woman were a wooden comb and a long, narrow straw basket. When she was unearthed, her face and upper body were covered by a large, woven winnowing basket. It is clear from all of this that the inhabitants of this region were agropastoralists already at the beginning of the second millennium BC.

Also in the vicinity of Loulan are a number of other cemeteries dating from c. 1800 BC to about the fourth c. AD. Some of the burials in these ancient graveyards have yielded extremely well-preserved mummies, together with a wide assortment of organic and inorganic remains. What is perhaps most striking about these artifacts is the high degree of cultural continuity over a period of two thousand years to which they attest, with some of the later mummies wearing the same kinds of hats and accompanied by the same types of tightly woven little baskets as the Beauty of Loulan.

Another important nearby tomb that has only recently become known lies approximately 4 km northeast of site LE (23 km northeast of Ancient Loulan City). This tomb dates to the 3rd-4th century; salvage explorations were carried out in 2003 after severe looting. A brightly painted coffin of local manufacture, but displaying cultural influences from the East Asian Heartland, was recovered from the tomb, as were a variety of textiles and other artifacts.

Gumugou Culture

Quite literally, the name Gumugou means "Gully of Ancient Graves." Archeologists regard the Gumugou culture as among the earliest manifestations of Bronze Age

settlement in the Tarim Basin. The culture was situated 70 km west of the great dried salt lake of Lopnur along the Kongque ("Peacock"; Uyghur Könchi) River and is best known for its eponymous cemetery which dates to c. 2000-1550 BC. The culture occupies the area that coincides with the later kingdom of Loulan (q.v.) during the Han period. It is of major interest because it and other nearby, associated sites have yielded the earliest evidence for Europoid mummies in Eastern Central Asia, and it displays similarities with cultures outside the region, thus providing important clues concerning the origin of some of the peoples of the Tarim Basin.

At Gumugou, excavations uncovered 42 graves which may be divided into two groups. The larger group consists of 36 burials in vertical pits. The Gumugou people placed their dead in an extended position on the sandy bottom of these pits. They then encased the bodies in coffins of poplar (*Populus diversifolia*) and sealed the top of the burial with animal skins, carpets, or a basket-shaped cover. The remaining six tombs all belonged to males and they had a very special surface feature: seven concentric rings of wooden stakes radiating outward from the center of the pit to constitute what has been interpreted as a solar configuration approximately 50-60 m in diameter. In effect, this produced a forest of erect posts with one of these configurations counting nearly 900 upright timbers.

The deceased wore ornaments of jade around their necks and wrists. Unlike burials from later periods which were dressed in trousers, coats, and shirts, most of the Gumugou burials wore no clothing other than leather shoes, although their bodies were wrapped in woolen blankets. Organic objects, such as small, extremely finely woven baskets, were preserved in excellent condition; in them are usually found grains of wheat. The deceased were generally accompanied by a small bag of *Ephedra sinica* (*mahuang*) which was most likely employed for medico-religious use.

The people of the Gumugou culture engaged in both agriculture and stockbreeding (cattle, sheep, goats, horses, and camels). This is a European or West Asian "menu" which contrasts sharply with the typical Chinese agricultural diet of millet and pork. Wheat was domesticated in southwest Asia as were sheep and goats. The Gumugou people hunted deer, wild sheep, and birds, and they also fished. Crafts included leatherworking, weaving of woolen textiles, felt-making, and working in jade, wool, and bone. Some fragments of copper have been recovered, and there is circumstantial evidence that much harder bronze tools were employed. The marks of axe-blades on hard wooden posts and coffin planks indicate clearly that they must have been made by a harder-edged tool than a stone or copper axe; only a bronze alloy could have made such cut marks.

Ancient City of Niyä

The ancient city of Niyä lies along the banks of the old Niyä River deep in the desert more than a hundred kilometers north of the modern city of Minfeng, midway along the southern rim of the Tarim Basin. Most scholars identify the site of Niyä with the Han Dynasty East Central Asian kingdom known as Jingjue.

The ruins are made up of two main sections. The southern section is relatively small, with only ten some houses partly revealed above the surface of the sand. It is situated on either side of a gully that runs through shifting sand dunes. The area of

the northern section is much larger, with hundreds of houses clustered three or four to a group and spread out over an extensive area. While not as elaborately carved as those at Loulan (q.v.), the houses themselves show that the people constructed them with a high degree of devotion and expertise. There are also an iron smeltery and a bronze-casting facility as well as Buddhist stupas. The northern section is of truly impressive proportions, stretching ten kilometers east to west and four to five kilometers north to south, but the town had no surrounding wall. The northern and southern sections are separated by a distance of approximately five to six kilometers.

In the early part of the twentieth century, the British-Hungarian explorer Aurel Stein visited Niyā several times, and there have been repeated excavations at this site since the founding of the People's Republic of China, most of them financed and organized by Japanese expeditions. More than a thousand artifacts have been excavated, collected, and sorted out. Among them are Han bronze mirrors, Han brocades, grains, woolen textiles, furs, *wuzhu* (the standard Han denomination) coins, wooden implements, pottery vessels, stone tools, bronze and iron utensils, a rich assortment of glass beads, shell ornaments, and silver rings. In addition, a large number of Kharoshti Prakrit documents have been recovered from the site, as well as a beautiful jet or lignite seal belonging to the government grain storehouse, and the seal of the Shanshan (modern Pichan County to the northeast of Niyā) Commandant who exercised military authority over Niyā for a period of time.

Two kilometers north of the ruins of the city is a cemetery from which several mummies have been recovered. Among these was an encoffined couple clad in the most exquisite and extremely well-preserved silk garments, and accompanied by a rich array of burial goods, including a complete set of bow and arrows with case and quiver.

Although the precise ethnicity of the people at ancient Niyā is yet to be determined, they were Caucasoid of some sort. The fact that they used Kharoshti Prakrit for administrative, legal, and daily purposes is clear evidence that they were strongly influenced by India. At the same time, the bronze mirrors, silks, embroidery, lacquerware, and other goods show that they had very extensive trade relations with China. Perhaps the most remarkable feature of the Niyā site, however, is the astonishing range of household items that survived, including cupboards, tables, chairs, and even mouse traps -- most of which were unknown to China at the time.

Sampul (Shanpula) Cemetery

One of the four garrison towns and the major oasis center of the southern rim of the Tarim Basin was Khotan, yet little is known about the area in which it is located before the opening of the Silk Road. East of Khotan itself is a local culture typified by the cemetery at Sampul, which dates to around the first century BC. Of the numerous graves here, 52 have been properly excavated. The graves are divided into several types. Among the earliest were two large shafts measuring approximately 5 meters by 4 meters and 2 meters deep containing astonishingly large collective burials of 133 and 146 people respectively. Accompanying the burials were textiles -- felt, wool, silk, and cotton -- which included a truly amazing pair of trousers. These were fashioned from cut-up tapestry (judging from the dyes and weave, clearly an

import from the west), decorated with a centaur and a Roman-looking face with striking blue eyes. The figure holds a spear against the right side of his body. Other objects of wood and bronze were recovered from these shaft graves.

There were also burials in timber-built graves and boat-shaped coffins. Physical anthropological analysis of 56 individuals from the collective burials indicates a mainly Caucasoid population similar to the Saka burials of the southern Pamirs. Smaller collective burials were also found with the deceased wrapped in reed mats, while 41 burials experienced individual secondary inhumation. Remains of wheat, peaches, and apricots were recovered from the tombs.

The excavated portion of Sampul is but a small part of an entire series of cemeteries which stretches along a one-kilometer strip for a distance of about 23 kilometers. Many of the graves have been robbed and the entire area is littered with bones, textile fragments and other artifacts that have been dug up by local people searching for valuables, firewood, or while digging new graves on top of the old ones. The human remains contain sufficient evidence to identify the deceased as blond- or brown-haired. The number of burials originally interred is probably to be counted in the many thousands.

Astanä Cemetery

Situated 40 km southeast of the modern city of Turfan, Astanä is a large cemetery that is one of the most important archeological sites of the medieval period in Xinjiang. Part of the cemetery also lies near the village of Qarakhoja.

Astanä is a Uyghur word meaning "capital city," a name that the place must have acquired from the fact that it is at the center of the ancient kingdom of Gaochang (Qocho). Indeed, the Astanä cemetery lies in the northern suburbs of Gaochang City (also called İdiqut Shähär ["City of the Ruler"]), just beyond the towering walls and the ruins of the vast fortresses, palaces, temples, stupas, and other buildings of the capital. This was the public cemetery for the inhabitants of the capital city from the beginning of the third century to the tenth century.

The cemetery measures approximately eight square kilometers and is densely filled with graves, nearly all of which had been repeatedly looted in the past. In the early part of the twentieth century, Astanä and the adjoining city of Gaochang had been investigated by a series of foreign explorers and archeologists, including Aurel Stein (British), P. K. Kozloff (Russian), A. von le Coq (German), and Tachibana Zuiho (Japanese). During the 1930s, Chinese scholars visited the area, concentrating on the study of tomb inscriptions and other texts. After the founding of the People's Republic of China, a series of thirteen excavations was undertaken in the cemetery, unearthing more than 460 ancient tombs. Depending on their shapes, the tombs may be divided into three different types which coincide with successive periods of history.

Despite the repeated looting of the past, modern excavations have yielded an enormous number of valuable artifacts, including marvelously preserved textiles of astonishing variety and outstanding quality, documents in numerous languages,

sculptures, and handicrafts. The silks of every imaginable weave and hue are unparalleled for this period, making the Astanä finds the most important repository of materials for the study of textiles from the medieval period. Documents in Chinese alone number nearly 3,000 (many of them had been cut up to serve as padding for shoes!), and include contracts, account books, official records, and catalogs. These documents are invaluable for studying the institutional, economic, military, and cultural history of the Western Regions (as seen from the point of view of China; i.e., Eastern Central Asia) during the medieval period. Equally important for understanding the social history of the Western Regions during the medieval period are the incredibly well-preserved wooden and clay figurines of all sorts, which tell us so much about daily life: clothing, horse trappings, games, cooking, transportation, cosmetics, religious conceptions, and so forth. Another outstanding feature of the Astanä cemetery are the dehydrated foodstuffs: breads, fruits, nuts, meats, sweets, grains, etc. In short, by careful examination of the textual and visual materials recovered from the Astanä cemetery, it is possible to gain a vivid reconstruction of what life must have been like for the inhabitants of this major Silk Road city during the third through tenth centuries.

Unlike the earlier graveyards at numerous sites elsewhere in the Xinjiang region where the deceased were largely of Caucasoid extraction, those buried in the Astanä cemetery were nearly all East Asians. This ethnic makeup of the Astanä cemetery is a graphic reflection of the dramatic shift in ethnicity that occurred throughout the Tarim Basin after the Han Dynasty, particularly in the eastern part of the region where the numbers of immigrants from East Asia grew rapidly during that period. Another great difference from the Bronze Age and Early Iron Age cemeteries elsewhere in Xinjiang is that, from tomb inscriptions at Astanä, we are often able to identify various mummies by name and, upon occasion, can even read about them in old history books.

Because of the extreme aridity and cold winter temperatures of the area, the corpses found in the Astanä cemetery must at one time have numbered in the thousands. However, most of these were seriously damaged by interlopers, so that only 305 were recorded by modern investigators and, of these, only twenty or thirty have made it to the safety of museum conservation facilities. When combined with the textual and artifactual materials that accompanied them, these mummies of over a thousand years ago seem almost to come alive before our eyes.

Ancient City of Jiaohe

Located approximately 10 km west of the modern city of Turpan, or Turfan, in the XUAR, Jiaohe (literally, "Conjunction of Rivers") derives its name from its peculiar geological configuration. Oriented from northwest to southeast, this entire ancient city was built on top of a long (1,650 m), narrow (about 300 m on average) plateau of hard packed loess that rises abruptly (approximately 30 m) from the valley floor of two rivers that flow along the back and both sides of the plateau, then come together at the sharply tipped front of the plateau.

Around the base are green fields irrigated with the plentiful river water, but the plateau itself is devoid of vegetation, and all water used there had to be hauled up

from the rivers below or from deep wells dug down from the top of the plateau.

Because of the willow-leaf-shaped plateau's natural configuration, it was not necessary to build a defensive wall around the city's perimeter. Another unusual aspect of the construction of the city is that most of its buildings and streets were dug out of the living earth. Some cave-like structures were hollowed directly out of the earth laterally, while many of the houses were dug vertically downward and then roofed over. Rammed earth construction of walls upward from the surface account for only a very small proportion of the buildings at Jiaohe. Some of the houses dug into the living earth had second storeys made with rammed earth walls.

The upper (northwest) third of the plateau is occupied primarily by a cemetery dating to the sixth century and before. Nearly all of the buildings at Jiaohe were constructed in the lower two thirds of the plateau toward the southeast. Access to the city was gained by two main gates, one on the east and one on the southwest side, although there were a few other more precarious access points that could be used by those capable of the steep ascent.

The city can be divided roughly into three sectors. The main north-south street separates the residential areas into an eastern and a western sector. At the northern end of the main street is a large temple that serves as the center of a sprawling monastery district. In the southern part of the eastern sector of the city, there is a grand residential courtyard of more than 3,000 square meters. Other buildings include government offices and a prison.

The ancient city of Jiaohe lasted from approximately the third century BC to the latter part of the thirteenth century AD when it was destroyed by the Mongols in a conflagration after more than three decades of conflict. From 108 BC to AD 450, at which time power was transferred to Gaochang (see Astana), Jiaohe was the political, economic, and cultural center of the Turpan Basin as the capital of the kingdom of Nearer Jushi and its successor states.

Aside from the thorough investigations that have taken place on the plateau itself, there has also more recently been a series of excavations at sites in the near vicinity of Jiaohe. Most prominent among these are Gouxu (Gully West) and Goubei (Gully North). From cemeteries at both of these sites, numerous artifacts dating from the 2nd c. BC to the 9th c. AD have been recovered. Among the grave goods are painted pottery with local characteristics, wooden articles, bone artifacts, earthen funeral figurines, epitaphs, bronzes, ironware, gold and silver coins, a gold crown with a design of wild animals, belt plaques, rings and cap ornaments, malachite flowers, a large quantity of Han period *wuzhu* coins, a Western Han mirror with a design of stars and clouds, all with strong local characteristics. So far only a small proportion of the thousands of tombs in these cemeteries has been professionally excavated, yet the results already reveal a tremendous amount of significant information about the Jushi people who were the earliest rulers of this area.

Sidaogou (Tört Erik) Site

Located 10 km southwest of the Mulei (Muri) County seat, the Sidaogou (Tört Erik)

site was discovered in 1977 and preliminary excavations were undertaken that same year. Although the construction of the large house at this site is not clear, post holes and a storage pit lined with stones have been identified. There are earthen shaft tombs and catacomb tombs, most of which have only a single burial, but occasionally two or three individuals may be found in a single tomb. The deceased were laid out either in an extended supine position or contracted supine position with the head pointing to the northwest or southwest. A few of the graves had bronze implements. Pottery from the site includes two-handled and single-handled jars, two-handled basins, single-handled cups, bowls, plates, and cauldrons. Some of the pottery pieces have a small perforation near the rim around the mouth of the vessel. There is a certain amount of painted pottery with a red slip and red or black decoration. The patterns of the decoration include fish-nets, water chestnuts, whorls, circles filled with curved lines, vertical stripes, waves, and so forth. Stone tools include microlithic cores, sharp-bladed flakes, and large polished tools like bolas, pestles, querns, hoes, and adzes. Bronze implements include arrowheads, awls, needles, spindle whorls, combs, and belt hooks. Iron objects include small knives, rings, and ornaments. Nine C14 dates cluster on the period between 600 and 300 BC.

In the same area of the northern foothills of Bogda Peak, in the eastern part of the Tian Shan ("Heavenly Mountains"; Tängri Tagh), three other sites that resemble the Sidaogou type have been discovered.

Yanbulaq Culture at Yanbulaq and Qizilchoqa

All of the sites related to this archeological culture are in the desert near relatively small oases approximately 60 km west or northwest of the city of Hami (Qumul) in eastern Xinjiang. Because of its location in the far eastern portion of the so-called Western Regions, relatively early date (the latter part of the second millennium BC), the presence of bronze implements and wheeled conveyances, spectacular textiles (including plaids), tattoos, and -- above all -- abundant human remains (both mummies and skeletons), Yanbulaq is one of the key cultures for understanding the dynamics of interaction between the eastern and western parts of Eurasia during late prehistory.

Some American scholars have alleged a distant connection between Yanbulaq culture and the still somewhat shadowy BMAC (Bactria-Margiana Archeological Complex) of Western Central Asia, but this remains to be demonstrated, both in terms of physical anthropology and material culture, not to mention the discrepancy in dating, with the BMAC settlements ranging from c. 2200 to c. 1700 BC and Yanbulaq culture having a range of dates almost exactly a thousand years later.

The eponymous site of Yanbulaq was first discovered in 1957 and 14 tombs were excavated there in the same year. In 1986, a total of 76 additional tombs were uncovered. All of these tombs used mud bricks in their construction and can be divided into three periods or types. The first period or type has shaft tombs with second-tier platforms and are relatively large in scale. Most of the tombs belonging to this period have multiple burials. Where complete skeletons survive in these tombs they are basically lying in flexed position on their right side, with their head to the southeast. Grave goods include pottery bowls, footed bowls with single strap handles, hollow-handled pots, single-handled cups (large and small), bronze

knives, bronze arrowheads, iron (N.B.) knives, and so forth. There is a fair amount of painted pottery in these graves, basically having a red slip with black decorations, but occasionally using a cream-colored slip. Patterns utilized include curved lines, sawtooth designs, waves, S-shapes, inverted triangles filled in with fish-net designs, vertical lines, crosses with open (hollow) strokes, and so forth. The human remains display some characteristics of East (Khams) Tibetans. The second period or type has shaft tombs that are simpler and cruder in comparison with tombs of the first period or type. Burials are generally single and, where there are complete skeletons, they are facing left in flexed position without any particular directionality of the head. Grave goods are chiefly pottery (small, single-handled cups, single- and double-handled jars, bowls, footed bowls with single strap handles, hollow-handled pots, bronze knives, and wooden buckets. Painted pottery is noticeably less than that of period or type I burials, while human remains displaying Europoid characteristics are noticeably more numerous. Tombs of the third period or type are shallow graves with a few mud bricks (sometimes only four) to line them or make the semblance of a chamber on the surface and are single burials. Grave goods are chiefly pottery (small, single-handled cups, single- and double-handled jars, bowls), bronze knives, and bronze arrowheads. There is very little painted pottery from this period.

Most of the pottery at Yanbulaq is sandy red ware, although a small proportion is sandy gray or black ware. All pottery at this site was hand modeled and most had a plain surface, although a few specimens had raised stripes, nipple patterns, or awl marks.

Another major site said to belong to the Yanbulaq culture is that known as Qizilchoqa (Hongqiu ["Red Hillock"]), from a prominent landmark nearby. This site was discovered in 1976 during construction of a reservoir at the oasis village of Wupu ("Fifth Burg"), for which it must have served as a cemetery in prehistory. Excavations were carried out in 1978 and 1986. Then, toward the end of the twentieth century, all remaining artifacts that were considered to be of any significance or value were removed from the site. All together more than a hundred tombs have been excavated at Qizilchoqa. The tombs are rectangular shafts with platforms built up of mud bricks and covered with large timbers showing cut marks that must have been made by bronze axes. Burials are single and lying on their side in flexed position. Grave goods are relatively few in number, chiefly various types of woolen textiles, felt, and leather goods. There is also occasionally some pottery, a fair amount of wooden utensils, stone tools, bronze implements, millet cakes, highland barley spikes, and so forth. In general, the amount of pottery in these graves is very limited, with only a few single-handled jars and hollow-handled pots. What painted pottery there was at Qizilchoqa usually had a red slip with black decoration, the typical patterns being inverted triangles and vertical stripes. Wooden utensils include buckets, ladles, bowls, spades, and so forth. By far the most sensational artifacts recovered from the graves at Qizilchoqa were the woolen textiles, including diagonal weave twills startlingly similar to plaids recovered from Celtic sites in Hallstatt (Austria) and elsewhere in northern Europe dating to approximately the same time. Human remains from this site display overwhelmingly Europoid characteristics. A series of C14 dates taken at the site range between 1300 and 900 BC.

In conclusion, several things need to be kept in mind in any discussion of Yanbulaq culture. First, serious confusion over the dating and affinities of Yanbulaq has been

brought about because of several aberrantly high calibrated radiocarbon dates (a total of twelve C14 dates have been taken, of which four or five are unrealistically high, with dates over 1500 BC; the more believable dates range between about 1200 BC and the middle of the sixth century BC. Secondly, the presence of iron at Yanbulaq means that it almost certainly can not be before around 1000 BC. Third, East Asians did not begin to move into this region in significant numbers, even in the eastern part of it, until the first millennium BC (particularly the latter centuries), so it is completely improbable that the individuals in type I tombs classed by physical anthropologists as Mongoloid could have been present there in such high percentages from the middle of the second millennium BC. Fourth, the small walled town-fortress (now almost totally destroyed) that once surrounded the pebbly terrace above the village of Yanbulaq where the ancient cemetery is located should not be considered as belonging to the cemetery or its culture. As a matter of fact, the walled town may predate the cemetery, since there is evidence that the terrace was used for residential purposes before it became a cemetery. While this may account for the scattered, aberrantly high C14 readings, we know next to nothing about the inhabitants of the terrace and their culture before it was turned into a succession of cemeteries. Fifth, and finally, Qizilchoqa is likely overall to be earlier than Yanbulaq, and may not even be a part of the same culture, but may have closer ties to contemporaneous Bronze Age sites at the eastern end of the northern side of the Tian Shan ("Heavenly Mountains"; Tängri Tagh).

Xintala Site

Located approximately 200 km southwest of Turpan (Turfan) and about 10 km southeast of the Heshuo (Khoshut) County seat, in the vicinity of Bosten Lake (near Korla City), Xintala is an important but poorly understood Bronze Age site. Xintala was first discovered in 1979 and minor excavations were carried out the same year, with repeated excavations being undertaken in later years.

The settlement mound at Xintala is 5 m high and 150 m in diameter. It is one of the earliest sedentary communities in the area of what later became Yanqi (Qarashähär), an important oasis center and one of the four main garrison towns of the historical period. It was also an important center of Buddhism in the medieval period and a stronghold of Tocharian.

The upper level of the site seems to be a small fortress, the walls of which were made of mud brick. Since the walls have been severely damaged, it is difficult to get a sense of the overall layout. The remains of a hearth were discovered in the bottom layer of the site, and there is also an earthen pit. The hearth is .6 m in diameter; the pit is rectangular (2 m in length and 1.4 m in width) and made of small mud bricks laid on top of each other. The space between the hearth and the pit is paved with bricks in the form of a triangle approximately one meter wide and must have served as a passageway.

Excavated and collected objects from Xintala include pottery, stone tools, and bronze implements. Pottery from this site is mostly sandy red ware with a small amount of sandy gray ware and black ware. The pottery is all hand modeled, and most has a plain surface, but a few specimens have awl-punched, comb, *repoussé*, *stichband*, or

pinched marks and raised stripes. Shapes include double-handled jars, cylindrical cups, bowls, mortars, urns, and cauldrons. Painted pottery is plentiful, most of it carrying a cream-colored slip with purplish red decorations, but there are also red or grey slips with black or purplish red decorations. Decorative patterns include inverted triangles, triangles filled with parallel slanting lines, double zigzag lines, fishnets, sawtooth designs, small waves, and small zoomorphic shapes. Stone ware at Xintala is mostly polished, but some is chipped and some struck. Tools include axes, sledges, querns, rollers, grinding stones, whetstones, bolas, mortars, and so forth. Bronze implements include axes, knives, arrowheads, and awls. Traces of decayed millet were also found at the site. No burials have been found yet. C14 dates for Xintala range between about 1700 and 1400 BC.

The cultural attributes displayed at Xintala are similar to those of another Bronze Age site, Quhui (Chokkur), 25 km east of Heshuo (Khoshut) County.

Haladun Site

Near the major oasis town of Kucha toward the western end of the northern branch of the Silk Road in Xinjiang, the prehistoric site of Haladun was found beneath a late medieval (Tang period) level. In the prehistoric level were discovered the remains of a dwelling and an ash pit. The shapes of the houses are unclear, with only eleven holes for the insertion of posts. The ash pits are of irregular oval shape with perpendicular walls. Artifacts found at the site include pottery, stone tools, and bone tools. Pottery from Haladun is hand modeled and mostly sandy red ware, but with a small amount of sandy gray ware. Much of the pottery has simple decorations on a white or red slip applied to the outer surface. The decorations are usually on the upper belly and around the rim and are done in red or purple, not black. They include triangles, multiple zigzags, multiple waves, multiple parallel lines, sawtooth patterns, and so forth. Often there are broad bands painted around the inside and outside of the vessels. A distinctive attribute of Haladun pottery decorations are the rows of hanging dots attached to many lines. Surface features include raised, pressed stripes in multiple lines and projecting ridges forming multiple zigzags, and incised triangles and circles. Shapes include a two-handled jar (the only intact vessel from the site), cups, plates, basins, bowls, and tripods. Haladun stone tools are mostly polished, with a small amount being chipped. They include semi-crescent knives or sickles (a special characteristic of this culture), spades, pestles, bolas, rings, awls, whetstones, and ornaments. Bone objects include awls, arrowheads, needles, and hairpins. Traces of carbonized grain have been found at Haladun. The site has been dated to c. 850-750 BC. Surface finds extend Haladun culture west to the foot of the Pamirs. Though it has not been connected directly to any other particular Bronze Age or Iron Age cultures in the surrounding areas, Haladun fills a major gap between these two stages of development. No human remains have yet been associated with Haladun culture.

Xiaohé Cemetery (Small River, Ördek's Necropolis)

In the summer of 1934, the Swedish archeologist, Folke Bergman, discovered an important Bronze Age burial ground in the desert about a hundred miles to the west of the fabled ruins of Kroraina (Uyghur: Krorän; Modern Standard Mandarin [MSM]:

Loulan). This hillock-shaped cemetery came to be known as Ördek's Necropolis (after a Uyghur peasant who had initially located it years before), but is more precisely referred to as Small River Cemetery Number 5 (in MSM it is called "Xiaohe Mudi"). After Bergman in 1939 published a detailed report on his investigations at the cemetery, the site went unvisited for more than half a century until the year 2000, when it was rediscovered by a Chinese documentary crew using Global Positioning System (GPS) instrumentation. Because of serious looting that had occurred at the site, the government permitted rescue operations. In the three seasons between 2002 and 2005, the Small River Cemetery was completely excavated, and an abundant amount of textiles, ornaments, implements, and other artifacts have been recovered. In addition, more than thirty well-preserved mummies, together with the coffins in which they were buried, were exhumed from the sandy necropolis. These latest findings match those of Bergman very closely, but multiply them greatly. Although it will take years to analyze all of the new materials, already we can draw some important inferences from them about the religious beliefs and practices of the community who buried their dead here. The recent excavations have also yielded rich resources for the study of the ethnic identity and cultural affiliations of the deceased.

All together, 167 graves were excavated, yielding more than a thousand artifacts, with dates ranging from around 2000-1450 BC. There were five levels of burials with coffins in the shape of overturned boats. Live oxen were slaughtered at the site and their still-wet hides were used to wrap the coffins. After they had dried, the hides sealed the coffin tight as a drum, so that not even a speck of sand could enter the burial.

Four coffins were coated with a layer of mud. Rectangular in shape, inside each of these special outer coffins was a boat coffin. The recipients of these special burials were all adult females with rich burial goods. It is quite clear that there was a gender bias in favor of women at the Small River Necropolis.

The most peculiar burials at Small River 5 were six coffins with wooden bodies in them. These ersatz mummies were treated the same as actual corpses. It is noteworthy that all six of the wooden mummies were male. Moreover, it is evident from the stratigraphy, placement, and other factors that they were all made within the same time period. It is tempting to speculate that these substitute bodies were meant to represent men from the community who were lost in some tragedy that befell them away from their homes, but were cherished by the community who honored them with a proper burial, the same as for real human beings. These replacement bodies were carved from diversiform poplar trunks and are about 1.35 m in length, with wooden sticks for arms. Their faces are flat and have red markings on them. The wooden male corpses are wrapped in intact lynx skins, with holes cut in them for eyes and mouth; eyelashes and hair are stitched to the skin, giving the appearance of a real person.

The most famous of the mummies from this fabled necropolis is the so-called "Beauty of Small River." She is 1.52 m in height, and fetchingly wears a fine felt hat and fashionable leather boots. Around her waist is a white woolen string skirt, and she was shrouded in a bulky woolen cloak with tassels toward the top (the tassels of men's cloaks were positioned toward the bottom). Like the other women at the Small

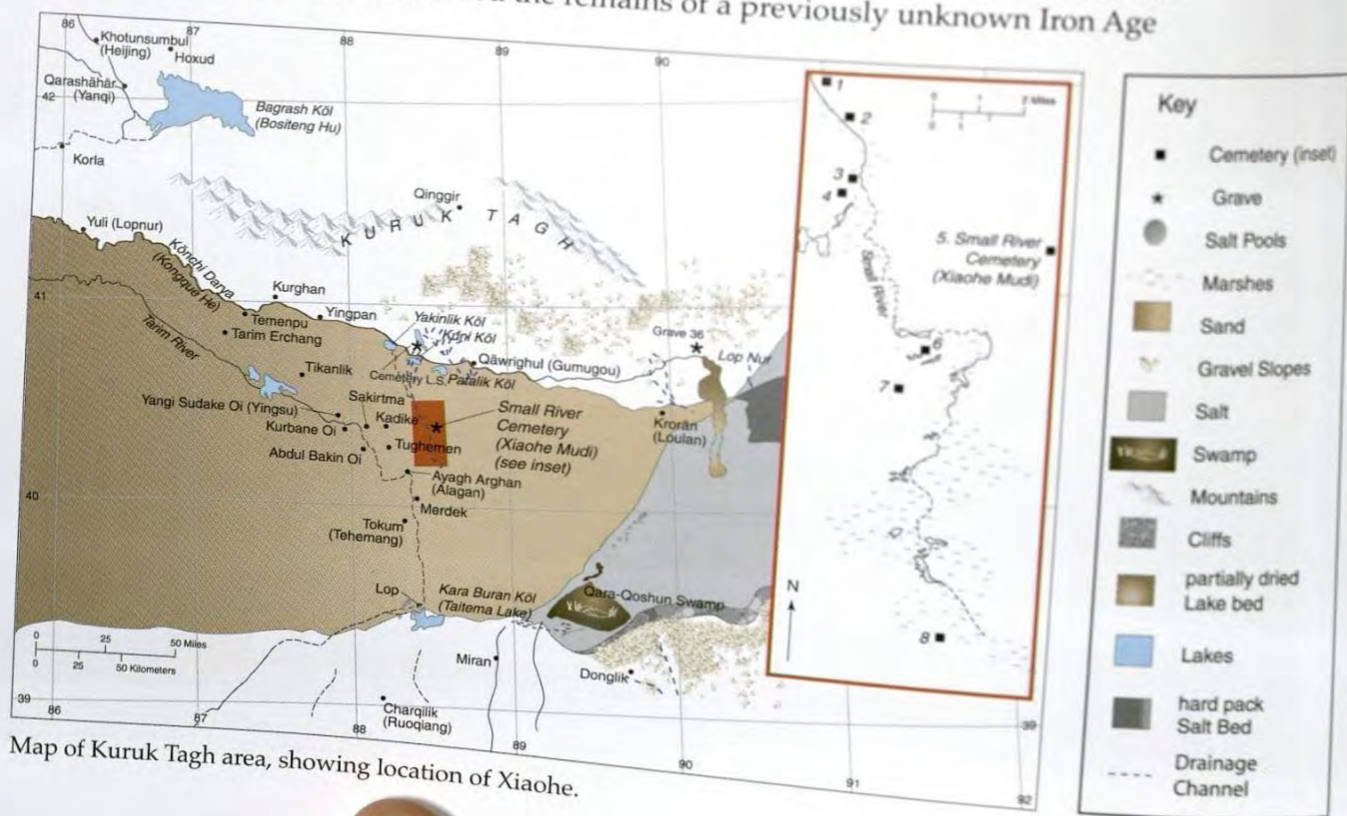
River Necropolis, she had a wooden phallus near her chest (strong sexual symbolism pervaded the site), a leather bag lay on her abdomen, and she was covered with ephedra branches and grains of wheat.

Archeologists have not been able to find any trace of settlements within several kilometers of the necropolis in every direction, only adding to the mystery of who these people were, where they came from, and what happened to them. Some possible answers are suggested in the next section.

Many of the objects in this exhibition come from the Small River Necropolis and vividly reveal aspects of the daily life of the Bronze Age inhabitants of the area during the first half of the second millennium BC. It has also become apparent that the other major Bronze Age sites that are located nearby (viz., Gumugou) share many cultural affinities. But it was not until 2008 that another site that lay far to the southwest, the so-called Northern Cemetery, was discovered and revealed to belong to the identical cultural complex as the Small River Necropolis. Aspects of their common symbolism and material culture will be discussed below.

Yuansha and Northern Cemetery Sites

During the 1990s, a joint Chinese–French group made repeated investigations of the desert settlements in the Täklimakan north of the oasis city of Yutian (Keriyä). Following the ancient riverbed of the Keriyä River northward, after 180 km they reached the 3rd-4th c. fortified town of Qaradöng (same name [“Black Hill”] but a different place from Haladun discussed above), where some of the world’s oldest Buddhist wall-paintings were found. From Qaradöng, they proceeded 40 km farther to the north, where they discovered the remains of a previously unknown Iron Age



city which they named Yuansha Gucheng (Ancient City of Round Sands; Yumulak Kum in Uyghur, Djoumboulak Koum in French transcription). A further 14 km into the Täklimakan, the archeologists found pottery and other artifacts that bore a conspicuous resemblance to the Bronze Age items found earlier along the northern parts of the Niyä River.

Radiocarbon dating indicates that the Yuansha city walls are 2,200 years old, making it the oldest city ever found in Xinjiang. Of 20 graves found in the settlement, only three were still intact. The human remains in these burials, of apparent Caucasian origin, were clothed in woolen textiles. Animal bones from a variety of domesticated species were found in the graves, including goats, sheep, camels, horses, dogs, and cows. Sheep bones recovered from the environs indicate that the inhabitants were adept at animal husbandry. Irrigation ditches were found throughout the settlement area, as well as traces of wheat and millet, millstones, and grain storage facilities, demonstrating their mastery of agriculture. Thus the people of ancient Yuansha were indubitably agropastoralists of the sort known throughout the entire prehistory and history of human habitation in the Tarim Basin.

Satellite images reveal a dried-out delta north and west of the Keriya River. They also indicate that the waters of the Keriya and Niyä rivers must have been connected by tributaries in ancient times. Furthermore, ice cores from the Qurum Tagh provide evidence that, by around AD 500, temperature and precipitation had significantly decreased. Both of these related factors resulted in diminished flow of the rivers and the abandonment of cities far out in the desert that depended on river water for their very existence. The dramatic reduction in the size of Lop Nor, the disappearance of the communities who buried their dead at Small River 5, Qäwrighul, and other sites in the region, and other remarkable environmental and demographic phenomena that occurred around the middle of the first millennium AD were in all likelihood caused by lower temperatures and the consequent diminution of precipitation.

Even more astonishing than the finds around the Yuansha Ancient City were those of the so-called Beifang Mudi (Northern Cemetery), which was located approximately 70 km farther along a branch of the Keriya River. Although the Northern Cemetery of Yuansha Ancient City (officially called Keriya River Northern Cemetery), lies more than half-a-thousand kilometers (595 km, to be exact) to the southwest from Small River 5, it unmistakably belongs to the same time period and culture. Discovered only in 2008, it is situated in an even more remote and isolated setting than the Small River Necropolis.

Like Small River 5, the Northern Cemetery was discovered by a Uyghur peasant wandering in the desert (January, 2008) and was relocated by archeologists using GPS on March 20, 2008. During their initial investigation on that occasion, the archeological team engaged only in surface recovery; excavation must await future seasons.

Strangely, the Northern Cemetery is also a built sand dune necropolis like Small River 5, but on a smaller scale. In 2005, after following the course of the Keriya River northward for 28 days, a team of archeologists led by Idris Abdurssul from the XUAR Institute of Archeology had discovered a Bronze Age site only 15 km from the Northern Cemetery. If they had been that close to Small River 5, they would have

been able to see it with binoculars, but in 2005 they missed the Northern Cemetery, even though they were tantalizingly close. The Northern Cemetery is a hill of sand 4-5 meters in height, whereas Small River 5 is 7 meters high. Like Small River 5, the Northern Cemetery has a north-south orientation and oval shape. At 34 meters wide by 50 meters long, it occupies a total of 1,700 m², making it about half the size of Small River 5, which has 2,500 m².

Just as the Small River Necropolis had a palisade wall of vertically placed logs running east-west that divides the sacred ground into a northern and a southern sector, so does the Northern Cemetery. Aside from dividing the necropolis into two sections, we may theorize that the palisade wall also serves to catch the Aeolian sand and thus grow the burial mound. The Northern Cemetery had at least two levels of burials, compared with the five levels at Small River 5. The archeologists who visited the site in 2008 noted that 50 tombs had been looted, with more than 20 coffins strewn on the surface.

As at Small River 5, the wooden coffins at the Northern Cemetery were encased in ox hides (and some were covered with a layer of mud). Also found were the same forest of posts rising out of the surface of the sand at the head of each grave and with the identical sexual symbolism: oar-shaped (vulvate) posts at the head of male burials and multi-angled (penile) posts at the head of female burials. All of these features of the Northern Cemetery are startlingly like their counterparts at Small River 5. Even the wood carving, shaping, and decorating techniques are identical. Other common attributes of the two cemeteries are leather or felt boots (often with red cords), peaked felt hats with cords and feathers, string skirts, woolen capes, wooden sculptures of human figures, finely woven baskets made of plant material, wooden substitute corpses, and so forth.

Not only are the characteristics of the burial grounds at Small River 5 and the Northern Cemetery virtually identical, the physical appearance of the people's faces and the clothing they are wearing at the two sites are strikingly similar. During their reconnaissance, the archeologists recovered a considerable amount of human remains, including six skulls and four mummified heads (two male and two female). Regrettably, the skeletons and corpses they encountered were left behind in the desert. All of the heads of individuals from the Northern Cemetery that were taken back to Ürümqi possessed European features (e.g., long noses and deep, round eyes). One of the mummified heads is that of a female with blond hair and wearing a peaked felt hat with cords wrapped around it and a feather stuck in the side (exactly the same as at the Small River Necropolis).

So uncannily alike are Small River 5 and the Northern Cemetery that we are undoubtedly dealing with the same culture and probably also the same (or very closely kindred) population. Consequently, in the following paragraphs, I will describe what may be called the SR-NC (Small River-Northern Cemetery) cultural complex. Although most of what I shall say will be based on data from the comprehensive excavations that were undertaken at Small River 5 between 2002 and 2005, enough material has been recovered from the Northern Cemetery that we can expect to find further confirmation of the intimate relatedness of the two sites after thorough excavations have been carried out the Northern Cemetery.

The deceased were placed on the bottom of the tomb, after which a coffin in the shape of a date pit (or overturned boat) was constructed around him or her, then covered with the hides of freshly killed oxen, as described above. Mud casings at first were reserved only for select females, but later this practice was gradually applied to males too. Typically, the head of the deceased was oriented toward the east. The deceased generally wore a jade bracelet (a woolen cord running through a round piece of jade) around their right wrist. Along the right side of the body was invariably found a basket woven so tightly of plant fibers as to be waterproof. Inside the basket were found foodstuffs or ephedra twigs. Some burials at Small River 5 were literally smothered in ephedra, which clearly held special importance for the Bronze Age people of the Tarim Basin.

At Small River 5, one male burial received unusual treatment. On his chest were placed seven snakes (seven was a special number with the Small River people). Unlike his compatriots, he had a leather decoration around the brim of his felt hat and feather ornaments pointing forward, perhaps signifying that he was a religious leader.

Occasionally a burial might be distinguished by having a comb in a woman's grave and one or two rods with the sculptured figure of a human or god near the uppermost part of a male body. In rare cases, the rod might have a stone mace head, which makes one think of West Asia and Northeast Africa, Sanxing Dui in Sichuan, or Bronze Age sites in northwest China. Such maces were not found in the heartland of East Asia.

The major difference between male and female burials is that male deceased held in their hands a horseshoe-shaped implement constructed of two pieces of wood. At the end of the wooden piece would be inserted a strip of stone that had been heated in fire before insertion. We know this to be the case because many of the wooden pieces are scorched from the stone. A characteristic attribute of female burials is the placement on the abdomen or lower chest of a carefully constructed, composite (wood, yarn, tufts of hair) phallus. Sometimes a snake or lizard were encased within the two halves of the phallus.

The dates for the Northern Cemetery are roughly 4000-3500 BP, making it virtually coterminous with Small River 5, but perhaps slightly earlier (based on coffin shapes – coffin boards at Small River 5 were relatively straight in the early period, but increasingly curved in later stages; the Northern Cemetery coffin boards tend to be more straight). The apparent, slight priority of the Northern Cemetery, plus its geographical position in the southwest quadrant of the Tarim Basin, allows us to hypothesize that the culture may have spread from the area of the Northern Cemetery downstream along the Keriya River, then followed the Tarim River all the way eastward to the area south of the Quruk Tagh where the Small River Cemetery is located. If this scenario is true, then we need to formulate an additional hypothesis that explains the cultural origins and affinities of the people who buried their dead at the Northern Cemetery. From which direction did they come to settle in the area around the Northern Cemetery? What were agropastoralists who knew how to make felt and woolen textiles doing in the center of a huge desert? These questions can only be solved by comprehensive, multidisciplinary research involving geneticists, physical anthropologists, archeologists, paleobotanists and paleozoologists, ancient

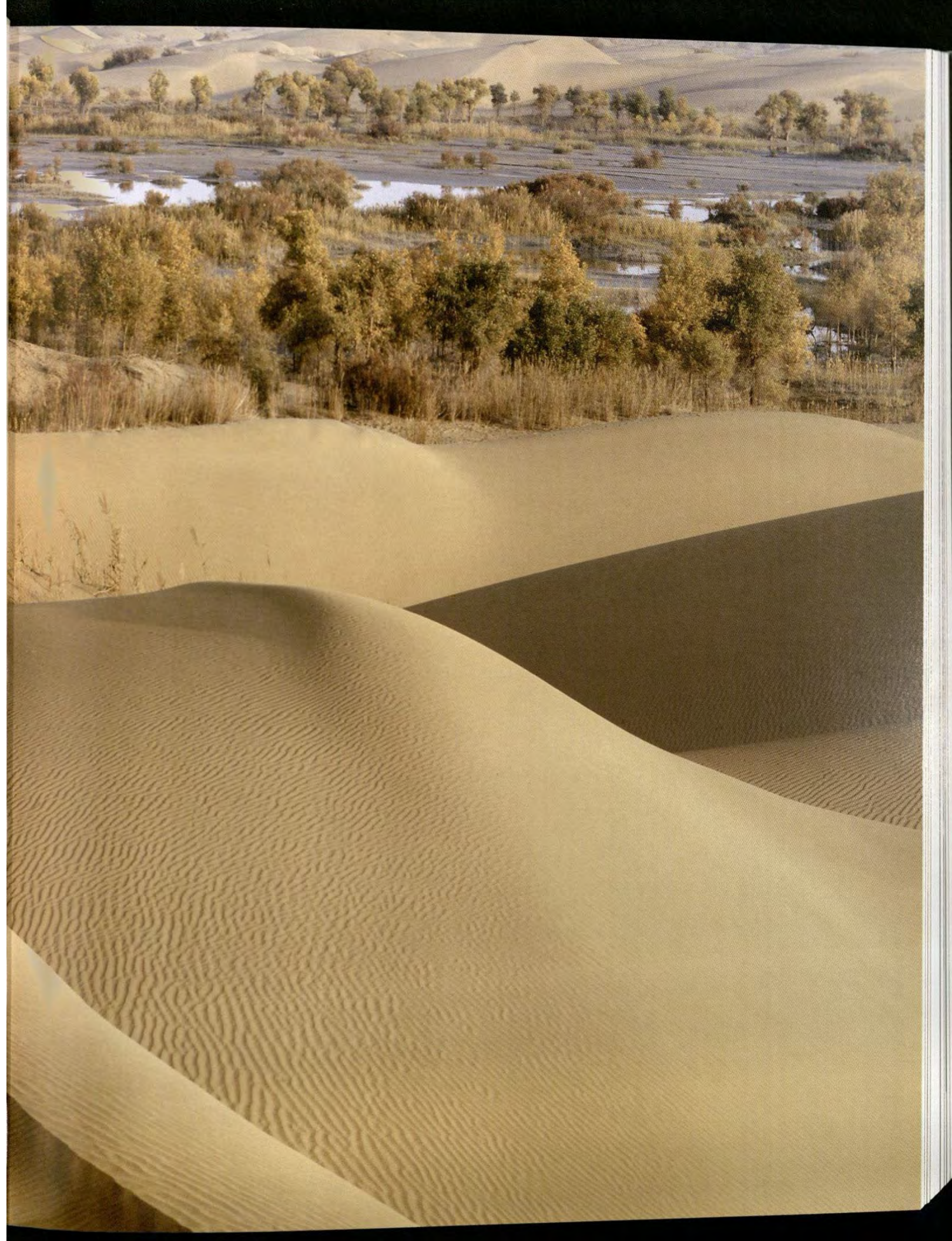
textile specialists, and so forth. Ideally, such investigations should be carried out with international cooperation to insure that the most advanced techniques and equipment as well as the highest standards are employed. For example, only in exceedingly rare instances (e.g., the Hami fragment) have ancient textiles from sites in the region undergone the most advanced types of fiber and dye analysis. More immediately, there is a desperate need for C14 testing at both the Northern Cemetery and Small River 5. Genetic testing of human remains from both sites (as well as from many other sites throughout the region) is also an urgent desideratum, particularly in light of environmental degradation and the danger of contamination by modern humans.

In general, along rivers flowing out of the Qurum Tagh and Altyn Tagh northward into the desert, the older sites lie deeper in the desert, while younger sites lie closer to the foothills. For example, as the Keriya River extends toward the north, we find first the AD 7th-8th c. site of Dandan Oilik, then the 3rd-4th c. site of Qaradöng, the 2nd-1st c. BC site of Yuansha, and finally the Bronze Age Northern Cemetery and other nearby sites of a similar age that have recently been discovered. Indeed, we may speculate that there was once a river passage that went all the way from Keriya (Yutian) to the Tarim River at the northern edge of the Tarim Basin.

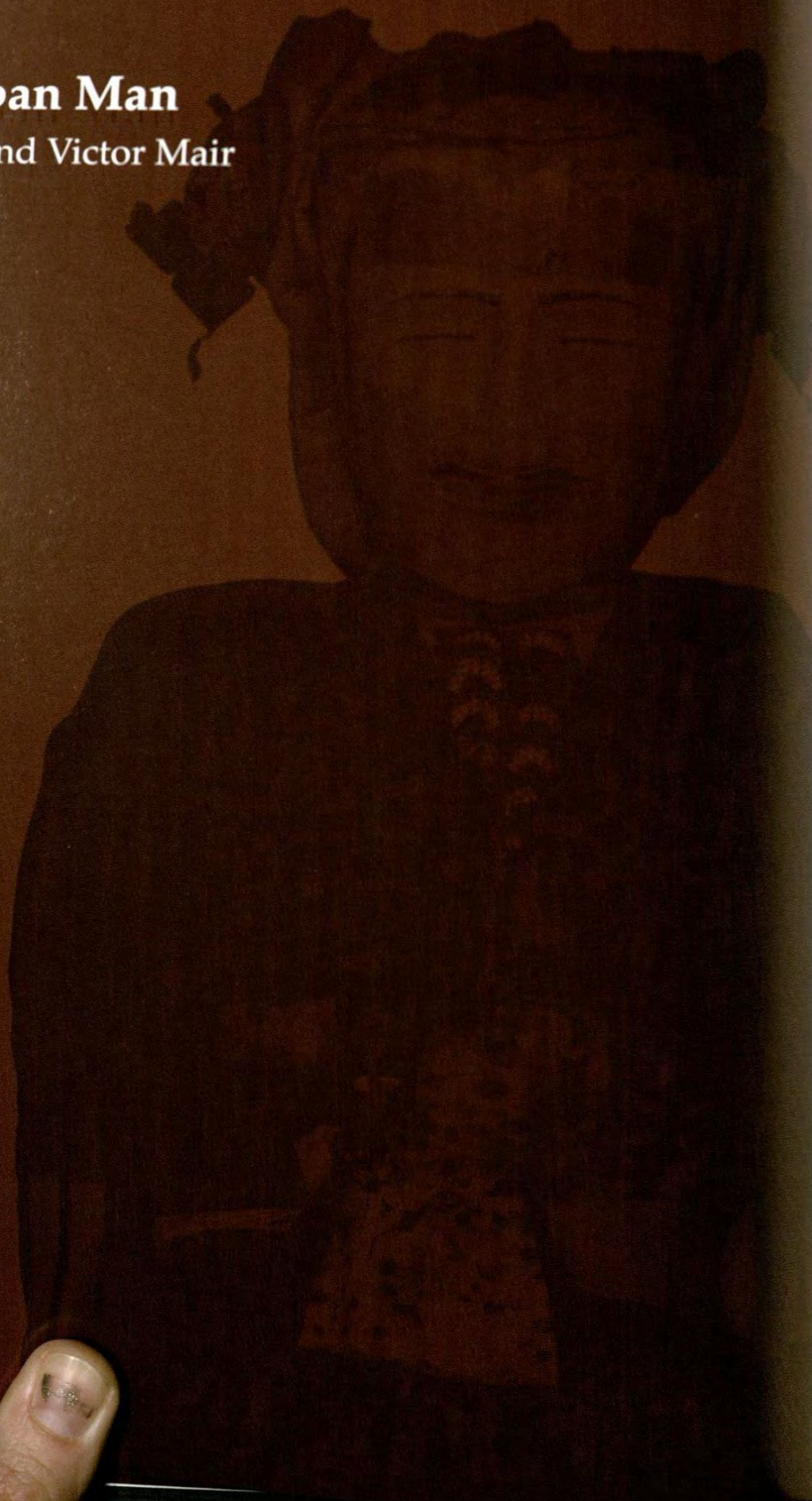
Very few people at SR-NC lived to the age of 60. Most of the deceased were relatively young and many human remains are disfigured or incomplete (limbs missing, skulls with holes in them, etc.). Occasionally wooden prostheses are found. Life was harsh, but possible to maintain at a more than merely subsistence level.

East of the Northern Cemetery, archeologists encountered over a hundred dried-up streambeds of what must once have been part of the northward-running Keriya River system. Here they found shards, stone tools, querns, and so forth. It took the team three days to cross a large expanse of ancient, withered poplar trees. Some were as large as 1.5 meters in diameter. It is interesting that the trees became smaller as the team walked toward the southeast. Judging from the stark, harsh desert around the Northern Cemetery today, it is difficult to imagine that 4,000 years ago an agropastoral, fishing and hunting people would have managed to survive here. The same was true of the people who lived along the branches of the Small River around in the heart of the desert depended entirely upon the bountiful waters of the ancient Keriya and Small Rivers. Once those rivers dried up, the communities whose lives depended on them were doomed. The members of the fated communities simply had to move elsewhere.

After walking for thirteen days and emerging from the desert, the strongest impression of the team of archeologists who visited the Northern Cemetery in March, 2008 was that the stark expanse of desert through which they had passed was once a string of oases. *Sic transit gloria mundi.*



The Yingpan Man
by Ulf Jager and Victor Mair



Located approximately 150 km southeast of Yuli county town and 200 km west of Lopnur, Yingpan was an important town on the Silk Road, because it was the first stop in the hinterland of the Western Regions beyond Loulan (Kroraina) as one traveled along the Kongque ("Peacock"; Kōnchi) River. Here there is a well-arranged ancient city in the shape of a circle, with a neatly constructed Buddhist temple, stupa, and courtyards, as well as a soaring beacon tower and a huge public cemetery.

This site has yielded some of the most splendid, even extravagant, textiles of ancient Xinjiang. Organic vessels rather than ceramics were found, and burial chambers were surrounded by wooden poles. The fact that the textiles include silk and cotton (instead of just wool, as was typical for earlier periods), plus the presence of iron implements, date this cemetery rather late, to c. 300 BC-500 CE.

All together, the 500 meter by 1.5 km cemetery at Yingpan has upwards of 150 tombs, more than a hundred of which have been disturbed by robbers; over thirty-two tombs were excavated on an emergency basis in 1995. Two other excavations took place in 1989 and 1999 for a total of 112 tombs.

The deceased occupant of tomb No 15 at Yingpan Cemetery is the tallest Caucasoid mummy excavated in Xinjiang. When he was unearthed, he was 6 feet and 6 inches tall (1.9 m) and was 30 to 35 years old when he died most likely during the late 5th to early 5th Century. It was inferred that he was 2 m tall when he was alive. His tomb (i.e., his head) was directed to the north. Mummification occurred through natural processes, viz., the extremely dry climatic conditions of the Taklamakan Desert, but it cannot be ruled out completely that people in ancient Xinjiang supported this process through the help of natural substances. Furthermore, some remarkable aspects of Yingpan Man's burial that have never before been revealed may now be told. First of all, his body was wrapped in strips of cloth, a treatment that has not been observed for any other mummy in Xinjiang. Secondly, he was supported by shaped wooden armatures; this too is unique for all Xinjiang mummies. Thus, it is not only the sumptuousness of his grave goods (to be described below), but the very unusual method of preparation for burial that make the Yingpan sui generis among all other mummies.

The richly decorated coffin was made of wooden planks of poplar wood(?). The coffin was found 1.8 m underneath the modern surface of the area of the cemetery, and covered by animal skins. The coffin was a little broader at the man's head and slightly longer than 2 meters. The carved decoration of the coffin shows floral and circular patterns as well as vases; perhaps the circular decorations had a solar meaning. The boards of the coffin were joined with mortices and tenons; no metal nails were used. Seen from an artistic point of view, the coffin is a fine piece of craftsmanship of a skilled carpenter and woodcarver. The mummified body lay on reed-grass and a yellowish shroud of silk covered the whole body.

The face of the man was covered with a white-painted mask made of hemp-cardboard. The closed eyes, as well as the fine moustache were finely marked with black color. The closed lips were covered with a fine reddish color. The man's prominent nose obviously shows that he was not of Han Chinese descent. The forehead of the mask was decorated with a strip of gold foil. The head rests on a silken pillow in the shape of a crowing cock. Such crowing-cock-pillows have their origin in the Han

Chinese culture. The extraordinary textiles used for the clothing of the deceased man are of special interest; till today such a complete and well-preserved set is unique.

The man wears a knee-long coat, or, better, a caftan opening to the right side. The basic color of this caftan is of a deep red and it is made of silk and wool. The decorations of the caftan are designed (i.e., woven) in rows and show confronting bulls and late antique putti. The naked putti are fighting each other with short spears and hold small shields; some of them simply hold spears. Between the putti and the bulls small trees ending in boughs are visible. A broad yellowish silk girdle closes the caftan. At the girdle hangs a silken square pouch which contains aromatic substances, either of apotropaic or of medical use. The wide silken trousers have a reddish-purple ground. Embroidered lozenges of wool in different colors, such as green, yellow, ocean-blue, and red give the trousers a vivid expression.

Yellowish high silken boots cover the feet of the deceased. They are decorated with silk and felt embroideries. Underneath and on the instep goldfoil has been sewn on, making it obvious that they were prepared especially for the burial. On the man's chest and on his left wrist lie sets of miniature funerary clothing made of spun silk fabric. The placement of these miniature garments on the man prompts speculation. Were they meant as a last gift for his male child? Or did they symbolize extra sets of clothing for him in the afterlife?

At the time of discovery, the face underneath the mask was very well preserved. Unfortunately, photos have never been published. According to descriptions the face was of a brown-greyish color. The hair was of a light brown shade and shaped to a top-knot. Eyebrows, mustache, and eyelashes were completely preserved. The nose was closed with woollen stoppers covered with gold foil. Closing the nostrils of dead persons with stoppers was a widely used burial practice in Xinjiang since the 2nd millennium BC. The lower jaw of the man had fallen down post mortem; even a silken neckband could not prevent this from happening.

In addition to the rich clothing worn by the man, the grave goods in tomb No.15 are remarkable. It contained a necklace, a wooden bow and arrows, as well as a wooden comb and a greenish, late antique glass bowl. Based on present knowledge, it is very likely that the glass bowl found its way to Yingpan via the Silk Road from the eastern parts of the Roman Empire, perhaps Syria. Because of the cut facets on its surface, we know that this glass vessel cannot date earlier than the late 4th to early 5th century AD.



Since his discovery, the question remains open to which ethnic group of Central Asian people this Caucasoid man belonged. The rich clothing, the ornate coffin and its valuable grave goods, in particular the late Roman glass bowl, in combination with the bow and its arrows, are a good indication that the man may have been a very wealthy travelling trader. The bow and the arrows (he also had an arm guard) are perhaps a sign that he was accustomed to protecting himself against robbers. Adding to all this the fact that he was a Caucasoid individual, one might well suspect that he was a Sogdian trader. The Sogdians were of eastern Iranian origin and had their original homeland in an area between modern Uzbekistan and Tajikistan where they settled in fortified towns. They never founded a larger state of their own, but associated themselves with various ruling powers throughout the time since Alexander the Great. The Sogdians reached Eastern Central Asia at the latest in the later Eastern Han Dynasty as traders and skilled craftsmen. Up to the T'ang Dynasty, the Sogdians in China became a group of people with great political and economic power. Originally they were believers of certain Zoroastrian sects, but many of them subsequently became Nestorian Christians, Manichaeans, and Buddhists. The Zoroastrians never buried the corpses of their believers nor did they cremate them, like the Buddhists. Instead they exposed their dead on large "towers of silence" where their flesh was consumed by wild dogs and vultures. Later on the bones were collected and buried in separate ossuaries.

Unfortunately the burial rites of our Yingpan man leave no room for speculation concerning his religion. His tomb is so unlike all the others at Yingpan Cemetery that one might well think he was buried by people who may not have been of his own group.

The Yingpan man's mask, in combination with his clothing, can also afford a certain indication of his geographical, though not his ethnical origin. To the northwest of Yingpan, along the Northern Silk Road at Kucha, masks played an important role in burial rites from around the 4th century to the early 7th century. So perhaps our deceased man came from Kucha. In order to know who he really was, one would need many more similar tombs like tomb No. 15 at Yingpan and much more scholarly archaeological investigations in Xinjiang involving Chinese-international cooperation.