

## LOCALISATION OF USUN'S ORIGINAL HABITAT PLACE (DATA FROM CHINESE HISTORICAL SOURCES AND LITERATURE)

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**Abstract.** *The given article is written based on the original Chinese historical sources and scientific literature. The work is devoted to the study of one of the debatable and poorly studied questions related to the issue of localizing the place of the original habitat of the Usuns, which formed one of the groups of the ancient population of Central Asia. The results of studying the data of ancient Chinese sources and the works of historians of the PRC demonstrated that initially the Usun lived in the valleys of the central part of the Eastern section of Tangritag (Tien shan).*

**Keywords:** *questions, Usun, Chinese historical sources, Central Asia, Tangritag, Tien-shan, (Tien-Shan), Dunhuang, Qilian, Bogda-shan, Bai-shan, localization, discussion, clarification.*

The Usuns (ancient reading asuen / asuən) as a separate ethnic group that have not survived to this day. They played an important role in the history of international relations of the Central Asian subregion in the ancient period and took part in the process of ethnic development of the region. Many authors read that their influence was especially great in the formation of the Kazakh and Kyrgyz peoples [Hasaketsu. 1987. 40]. However, in their history there are quite a few blank spots and controversial issues, one of which is the clarification of the territory of the original habitat of the Asueni/Usuns, which is explained by the lack of direct and sufficiently detailed information about this in ancient sources. Some authors, including Chinese, localize the original habitat of the Asuen/Usun in the Hesi corridor, while others - in the mountain valleys of the central part of East Turkestan.

The results of a study conducted by the author of this article show that the basis for the emergence of different opinions on this issue is the lack of a unified approach to the localization of two toponyms “Dunhuang” with the same pronunciation and mountains with the name “Qilian”, which were first found in the source “Shiji” ( "Historical Notes"), written in the last quarter of the 1st century BC. The first toponym “Dunhuang” is written with the hieroglyph dun with the sign (key) fire (火), and the second - without this key. The name of the mountains “Qilian” in some cases occurs with the defining hieroglyph shan (山 - mountain), and in others - without.

For example, A. Hermann identifies Qilian with the Mowan Shan mountain range north of the city of Ganzhou, Gansu Province. G. Halun and a group of other authors “used the toponym Qilian to designate the Richthofen ridge south of the cities of Suzhou and Liangzhou” [Roerich. 1963. 118].

The Japanese scientist Fujita Toyohachi localizes the toponyms Dunhuang and Qilian, found in the “Daiyuan” (“Davan” 大宛) section of the “Shiji” source, in the Heshi corridor [Fujita. 1971. 77–84].

The Chinese historian Lin Meicun, whose work is based on new achievements of archaeological science, came to the conclusion that the toponyms Qilian and Qilian-shan found in

Chinese sources, in particular in the sections devoted to Western countries (Xiyu), are localized in the central part of East Turkestan section of Tangritag (Tien Shan) [Fujita. 1971. 75].

In our opinion, the localization of the original place of residence of the Asuen/Wusun in the territory, located between the modern city of Dunhuang and the Qilian Shan Mountains, located in the south of the central part of the Hexi Corridor, does not correspond to reality.

The Hexi Corridor (Heshizoulan 河西走廊 - means a narrow passage in the west of the Yellow River) is located in the north-west of the modern Gansu province of China, and was one of the important sections of the Great Silk Road. The length of the corridor is about 1000 km and the width is from 100 to 200 km. In the south, the corridor ends with the mountains of Qilian Shan (祁连山), and in the north - Heli Shan (合黎山) and Longshou Shan (龙首山). The cities of Wuwei (武威), Zhangye (张掖), Jiuchuan (酒泉), Yumenguan (玉门关) and Jiayuguan (嘉峪关) are located in the Hexi Corridor. A significant part of the corridor territory is desert [Tsykhai. 1979.912]. Until the 2nd century BC, before the advent of the Han Empire (206 BC - 8 AD), the Hexi Corridor was not part of the territory of ancient China.

The author of this monograph came to this conclusion for the following reasons:

1) Chinese sources themselves report that the Asueni/Usuni were horse breeders [Sima Qian. 1856. 1138(1138)/4b/] and lived in the neighborhood of the Ruzians / Yuezhians. In ancient China, Wusun horses were highly valued. Vast pasture lands were needed to breed horses.

2) The Hexi Corridor (Hezizoulan 河西走廊 - means a narrow passage in the west of the Yellow River) is located in the west of the modern Gansu province of the People's Republic of China and was one of the important sections of the Great Silk Road. The length of the corridor is about 1000 km and the width is from 100 to 200 km. In the south, the corridor ends with the mountains of Qilian Shan (祁连山) and in the north - Heli Shan (合黎山) and Longshou Shan (龙首山). The cities of Wuwei (武威), Zhangye (张掖), Jiuchuan (酒泉), Yumenguan (玉门关), Jiayuguan (嘉峪关) and Dunhuang (Dasht-ata) are located in the Hexi Corridor. A significant part of the corridor territory is desert [Tsykhai. 1979.912] until the 2nd century BC, before the advent of the Han Empire (206 BC - 8 AD), the Hexi Corridor was not part of the territory of ancient China.

3) The author of this monograph traveled through the Heshi corridor four times, stopped in the cities, located there and became acquainted with the geographical conditions of the surrounding areas.

4) In 2000, during the expedition along the Chinese section of the ancient Great Silk Road, the author was able to observe the natural conditions of the Dunhuang region (Dasht-ata) and surrounding areas while flying low on an airplane. After visiting historical sites for 3 days, he became convinced that modern Dunhuang is located in the center of a dry desert area. Around Dunhuang there are only small green valleys, where a small number of animals can be kept.

5) In the process of translating the 123rd chapter of "Shiji" into Uzbek, dedicated to the history of ancient Fergana, two consonant toponyms "Dunhuang" were identified. One is written with the character dun (敦) without the sign (key) fire (火) and the second (墩) with the sign. The second toponym Dunhuang corresponds to modern Dunhuang, which the ancient Turks called Dasht-ata, which means "city in the desert."

Below, as an argument for my own statement put forward by the author of this article, it is appropriate to refer to the following information from primary sources and works of Chinese scientists.

The expedition took place from August 15 to September 4, 2000. It was organized as part of cooperation between the departments of Uzavtoyul Concern and the Ministry of Transport of the People's Republic of China (Zhongguo jiaotong bu). The purpose of the expedition was to study the current state and prospects for the development of the Great Silk Road [for details, see: Khodzhaev A. *The Great Silk Road: Connections and Fates*. pp. 9–11].

Thus, the author of the famous source “Shiji” (“Historical Notes”) Sima Qian (lived approximately 145–42 BC), using identically pronounced place names, left them without corresponding comments, although he clearly distinguished them both in terms of writing, as well as in their localization. For example, while indicating the place of the original habitat of the Asuen/Wusun and Ruzian/Yuezhi people, the toponym Dunhuang was written by him with the hieroglyph *dun* 敦 (without the fire sign - ho 火). While indicating Dunhuang (Dasht-ata), where several people returned alive after the first unsuccessful military campaign of the Han troops against the ancient state of Parkan (Daiyuan / Davan), he used the hieroglyph *dun* (燉) with the sign of fire. For example, in chapter 123 of “Shiji”, entitled “Daiyuan Lejuan” (“Tale of Fergana”) (“Historical Notes”) it is written:

“At the very beginning, the Ruzians (Yuezhi - Oghuz) lived around Dunhong and Qilian” (始月氏居敦煌祁連間) [Sima Qian. 1856. 1144(1144)/17a/].

As it is obvious, in this information the toponym Dunhuang is written with the character *dun* without the fire sign (ho 火). After the toponym “Qilian” there is no word *shan* (山 - mountain), but the word *xian* (閒) is used, which carries the meaning - space, districts. Further, in the same chapter of the source, it is written:

“Ershi Jiangjun, after consulting with Do Shicheng and others, came to the conclusion that although [our troops] reached Yucheng [Uzgend], they could not capture it, how can one dream of taking the capital. Therefore [He] turned the troops back. It took 2 years [on the way] there and back. No more than 12 people returned to Dunhuang (燉煌).”士不過什一二) [Sima Qian. 1856. 1144(1144)/17a/].

As can be seen from the above text, the character *dun* with the sign fire (ho 火) was used to write the toponym Dunhuang (Dasht-ata). The practice of such a distinction between two toponyms with the same reading also occurs in other chapters of “Shiji” [Sima Qian. 1856. 1043(1043)/29b/]. Sima Qian also distinguished the names of two mountains - Qilian (祁連) and Qilian Shan (祁連山). The first name is identified with Tangritag (Tien Shan), and the second with the mountain ranges in the area between the cities of Zhangye and Jiuquan [Sima Qian. 1856. 1041(1041)/24b/], i.e. in the south-central part of the Hesi corridor.

It was found that in the Hanshu (History of the Han Dynasty), written approximately 100 years after the Shiji, there is a tradition of different spellings of two place names with the same reading "Dunhuang" and two names of mountains "Qilian" and "Qilian- shan" was broken. Historians of subsequent centuries also stopped distinguishing between spellings.

In the translation by N.Ya. Bichurin, this fragment, without appropriate comments, is formulated as follows: “Initially, the House of Yuezhi occupied the country between Dunhuang and the Qilian Shan ridge” [Bichurin. 1950. T. 2. 151].

Thus, to designate two toponyms “Dunhuang”, the author of “Hanshu” Ban Gu used one hieroglyph *dun* with the sign of fire (火 火), which had a significant impact on the localization of the original habitat of the Asuen/Wusun and Ruz/Yuezhi people. For example, in the 61st chapter of “Zhang Qian Liguangli zhuan” (張騫李廣利傳 - “The Story of Zhang Qian and Li Guangli”) “Hanshu” it is written:

“When the humble servant [Zhang Qian] lived among the Huns, he heard that the Wusun ruler had the title of Kunbi (Kunmo 昆莫). Initially, Nandobius (Nandoumi / Nan-dou-mi 難兜靡) - the father of Kunbiy, together with the Dai-ruzie (da-yuezhi) lived around Dunhuang and Qilian. [His] possession was not large” (臣居匈奴中間烏孫王號昆莫昆莫父難兜靡本與大月氏俱在祁連燉煌間小國也) [Ban Gu. 1956. 1958(750)/4a/].

The comments of the ancient Chinese historian Yan Shigu are also given here, where it is noted that the habitat of the Asuen / Wusun “is located in the east of Qilian and in the west of Dunhuang” (祁連山以東燉煌以西). Since the *dun* hieroglyph with the sign of fire was used to write the toponym Dunhuang, it is identified with modern Dunhuang (Dasht-ata), and the toponym Qilian is identified with Tangritag (Tien Shan). In this case, this comment should be understood as meaning “the Asueni/Usunis, together with the Ruzians/Yuezhians, lived in the territory located between modern Dunhuang (Dasht-ata) and Tianshan (Tangritag).” However, this does not correspond to historical reality, since the geographical conditions of this territory would not have allowed its inhabitants to breed horses there, which were highly valued in ancient China.

This chapter is located on pages 1957(749)–1963(755) of Hanshu. Our translation into Uzbek of this chapter is given on pages 24–51 of the book “Markaziy Osiyo tarihi Khitoy manbalarida (qadimiy hamda ilk yirta asr yozma yodgorliklaridan tarjimalar wa tadqiqotlar)” / History of Central Asia in Chinese sources (Research and translations from ancient and early medieval Chinese written monuments)/. The book was published in Tashkent in 2016 (438 pages) in collaboration with A. Aitbaev, Sh. Kuldashv and F. Jumaniyozova.

Kunbiy (in Chinese sources Kunmo, according to ancient reading Kunmek) is a title, his name is Lejiaomi (Liejiaomi, ancient reading 獵驕靡 - Lachinbiy), he lived in 177-104. BC. The Huns called themselves *kyun*, the word *biy* meant the name of the position of a high-ranking official, so we believe that the word “*kyunbiy*” meant a representative or official of the Huns.

The hieroglyph *mi* (ancient reading: *miea*, *mie* 靡) was used by ancient Chinese historians to transcribe the word *biy*, meaning lord, high-ranking, respected, leader, so we believe that in the Wusun language the title of Nandoumi was pronounced as Nandau-biy or Nantav-biy.

The 61st chapter of “Hanshu” was not translated by N.Ya. Bichurin.

The “Hanshu” tradition of writing down the toponym Dunhuang in the characters *dun* with the sign of fire (火 火) influenced Chinese historiography of later times [Ban Gu. 1956. 2370(1162)/14b/; Du Y. 1995. 2734; Taiping Huanyu Ji. Le Shi. 1980. Juan 184, 7b, etc.]. For example, in the source “Tongdian”, written in 766–801, the palace historian Du Yu (735–812) noted about the place of the original residence of the Yuezhi:

“Ruzie (Yuezhi) was a state of herders originally it was located between Dunhuang and Qilian” (月氏...本行国也...本居燉煌, 祁连间) [Du Yu. 1995. 2734].

In the work “Taiping Huanyu Ji”, authored by Le Shi (930–1007), it is written:

“In the past, Zhang Qian said that in the beginning, the Asuen/Wusun and the Dai-Ruzie (Da-Yuezhi) lived together around Dunhuang” (始漢張騫言烏孫本與大月氏共在燉煌間) [Le Shi. 1980. Juan 182, 1b].

Thus, the authors of these two works - Du Yu and Le Shi, continuing the Hanshu tradition, localized the original habitat of the Asuen/Usun and Ruzians/Yuezhi in a deserted area unsuitable for horse breeding, located between Dunhuang (Dasht-ata) and Tangritag (Tien Shan). This clearly contradicts the statements of the Chinese sources themselves that the named ancient inhabitants of East Turkestan were engaged in horse breeding.

Soon after the end of the Han dynasty, scholars appeared in China to write commentaries on the Shiji and Hanshu texts, some of which are found in the texts of these two sources. One group of commentators argued that Dunhuang and Qilian are located in the south-central part of the Hexi Corridor (modern Gansu Province of China), while another group localized them in East Turkestan.

Thus, in one of the comments to these two toponyms, from the above section “Shiji”, it is said: “in the beginning, the Ruzians (Yuezhi) lived in the east of Dunhuang and in the west of the Qilian Mountains. The Dunhuang region is now called Shazhou, and the Qilian Mountains are located in the southwest of Ganzhou” [Sima Qian. 1856. 1138(1138)]. The authors of the commentaries were ancient Chinese historians, who were collectively called “Zhengyi” (正義 / 正義), which means truthful interpretation or correct meaning [Tsihai. 1979. 13663; S. Qiyuan. 1982. T. 2, 1665]. The time when the comments were written dates back to the early Middle Ages.

“Shiji Zhengyi” (史記正義 – Correct Commentary on Shiji) was compiled by the Tang Dynasty court historian Zhang Shoujie.

In the section “The Story of the Commander Li [Guanli]” of the same source, there are comments by several authors on the toponym “Qilian Tien Shan” (祁連天山). In one of them, with reference to the work “Kodi Zhi” (括地志 - description of the acquired lands), it is noted: “Qilian Shan are located 200 li (about 98 km) in the southwest of Zhangye County in Ganzhou” [Sima Qian. 1856. 1028(1028)].

In the comments given in the works “Tongdian” and “Taiping Huanyu Ji”, it is said that “Qilian Shan is located northwest of the modern Zhangye region” [Du Yu. 1995. 2734; Le Shi. 1980. Juan 184, 7b]. As is known, Ganzhou and Zhangye are different names for the same place [Zhongguo. 1930. 802], located in the central part of the modern Gansu province of the People's Republic of China near the Heishui-he River (黑水河 - Karasu). The Cihai dictionary clarifies: “in a broad sense, the Qilian Mountains are the general name for the mountains located between the western part of Gansu Province and the northeastern part of Qinghai Province. In a narrow sense, Qilian is the name of the westernmost part of these mountains” [Tsyhai. 1979. 1577].

From the second group of comments available in Chinese reference literature, it is clear that in ancient times there were also Qilian Shan and Dunhuang in East Turkestan. For example, in the toponymic dictionary “Zhongguo Gujin Diming Da Qidian” it is noted: “The Qilian Mountains are located in the southwest of Zhangye County (张掖) in Gansu Province. In another way, [these mountains] are called Nanshan (南山 - Southern Mountains). They are also called Xueshan (雪山 - Snowy Mountains), Baishan (白山 - White Mountains), in the west [they] connect

with Jiuquan and Anxi. Even further to the west [they] connect with the mountains of Aerjin (阿尔金 - Altuntag) and Tsongling (葱岭 - Pamir)" [Zhongguo. 1930. 528].

Li Guangli (birth year unknown, died 88 BC) - military leader who led the campaign of Han troops to Fergana in 104–101. BC. He was killed in the war with the Huns. He was the younger brother of Lady Li, a concubine of Emperor Wu (140–85 BC), who planned to increase the combat effectiveness of his troops with the help of Ferghana fast horses (argamaks).

Jiuquan (ancient pronunciation: Shei-dziwan) is a modern city in the western part of Gansu Province of China. It is located east of modern Dunhuang. In ancient times, it was one of the busiest trading points in the Heshi Corridor. It was first taken from the Huns by the Western Han Empire in 121 BC. The toponym Jiuquan is found in the section “Zhonggong” (Ruler Zhong) of the source “Zozhuan”, the writing of which dates back to the end of the 5th century. BC. The reign of Zhonggong dates back to 693-660. BC. [Sigh. P. 936].

Anxi (literally meaning "western peace") is located in the west of Gansu Province near Dunhuang and on the southern coast of the Sulay River (Bulongjir).

Aerjin is a transcription of the local Turkic name for the mountains

Further, the dictionary says that according to the comments of ancient historians, “The Qilian Shan are divided into southern and northern. Southern Qilian Shan is Nanshan from [chapter] Xiyu Zhuan (Tale of Western Countries) of Hanshu. Northern Qilian Shan is the [eastern part of] Tien Shan in Xinjiang and [they] are located north of the city of Hami (Ivergul, Yiwu, Kumul). [Tien Shan] branch from Tsunling (Pamir) and go to the east, acquiring a serpentine shape, and stretch for several thousand li. The highest mountain is called Bogda-shan (Bogda-ula), the remaining mountains are named according to their location. They correspond to the Beishan (Northern Mountains) mentioned in the Western narratives (Xiyu zhuan). Therefore, in Du Yu’s work “Tongdian” it is said that from Zhangye to Tingzhou there are mountains all around, which are divided into southern and northern Qilian Shan” [Zhongguo. 1930. 528].

The presence of two mountains called Qilian Shan is also noted in the book “Shiji. Xiongnu Lezhuan” (“Historical Notes: Narrative of the Huns”), published in 1975 in Beijing. In particular, it notes: “The Qilian Mountains are called Tien Shan and Bai Shan (White Mountains)” [Lin Meicun. 1998. 74].

The third group of comments states that in ancient times the East Turkestan and Gansu Qilian Shan formed a single mountain range, which in the language of local residents bore the common name Tangritag (Tien Shan), i.e. Heavenly or High Mountains. The Gansu part of this chain was called South Tangritag, and the East Turkestan part was called Northern Tangritag.

Thus, in the commentary to the Uyghur translation of the chapter “Davan Lezhuan” (“Tale of Fergana”) from “Shiji” it is noted: “Qilian Shan is part of Tangritag located in the Gansu region. During the Xiongnu period, the Xinjiang (East Turkestan) Tangritag was called Northern Tangritag, and the Gansu Tangritag was called Southern Tangritag” [Sima Qian. 1989. 390]. This commentary was compiled on the basis of information given in the collective work “Materials on the history of the two Han dynasties” [Sima Qian. 1989. 390].

The fourth group of comments indicates that the Qilian Shan mountains are located in East Turkestan. For example, in the work “Mu-Tianzi Zhuan”, which is considered one of the earliest geographical works on East Turkestan, there is information that Mu-Tianzi “on the day of Jihai (the second day of the third moon) arrived in Yanju (焉居 ancient. ch. Yiankiya) and Yuzhi (禺知 ancient ch. ngiwo-tie, ngiwo-tcie) zhiping (之平)” [Gu xisin ji. 1987. 6].

Altuntag, which are located in the southeast of East Turkestan and are considered the easternmost spur of Kunlun. They connect with the Qilian Mountains in Gansu Province. Altuntag is also transcribed by Aletentake [Zhongguo. 1930. 564].

Tingzhou corresponds to the modern city of Urumqi, the center of the Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region of the People's Republic of China [Zhongguo. 1930. 697].

According to Wang Guowei's definition, Yuzhi (Ngouzie) is an older Chinese transcription of the toponym Ruzie (Yuezhi 月氏). The second character zhi (之) performs a grammatical function and expresses the ownership of a particular object by someone. The last character ping (平) means plain. It follows that "Yuzhi zhi ping" is translated as "plain" or "Ngouzie (Ruzie/Yuezhi) valley." Since Mu Tianzi arrived at these two points within one day, as the essay says, they were nearby.

Some historians localize Yanju in the Karashar region in East Turkestan, while others - in Ganzhou in the Pingliang region of Gansu province [Gu Xixing Ji. 1987. 10]. And Lin Meicun proves that Yanju, indicated in the Mu-Tianzi Zhuan, is the name of the mountain and this toponym corresponds to Yanzhi-shan, which is the Chinese name of Mount Karlyktag, located near Barkul [Lin Meicun. 1998. 74] in East Turkestan.

In the 109th chapter of Sima Qian's essay "Shiji", dedicated to the life of the aforementioned commander of the military campaign in Fergana (Daiyuan, Davan) Li Guangli, the toponym Qilian Tianshan (祁連天山) is found. The interlinear commentary attached to it says that leaving Dunhuang (燉煌) you can get to Tien Shan in Xiyu, near Pulei (蒲類 - Barkul) and the Xihe River (西河). In ancient narratives it is noted that "The Baishan (White Mountains) are covered with snow in winter and summer, the Huns called these mountains Tangritag (Tien Shan)" [Sima Qian. 1856. 1028(1028)/10a/].

According to the comments of ancient authors in the work "Kodi Zhi" (括地志 - "Description of Acquired Lands") it is mentioned that "Tien Shan (天山) is also called Baishan (白山). Currently, they are called Chuloman-shan (初羅漫山) and are located 20 li north of Yiwu County (伊吾 - Ivergul, modern Kumul region), which is located 4416 li (about 2200 km) in a western direction" [Sima Qian. 1856.1028(1028)]. Almost the same thing is given in the book "Shiji. Xiongnu Lezhuan": "Qilian-shan is also called Tien-shan, also called Bai-shan" [Lin Meitsun. 1998.74] and are located in East Turkestan.

In this case we mean East Turkestan.

Xihe - literally means "Western River" - the western tributary of the upper reaches of the Yellow River [Tsihai. 1979. 1832].

Tien Shan (Tien Shan) is the Chinese translation of the Turkic toponym Tangritag (Heavenly Mountains).

Yiwu is a Chinese transcription of the toponym Ivergul, which is currently called Kumul (in Chinese - Hami).

In Uyghur translations of materials on Central Asia, the toponym "Qilian-shan" is also identified with Bai-shan in East Turkestan. At the same time, they note that in the language of local peoples these mountains are called Karliktag. This position is argued by the fact that, firstly, Qilian-shan is a Chinese translation of the toponym Tangritag in the Hun language [Ban Gu. 1994. 60], secondly, in the 99th chapter of "Shiji" the toponym Qilian-Tianshan [Ban Gu. 1994. 43].

European scientists W. Krause and W. Thomas (W. Krause, W. Thomas) in their work “Tocharisches Elementarbuch” tried to find the etymology of the toponym Karlyktag in the Tocharian language, mistakenly believing that Karlyk means black, and black in the “Eastern Tocharian language” is called “erkent” [Lin Meicun. 1998. 74]. They did not take into account that “black” in Turkic is kara (qara) or karalyk, and Karlyk means snowy, i.e. white, which corresponds to the toponym Baishan (White Mountain) in Chinese sources. The character bai (白), meaning “white,” also meant “west” in ancient times. Therefore, it is impossible to connect the etymology of Karlyktag with the “East Tocharian” word “erkent”.

Based on the analysis of various information from ancient Chinese written monuments and archaeological materials, the Chinese historian Lin Meicun came to the conclusion that the toponym Qilian-shan, found in Chinese sources, in particular in the sections devoted to Western countries (Xiyu), corresponds to Karlyktag (Haerlik-shan), located in the northeast of Barkul in East Turkestan [Lin Meicun. 1998. 75]. He also states that Qilian Shan is sometimes called Balikun Shan (Barkul Mountains).

In particular, he writes: “in the 3rd century, the Yuezhi, having made Balikun Shan and Haerlik Shan their center, wandered throughout all the pastures of Central Asia. After they left to the west, the Huns took their place. Huo Qubing and Ban Yun, having successively carried out military campaigns against the Huns, expelled them from Yanzhi-shan (Haerlik-shan) and Qilian-shan (Balikun-shan). After this, the Huns began to sing a sad song about the loss of Yanzhi-shan and Qilian-shan” [Lin Meitsun. 1998. 75].

As an example, he cites the following text from the Chinese translation of this song: “The loss of Qilian Shan deprived us of a place where our cattle could multiply. The loss of Yanzhi-shan means the loss of joy for our women” [Lin Meicun. 1998. 74].

Further, the Chinese scientist suggests that since pastures are the main place of nomadic herders during the four seasons, the ruler of the Ruzians/Yuezhi should have had two residences - summer and winter. The summer one could be in the pastures near the lake. Barkul, because they were the southernmost, and further south the desert and semi-desert zone began. And the northern residence of the ruler of the Ruzians/Yuezhi could be located near the lake. Qin Hai (秦海 – Bagrashkel) [Lin Meicun. 1998. 75; Zhongguo ditu. 1996. 29]. This thesis is substantiated by the following arguments.

1. In the section “Narrative of Western Countries”, “Hou Hanshu” it is indicated that in 123, the Han representative in Dunhuang Zhang Dan wrote a report to the future Emperor Shundi (reigned 126–144), in which it was stated that “the ruler of the northern Huns, Huyan roams between lakes Pulei (蒲類) and Qin (Qin Hai 秦海) and from there exercises control over the western countries (Xiyu)” [Lin Meicun. 1998. 75]. Puley corresponds to lake. Barkul, and Qin Hai - lake. Bagrashkol) in Eastern Turkestan.

2. In the section “The Narrative of Ban Yun” of the same source there is information about the defeat of the Xiongnu ruler (Wang) Huyan by Han troops in 126 AD, after which “the ruler Huyan settled on the coast of the Ka-nga River” [Lin Meicun. 1998. 75]. The toponym Ka'nga was also pronounced Ka-nгу, in modern Chinese Ku-wu, and corresponds to the Urungu (Ulungu) River [Lin Meitsun. 1998. 75].

Lin Meicun's conclusions inspire confidence, because according to their geographical location, the areas near Barkul and Lake. Buluntohai are convenient for breeding horses and could well have been the location of the residence of the Ruzian/Yuezhi (Oghuz) rulers.



The area of modern Dunhuang is a small green area in the middle of the desert and is surrounded by bare mountains. It is not suitable for cattle breeding, especially for horse breeding, which was the basis of the economy of the Asuen/Usun and Ruz/Yuezhi. In the southwest of modern Dunhuang (Dasht-Ata) there are Kumtag (Sand Mountains), which were also devoid of vegetation, which excludes the possibility of cattle breeding here.

The Suli River (literally meaning high-water), which originates in the Suli-Nanshan (meaning “high-water southern mountains”) and Tolai-Nanshan (meaning “mountains of luck”) mountains, flows northeast of modern Dunhuang and disappears into the sands. The coastal zone suitable for cattle breeding is small and cannot serve as pasture for large-scale horse breeding. Therefore, the assumption that the strong nomadic state of Ruziye (Yuezhi - Oguziya) for several centuries could have existed in the relatively small semi-desert space between modern Dunhuang and the Qilian Shan mountains in the south-central part of the modern Gansu province of the People's Republic of China is untenable.

Lake Bagrashkol is located near the city of Karashar (Yanqi 焉耆) in Eastern Turkestan [See: Zhongguo ditu 1996 29]. In ancient times, in the language of local residents, Karashar was called Agni [Shiyu. 2008. 1067].

In ancient China, the ruler of an appanage principality was called a wang (王). The use of this title in relation to the rulers of the Huns or other countries meant humiliation of their dignity and recognition of them as subject to the Chinese emperors (Huangdi).

Sulihe (Bulunjier River) - on modern Chinese maps - Sulehe.

Analyzing the information at our disposal, we come to the conclusion that in ancient times the East Turkestan and Gansu Qilian Shan were considered as a single mountain range, which in the ancient Turkic language was called Tangritag, i.e. heavenly or high mountains. Ancient Chinese historians did not use a transcription of a local toponym, but a translation of its meaning into Chinese. Thus, the toponym initially sounded like Qilian-shan, and later Tien-shan. The hieroglyphs of Qilian in ancient times were pronounced as Geilian, Tilyan and had the meaning “Sky” or “high” [Zhongguo sichou. 1994. 217; Fan I. 1996. 504].

In our opinion, all pasture areas located in the mountain valleys, gorges and foothill zones of this mountain range were the habitat of the Asuen/Usuns and the Ruzians/Yuezhi people - the Oguzes. Therefore, some ancient historians localized the toponym Qilian in the province of Gansu, taking its eastern half as a basis, while others - in East Turkestan, referring to its western half.

In fact, the authors of both opinions were right. The difference was in the approaches, since the supporters of each opinion were based only on individual information. They did not make a general analysis of existing information on the issue of localization of Qilian Shan. Later, due to the transformation of the word Qilian into “Tian” in the sources, the name of the western part of this mountain range began to be pronounced in a new way - Tien Shan, and its eastern part remained under the old name - Qilian Shan.

This conclusion is also confirmed by clarifying the location of two ancient toponyms of Dunhuang, which can only be distinguished by the different spellings of the dun characters (敦, 墩). Based on transcription alone, it is impossible to distinguish between these two identical-sounding toponyms, let alone their correct localization. In this context, first of all, it is necessary to pay attention to the following data indicated in the primary sources.

1. In the section “Usun-guo” (“State of Asuen”) of the 96th chapter of “Hanshu” it is written: “Initially Zhang Qian said that in the beginning the Asuen (Usun) and the Dai-Rusians

(great or great Oguzes) coexisted in the mountain plain Dunhuang" (始张騫言烏孫本與大月氏共在燉煌間) [Ban Gu. 1956. 2374(1166)/1b/]. This information is repeated in the sources "Tongdian" [Du Yu. 1995. 2724] and "Taiping Huanyu Ji" [Le Shi. 1980. Juan 182, 1b]. However, in the Tongdian composition, xian (閒) is replaced by the character jian (間).

It should be noted here that in this sentence, after the word Dunhuang, the character xian (閒) is used, which is also read as jian. As indicated in the Great Chinese Dictionary of Chinese Characters, when read as "xian" it has the meaning of "vast space" or "mountain gorge" [Hanyu. 1986. T. 7, 4241–4242]. For example, in ancient texts, if the character "jian" is written after the name of a river or lake, then in this case it is understood as "coast". In Chinese-Russian dictionaries compiled under the editorship of I.M. Oshanin, there is no such meaning [Oshanin. 1984. 343; Oshanin. 1983. 142–143].

In "Tongdian" the word "Sihai jian" appears [Du Yu. 1995. 2712]. In this example, the character "jian" is used after the name of the sea "Xihai" (literally meaning "Western Sea"). If we take the hieroglyph "jian" to mean "between," then we get semantic absurdity. This word should definitely be translated as "coast or coastal areas of the Western Sea", and "Dunhuang xian" should be understood as "plain or expanse of Dunhuang".

This interpretation is also confirmed by the fact that in the mentioned ancient Chinese sources it is not indicated anywhere that Dunhuang (敦煌) is a city or region. Although, as a rule, after the geographical name, ancient Chinese historians always added hieroglyphs denoting the city (cheng 城), region (zhou 州), county (xian 县), etc.

2. In the section "The Narrative of Fergana" of the 123rd chapter of "Shiji" there is also a mention that initially the Ruziye (Yuezhi) lived in the vastness of Dunhuang and Qilian. In the original it is written as follows: "Shi Ruzie (Yuezhi) ju Dunhuang Qilian xian" (始月氏居敦煌祁連閒) [Sima Qian. 1856. 1138 (1138)/4b/]. Here the character "Xian" is used after the toponym Qilian, which in ancient times was pronounced Giei-lien. In the Uyghur translation, the meaning of this hieroglyph is conveyed by the word "between" [Sima Qian. 1989.491]. Exactly the same meaning is conveyed in the Russian translation by N.Ya. Bichurin [Bichurin. 1950. 151].

In our opinion, the character "jian" should be translated as "open space" or "pasture," but not as the word "between," in which case we can argue that the toponym Dunhuang (敦煌) was the name of a mountain.

3. The ancient Chinese historians themselves reported that the Ruzians (Yuezhi - Oghuz) bred horses, which would have been impossible without the presence of vast pasture lands. Modern Dunhuang (Dasht-ata) and the surrounding areas cannot be the habitat of a large group of tribes engaged in horse breeding. Only small parts or representatives of them could live there.

4. During the Han Dynasty, the name of the modern city of Dunhuang was written using a hieroglyph with the addition of the fire sign "ho" in front of it, pronounced "tuen" and meaning "fire light". The second character "huang" in ancient times was read as "zhuang" ("juang") and was used in the meaning "light of fire, dawn, large."

Based on this, it can be argued that in ancient times the hieroglyphs of the modern city of Dunhuang were pronounced Tuen-juang and meant "light of the great fire." "Shazhou" - the second ancient Chinese name of this city meant "sand valley". In the ancient Turkic language the

city was called Dasht-ata, Daksh-ata [Sima Qian. 1989.521], which means “city in the desert.” As we can see, both of these names reflect the actual geographical location of modern Dunhuang.

5. In Shiji, the character “dun” (敦) is used to write the place name Dunhuang without adding the fire sign (火) in front. However, in the work “Shanghai Jing”, which was written in an earlier period, the toponym Dunhuang Shan (敦煌山 – Dunhuang Mountain) is found.

According to Lin Meicun, Dunhuang Shan corresponds to the modern mountain range Bogda Shan (translated as “big” or “great mountain”), which is located near the city of Urumqi [Lin Meicun. 1998. 77]. According to the toponymic dictionary “Zhongguo gujin diming datsidian”, these mountains are located near the city of Karashar in East Turkestan [Lin Meicun. 1998. 76].

Near this city there is also the Dunhuang River [Zhongguo. 1930. 898]. Dunhuang-shan in ancient times was pronounced Tuenshuen-shan or Tuenshuen-shan (Tuen-shueng-shan, Tuen-shung-shan). In this toponym “shan” clearly means “mountains”. The modern toponym Dunhuang was pronounced Tuen-juang in the distant past. As you can see, their modern reading is the same, a slight difference can be traced in their ancient reading. This gives reason to believe that in his story, when mentioning Dunhuang, the Chinese envoy to Fergana Zhang Qian meant Dunhuang Shan in East Turkestan.

6. At the time of Ambassador Zhang Qian, modern Dunhuang (Dasht-ata) did not yet bear this name [Lin Meicun. 1998. 76], therefore the Chinese envoy could not mention him in his report. Analysis of the information provided allows us to assert that in ancient times the Asueni/Usuns, together with the Ruzians/Yuezhi people, lived on the mountain plains and pastures located in the eastern part of Tangritag (Tien Shan) and the areas between the Urumchi and Karashar regions of East Turkestan.

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