

JADE FROM THE POINT OF VIEW OF TURKIC HISTORY

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Abstract: One of the most intriguing products in history is jade. This very rare stone was not only an expensive luxury item but also used in rituals and medical treatments. Taken by rulers as tribute and tax, it was considered the most valuable trade commodity. The fact that jade, which spread from China to Europe in the early period, is a product of Turkestan is still not properly understood. Throughout the history of ancient Asia and Europe, East Turkestan, especially Khoten, was the source of authentic—and highest quality—jade. However, records also exist in the oldest primary sources describing other regions. In my article, I will try to examine the course of jade in Turkish history based mainly on Chinese sources.

Keywords: Jade, Turkestan, Trade, Tribute, China, Chinese Sources.

TÜRK TARİHİ BAKIMINDAN YEŞİM TAŞI

Öz: Tarihteki en ilgi çekici ürünlerinden biri yeşimtaşıdır. Çok nadir bulunan bu taş pahalı bir lüks eşya maddesi olduğu gibi ritüellerde ve tedavilerde de kullanılmıştır. Hükümdarlar tarafından haraç ve vergi olarak alınan bu taş, ticarete ise en kıymetli mal olarak kabul edilmiştir. Çin'den Avrupa'ya kadar erken dönemlerde yayılan yeşimtaşının bir Türkistan ürünü olduğu gerçeği hâlâ gereği gibi anlaşılamamıştır. Eski Asya ve Avrupa tarihi boyunca gerçek ve en kaliteli yeşimtaşının kaynağı Doğu Türkistan, bilhassa Hoten olmuştur. Yine de en eski ana kaynaklarda başka bölgeleri tarif eden kayıtlar da vardır. Makalemden esasen Çin kaynaklarına dayanarak yeşimtaşının Türk tarihi içindeki seyrini incelemeye çalışacağım.

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Anahtar Kelimeler: Yeşimtaşı, Türkistan, Ticaret, Haraç, Çin, Çin Kaynakları.

Introduction

In 1879, European researchers were astonished to find a jade-cutting tool made among remains unearthed during excavations in the Rhone bed near Geneva; it was considered to have been produced centuries before Christ. Proponents of the Indo-European theory began to question whether this cutting implement was a piece brought by the Aryans from the lands of their kindred in the Hindu Kush. How this stone, found only in Asia, could have been brought to Europe in the early ages is a matter of much curiosity.¹ Several recent studies have accepted that the raw material for the jade axes found in Europe, especially in England, which dates back to 6,000 years, did not originate in England—but in the Italian Alps.² However, some data in these studies suggest that the material found in the Italian Alps is jadeite and eclogite, minerals similar to jade. Jadeite and eclogite tests for “jade” axes found in Bulgaria and Romania are mentioned, along with the Italian Alps origin of the stones. Moreover, some archaeological studies refer directly to the pieces from the Italian Alps as jadeite (“jadeite quarries”).³ According to the current knowledge, no natural jade deposits exist in Europe. Therefore, first, determining where jade comes from is essential.

Jade and Turkestan

Westerners doubted that the inhabitants of Turkestan could have mined, processed, and exported this precious and rare stone to such distant places; at first, they insistently focused on the thesis that it came from Asia to Europe via Aryan migrations. At this juncture, one fact needs to be established: The people of Turkestan have produced jade from East Turkestan and sold it to distant lands since very early periods.

According to various assessments, a minimal amount of jade was scattered between Mesopotamia and England. It was highly prestigious to possess jade or pieces made from it, and this reflects the ambition of humankind.

¹ F. Max Müller, *Biographies of Words and the Home of the Aryas*, Longmans, Green, and co., London 1888, p. 209-210.

² P. Pétrequin et al. (Ed.), *Jade. Grandes haches alpines du Néolithique européen*, Presses universitaires de Franche-Comté, Besançon 2012; Pierre Pétrequin et. al. - Estelle Gauthier - Anne-Marie Pétrequin, *Jade: interprétations sociales des objets-signes en jades alpins dans l'Europe néolithique*, Ed: Pierre et al Pétrequin, Presses universitaires de Franche-Comté, and Centre de Recherche archéologique de la Vallée de l'Ain, Besançon 2017.

³ Lasse Sørensen, “A Critical Approach Towards Jade Axes in Southern Scandinavia”, *Danish Journal of Archaeology*, vol. I, issue 1, 2012, p. 82.

However, no jade exists among the fine art and religious ornaments of Egypt, and there is no evidence that the Greeks or Romans ever used it; the metal does not even have a name. In Europe, jade was mined in the Karakash River in Khoten from deposits in the Kunlun Mountains region and the north of the Kashmir Mountains. In prehistoric times, jade was taken to the West because of its sacred properties. In India, the recognition of jade, or at least its use as a material for artistic engraving, is more recent. Jade and a similar material, jadeite, are found in Burma, Mexico, and Polynesia.⁴

Stanley Charles Nott writes about the jade: “*The Chinese term for Jade, Yü (Yu- narrator), covers a large range of stones including the Agate, Quartz, and Fluor families, in contrast to the accepted mineralogical classification of the present day European scientist, who confines the term Jade to three varieties, Nephrite, Jadeite and Chloromelanite*.”⁵ “*Chinese classify this material under three headings: (1) Yü (Yu- narrator)- its general name. (2) Pi Yü (Bi Yu- narrator) the dark green variety, similar in character to serpentine obtained mainly from Barkul, Manas, Sungaria, the country surrounding Lake Baikal and the mountain slopes of Western Yunnan. (3) Fei-ts’ui (Feicui- narrator)- an emerald green variety first obtained from Lau-t’ian (Laitian- narrator) on the borders of the province of Shensi, and later imported from Burma.*”

Outside Turkestan, the Chinese later obtained jade from the Amur in the north and some small sources in Southeast Asia; however, natural, high-quality jade came to them from East Turkestan. Chinese archaeological cultures dating back several centuries BC used it for ritual purposes.⁷ According to the Chinese source Guanzi 管子, which dates back to the 7th century BC, jade was produced in Yuezhi territory, and the Yuezhi brought jade to the Chinese.⁸

Now let's look at the places where jade comes from according to Chinese sources. I will attempt to provide a general overview of these documents below.

⁴ Müller, a.g.e., p. 210-214.

⁵ Stanley Charles Nott, *Chinese Jade Throughout The Ages*, B. T. Batsford LTD, London 1962, p. 7.

⁶ Nott, a.g.e., p. 1.

⁷ Li Liu, “The Products of Minds as Well as Hands: Production of Prestige Goods in Neolithic and Early State Periods of China”, *Asian Perspectives*, vol. XLII, issue 1, 2003, p. 3 etc.

⁸ K. Enoki et al - G. A. Koshelenko - Z. Haidary, “The Yüeh-chih and Their Migration”, *History of Civilizations of Central Asia*, vol. II, Ed: B. N. Puri-G.F. Etemadi, UNESCO, Paris 1994, p. 172.

- Tengri Mountains-Kumul-Barkol: According to the Chinese source *Shan Hai Jing* 山海經, which dates to the 4th century BC, 290 li west of the Tengri Mountains one could find You 渤 Mountain. There were short jade samples of various colors on the top of this mountain. On the south side of the mountain, large amounts of green xionghuang 雄黃 could be found. This mountain was the place where the sun rose when looking westward. The surrounding area was circular. The Ying 英 River flowed 100 li westward from that point and arrived near Yiwang 翼望 Mountain; there were no plants or trees on this mountain, but gold and jade were abundant.⁹ According to the *Guo Pu Commentary* (郭璞注), Yiwang was also called Tucui 土翠 Mountain.¹⁰ The Tengri Mountains mentioned in this source were the Tengri Mountains in the territory of Kumul. If one traveled west from there, the traveler would reach Mount You and then Mount Yiwang after 400 li.¹¹ This corresponded to the western parts of Barköl and Mount Patkahlık. Although the information given in the *Shan Hai Jing* about the Tengri Mountains is not mentioned in the Chinese sources of the Huns and Turk Khaganate, the *Da Ming Yitong Zhi* 大明一統志, written in 1461, mentions that jade was mined in Yiwu (Kumul) lands at the foot of the Tengri Mountains.¹² According to another record in the *Shan Hai Jing*, getting there entailed going 190 li west from a mountain called Sanwei 三危 to Mount Kuei 驪 and then 350 li west from this mountain to the Tengri Mountains. In the Tengri Mountains, large amounts of gold, jade, and green xionghuang could be found.¹³

- Yarkend: Jade came from Yarkend, located west of Khoten. According to the *Taiping Yulan* 太平御覽, completed in 983, there was an iron-rich mountain in Yarkend from which green jade could be collected.¹⁴ Additionally, in Yarkend, a “Jade River” flowed. The Yellow River could be observed to the south, and the Pamir Mountains to the west.¹⁵

⁹ *Shan Hai Jing Quanyi*, Guizhou 1992, p. 40.

¹⁰ *Shan Hai Jing Quanyi*, p. 47.

¹¹ *Yuan He Jun Xian Tuzhi*, Zhonghua Shuju, Beijing 1983, p. XXI, 4a.

¹² *Da Ming Yitong Zhi*, San Qin, Xi'an 1990, p. 5505.

¹³ *Shan Hai Jing Quanyi*, p. 39-40.

¹⁴ *Taiping Yulan*, Shangwu, Taipei 1997, p. 796, 1a-1b.

¹⁵ *Qin Ding Huan Xing Xiyu Tuzhi*, Library of Tokyo Chuan-men University's copy, Beijing 1755, p. XVIII, 17a.

According to Xiyu Wen Jian Lu 西域文見錄, jade was mined from the river in the land of Yarkend; the larger pieces were the size of bowls or pianos, and the smaller ones were the same size as palms or chestnuts. Some weighed 300–400 jin.¹⁶ The colors were not all the same; pieces colored snow white, kingfisher green, wax yellow, chainifre red, and ink black were all of high quality. One kind of jade looked like sheep's fat and was speckled with bright red. Another variant was bluish-green, like a Persian cocoon, and yet another had gold flecks and seemed to float in the water where it was found. It was difficult to pick up the large and small stones and shiny jade pieces that settled at the bottom of the water. The jade that fell and spread was mixed, and there were rules for talking about the jade and collecting it. The source continues with descriptions of human interaction with the jade: an officer on the far bank of the river and a barracks officer (soldier) on another bank nearby kept watch; Twenty or thirty Muslims (or Uighurs) from the same group who had mastered the art of removing the jade moved forward and entered the river together, shoulder to shoulder, and barefoot. They stepped on the stones, and one Muslim/Uighur who stumbled on a jade stone now realized that jade was underfoot; he bent down, picked it up, and threw it on the bank of the river. The soldier struck the gong once, and the official drew a dot in red ink (on the paper). When the Muslim/Uighur came out of the river, he checked the dot to see if it was the same as the stone he had thrown before; 230 li from Yarkend, there was a mountain called Miertai, and there were jade stones all over that mountain of five colors—and not the same kind of stones. Those who wanted to retrieve the big jade stones, which were not cracked and weighed 1000–10,000 jin, had to climb the high peaks with clefts. The local people could not go. A locally raised yak was used for climbing and walking. The Muslims/Uighurs took their tools, loaded them onto the animal, climbed up, and broke the stones with their maces and chisels; the stones would fall by themselves, and then the workers picked them up. In their tradition, this was called a rub stone and a mountain stone. Every year, during two seasons, spring and autumn, Yarkend did not wait to send jade tribute weighing 7–8 to 10 thousand jin. Yarkend and Khoten sent jade from the Yurunkash and Karakash rivers as tribute—as much as possible—but in different amounts every time; it was brought to the capital by imperial carriage, passing by the watchtowers. It was forbidden to hide jade. Watchtowers and fortresses were always very strictly controlled. The Muslims/Uighurs carried it secretly and cunningly,

¹⁶ 觔. Like 500 grams.

and merchants carried it secretly through difficult routes, as well, so it was difficult to stop them.¹⁷

- Cherchen-Chakılık: It was also recorded that jade was mined in the territory of Kroran (Chinese sources: Loulan) State, which was established in the eastern parts of the Taklamakan Desert in present-day Cherchen-Chakılık region.¹⁸ In East Turkestan, jade is mined today in Khoten and the Cherchen-Chakılık region.

- Karasheher: According to *Shui Jing Zhu* 水經注, in Karasheher, there was a mountain called Daxian 大咸, a four-cornered mountain with no water and no grass; its peak could not be climbed, and large amounts of jade were mined from its slopes.¹⁹

- Kagilik: Jade also existed in Kagilik in the southwest on the present-day Yarkend-Hoten road. According to Han Dynasty chronicles, jade was mined in the territory of the Xiye State established there.²⁰

- Khoten: According to the Dawan (Fergana) chapter of the *Shi Ji* 史記, the first Chinese dynastic history completed in the 1st century BC, the water east of Yutian (Khoten) used to flow eastward and join the Salt Lake 鹽澤. The water went underground and disappeared. The river's source was south of this area (Yellow River: Huang-he 黃河). Large quantities of jade could be found in the water. The Huns' right branch was located east of this lake.²¹ The second dynasty history of the Han *Shu* 漢書 also recorded that copious quantities of jade came from Khoten.²² According to the Wei Dynasty history, *Wei Shu* 魏書, completed in 554, the Shouba 首拔 was located 30 li east of the city of Yutian (Hoten), and jade was extracted from that river.²³ According to the dynastic historical text *Xin Tang Shu* 新唐書, during the Turk Khaganate, a jade river ran through Khoten. The river was mentioned directly in the sources as Yuhe 玉河, meaning "Jade River." According to the records, people in

¹⁷ *Xiyu Wenjian Lu*, Beijing, 1802, I, p. 38-39.

¹⁸ *Han Shu*, Zhonghua Shuju, Beijing, 1997, p. 3875-3876; *Tong Dian*, Zhonghua Shuju, Beijing, 2003, p. 5199.

¹⁹ *Shan Hai Jing Quanyi*, p. 63-64.

²⁰ *Han Shu*, p. 3882-3884; *Hou Han Shu*, Zhonghua Shuju, Beijing 1997, p. 2917.

²¹ *Shi Ji*, Zhonghua Shuju, Beijing 1997, p. 3160.

²² *Han Shu*, p. 3881.

²³ *Wei Shu*, Zhonghua Shuju, Beijing 1997, p. 2262-2263.

that area would look for places with bright moonlight in the evening and mine the jade there.²⁴ According to the *Tong Dian* 通典, written in 801, there was a river in Khoten from which jade could be extracted called the “Jade River.”²⁵ Yelü Chucai (d. 1244) mentions in *Xi You Lu* 西游錄 that there was a river with white and black jade in Wuduan (Hoten).²⁶ According to Ming-era Chinese sources, Khoten is bordered to the east by the Baiyu (“White Jade”) River, to the west by the Lüyu (“Green Jade”) River, and further west by the Heiyu (“Black Jade”) River. All of these rivers originated from Kunlun (Kurum) Mountain. The locals went into the water at night to collect the jade that shone in the moonlight, and it must have been beautiful. China’s neighbors often collected jade from these places and offered it as tribute.²⁷

In the *al-Jamâhir fi ma'rifat al-jahâvir*, Al-Biruni mentioned Karakash while describing jade: “*The jade comes out of two valleys in the district of Khoten, the center of which is Ahma. One of these valleys is called Kâsh... the other is called Karâkâsh...*”²⁸ In his *Kitâb al-Saldana*, the author stated, “*As for jade, this stone is mined from two valleys in Khoten. One of these valleys is called Yûrenk Kâsh, from which the white and precious stone is mined.*”²⁹

Mahmud of Kashgarlı indicated the following about rivers from which jade was extracted in a work titled “Kash Öküz”: “*They are two streams flowing on either side of the city of Khotan. One of them is called “Ürüng Kash Öküz”, a clean white stone is found here; the stream got its name from this stone. One is called “Karakash Öküz”, a clean black stone is found here. This stone is the only one in the whole world.*”³⁰ The Chinese source *Wen Xian Tong Kao* 文獻通考, completed in 1317, mirrors this information.³¹

In the *Zafernâme*, written in 1425, the record is as follows: “*There are two rivers in Khoten. One is called Arangkash and the other Karakash. Both rivers contain jade. They export this jade to other countries. The water of*

²⁴ *Xin Tang Shu*, Zhonghua Shuju, Beijing 1997, p. 6235.

²⁵ *Tong Dian*, p. 5225.

²⁶ Kürşat Yıldırım, (Ed.), *Çin Kaynaklarında Türkistan Şehirleri*. Ötüken, İstanbul 2013, p. 203.

²⁷ *Ming Shi*, Zhonghua Shuju, Beijing 1997, p. 8614.

²⁸ Ramazan Şeşen, *İslam Coğrafyacılarına Göre Türkler ve Türk Ülkeleri*, TTK, Ankara 2001, p. 202.

²⁹ Şeşen, a.g.e., p. 204.

³⁰ Kaşgarlı Mahmut, *Divanü Lûgat-it-Türk*. cilt III, Trans: Besim Atalay, TDK, Ankara 2006, p. 152.

³¹ *Wen Xian Tong Kao*, Zhonghua Shuju, Beijing 2006, p. 337, 2643a-b-c, 2644a.

*these two rivers comes from Karangutagh.*³² The Karangutag mentioned in this source is the mountain range known today as the Kunlun.

The Karakash River made up the upper course of the Khoten River; it originated from the same source as the Yurunkash River. The water flowed west of the former city of Kashtash. For 60 li, it flowed north and arrived in an area south of Karakash. There, it split into two branches; it then flowed northeast to Koghish and merged with the Khoten River. The water came from the east of Karakash, and Jade was extracted from this water.³³ According to Jin Gao Ju Hui Shi Tian Ji, this was the Wuyu 烏玉 River west of Khoten territory.³⁴ According to the Wei Shu, there was a large body of water 55 li west of Khoten called the Dali 達利 River.³⁵ The Wuyu and Dali mentioned in the sources were part of the Karakash River.

In Ali Akbar's Hitayname, which is said to have passed through Khotan in 1500, the author mentioned the following: "*There are two rivers in Khotan. One of them is called Ak-kash. White jade came out of it. The other is called Kara-kash. Black and green jade was mined from there. When the waters rose and receded back into its course (or in a place called Dascu), they would gather jade on its banks for ten days and it would go everywhere from there.*"³⁶ Today, jade is still mined in Khoten. The place and water names of Ürünk (ürünk: "white") Kash, Kara Kash, or Kash are still used; Kash is the Turkic equivalent of 'jade' in the oldest Turkic texts.

- Kunlun (Kurum) Mountains: In the travel report Xi Shi Ji by Chang De, a Chinese envoy sent by the Mongol Khan Mengü to his brother Hülagü—who had just overthrown the Caliph in Baghdad—the author related that there were copious amounts of jade originating in the Kunlun Mountains.³⁷

According to Qing period records, the territory of Kashtashi in the southern part of Khoten province was 160 li southwest of Khoten City. There were city walls there. One could find the Yurungkash and Karakash rivers to the south of this area. Water flowed eastward through the city, surrounded by rivers on three sides, each 20 li long. Since the time of the Huns, these bodies

³² Şerefüddin Ali Yezdî, *Emir Timur (Zafernâme)*, Trans: D. Ahsen Batur, Selenge, İstanbul 2013, p. 329.

³³ *Qin Ding Huan Xing Xiyu Tuzhi*, p. XXVIII, 16a.

³⁴ *Hsiyu Tongwenzhi*, Beijing National Library's copy, Beijing 1763, p. VI, 23a.

³⁵ *Wei Shu*, p. 2263.

³⁶ Lin Yih-min, *Ali Ekber'in Hitayname Adlı Eserinin Çin Kaynakları ile Mukayese ve Tenkidi*, Taipei 1967, p. 132.

³⁷ *Çin Kaynaklarında Türkistan Şehirleri*, p. 280.

of water surrounded mountains called the “Southern Mountains,” and jade was mined there.³⁸

Jade as a Material

One of the most important reasons jade has been in high demand throughout history is the mystical belief that it is beneficial for curing or helping with disease, brings good fortune, and protects its owner from trouble or bad luck. Jade was also used in activities such as magic.

According to a narrative by Biruni, people called jade or a stone similar to it “*galebe tashi*” (conquering stone). Therefore, Turks used to decorate their swords, belts, and horse saddles with this stone to be victorious in battle.³⁹

Mahmud of Kashgarli said the following about jade: “*It is a pure white stone without blemish, it is put into rings, and the owner of the ring is not touched by lightning; for this is the way it is created. If it is wrapped in a cloth and thrown into the fire, neither the cloth will burn, nor the stone...This has been tested. If a man takes it in his mouth when he is thirsty, it will quench his thirst.*”⁴⁰ Turk shamans from ancient times used some jade stones, also called *yada*, to make it snow, rain, hail—and have the wind blow.⁴¹

According to researchers such as Max Müller, raw or unprocessed jade has never been found anywhere in Europe, and there is no ancient name for jade in Europe. The word “jade” is not used or found in any European source before the discovery of America. The Spaniards who brought jade from America called it “*piedra de yjada*” because, for a long time, it was believed to relieve pain. Monardes was the first to introduce this new terminology in Europe in his *Historia Medicinal de las Cosas que se traen de las Indias Occidentales* (Seville, 1569). He used “*piedra de yjada*,” also spelled “*piedra de ijada*,” which means groin stone or stone that relieves pain in the groin. The Spanish word “*ijada*” means “*il lado del animal debaxo del vientre junto al anca*,” according to the Dictionary of the Spanish Academy, and there is little doubt that it comes from the Latin *ilia*. The “*iliaco*” in Spanish is “*il dolor colico*”. The words “*ijada*,” “*jada*,” or “*jade*” are a mere coincidence in terms of the belief in the healing power of the stone originating in America. Some of the

³⁸ *Qin Ding Huan Xing Xiyu Tuzhi*, p. XIX, 13b.

³⁹ Şeşen, a.g.e., p. 202.

⁴⁰ *Divanü Lügat-it-Türk*, III, p. 22.

⁴¹ A. Duvarcı, *Türkiye’de Falçılık Geleneği ile Bu Konuda İki Eser*, Kültür Bakanlığı, Ankara 1993, p. 26. See Hikmet Tanyu, *Türklerde Taşla İlgili İnançlar*, Ankara Üniversitesi, Ankara 1968.

books written by Charles V's court physicians and others describe treatments that require wearing jade.⁴²

In addition to its use for therapeutic purposes in China, jade had a place in Chinese religion, especially Daoism. According to the Chinese, death was not an obstacle to coming back to life; therefore, jade amulets were placed between the lips of the deceased to ensure that the body came back to life. Jade also influenced Chinese alchemy. According to the Daoists, the entire body was a "jade tree".⁴³

Throughout history, jade was a luxury item and an ornamental material; it was the most spectacular material in clothing and the decoration of dwellings and buildings. Several examples from the primary sources are required here. The Töles in Turfan wore gold and jade belts.⁴⁴ The ruler of Kucha had arches decorated with precious stones.⁴⁵ Chang De's travel report, *Xi Shi Ji* noted that the walls of the palace of the Caliph of Baghdad were covered with black and white jade.⁴⁶ In Buddhist texts written in Sanskrit, the word "yedâ" was called a material but not an ornamental one. From the time of the early Turkic dynasties of Delhi, jade had been an ornamental material in India.⁴⁷ In the city of Kash, pleasant palaces and a beautiful place of worship could be seen, and many structures had pillars made of jade.⁴⁸ In China, the most popular ornaments were made of jade; it was also used in ceremonies in ancient Chinese cultures before Christ. For the first time, Tang Emperor Gaozu (618-627) ordered all princes, nobles, soldiers, and officials above the 2nd rank to wear jade-encrusted belts.⁴⁹ Qing Dynasty emperors were also known to be fond of jade.⁵⁰ In Europe, grandiose dreams about acquiring jade began to take hold in the 16th century.⁵¹ Everyone wanted to own this stone because it represented wealth and prestige.

⁴² Müller, a.g.e., p. 217-218, 220.

⁴³ T. Zarccone, *Yeşimtaş Yolu*, Trans: Canan Çankaya, Türkiye İş Bankası, İstanbul 2009, p. 17-18, 20.

⁴⁴ *Tong Dian*, p. 5258-5259.

⁴⁵ *Jin Shi*, Zhonghua Shuju, Beijing 1997, p. 917.

⁴⁶ *Çin Kaynaklarında Türkistan Şehirleri*, p. 286.

⁴⁷ Müller, a.g.e., p. 214, 220.

⁴⁸ *Çin Kaynaklarında Türkistan Şehirleri*, p. 478.

⁴⁹ B. Laufer, *Jade*, Chicago 1912, p. 286.

⁵⁰ Zarccone, a.g.e., p. 30.

⁵¹ Müller, a.g.e., p. 220.

Jade in the China-Turkistan Tribute-Trade Relationship

Ancient China had a tribute-trade process in its international relations system. According to this system, China, which considered itself the center of the world, recognized the states in Turkestan in return for a tribute they were obligated to pay. The Chinese granted the Turkistanis commercial privileges in return. During this practice, these outside states were not subordinate to China; a trade relationship was established only by accepting China's superiority. Jade was one of the most important tribute commodities given to the Chinese by other states in this relationship. Throughout history, powerful states have received this stone from others as a tribute or gift. Jade, a very colorful and attractive stone, was even given as a bribe. For example, in 90 AD, the regent of the Yuezhi (Kushan) rulers, a man named Xie, sent jade with horse riders as a bribe to the rulers of Kucha.⁵² The states that ruled the region imposed the burden of collecting jade on the people of Khoten. The work was so laborious that when exemptions were granted, this was recorded in the sources. In the Yuan Shi from 1274, it was reported that the people of Khoten were relieved of the burden of collecting jade for the Yuan Emperor.⁵³

For many centuries, Chinese dynasties made every effort to obtain the stone. One of China's last two constructed gates in the empire's west was called the Jade Gate Pass. This gate, opened in prehistoric times, was used for long periods. There are numerous records of jade as an item of tribute. It was constantly at the center of relations between the Ming Dynasty in China and Turkestan. I will only mention several documents from the 15th century here as examples. After Emperor Yongle ascended the throne (after 1402), the ruler of Bashbalik sent an envoy to the Emperor and offered uncut jade as tribute.⁵⁴ In 1406, the ruler of Bashbalik sent an envoy to the Chinese court, and this visitor transported jade to offer as tribute.⁵⁵ In 1407, the ruler of Qocho sent a piece of jade and other items from his country to the Ming Emperor as tribute.⁵⁶ In 1422, an envoy from Khoten sent to China presented his hosts with fine jade.⁵⁷

Emperor Yongle of China (1402-1424) established close relations with Turkestan, and every year, envoys arrived from the western countries. The Turks were very fond of Chinese goods, especially silk, and profited by

⁵² *Hou Han Shu*, p. 1580.

⁵³ *Çin Kaynaklarında Türkistan Şehirleri*, p. 378.

⁵⁴ *Çin Kaynaklarında Türkistan Şehirleri*, p. 459.

⁵⁵ *Çin Kaynaklarında Türkistan Şehirleri*, p. 440.

⁵⁶ *Çin Kaynaklarında Türkistan Şehirleri*, p. 436.

⁵⁷ *Çin Kaynaklarında Türkistan Şehirleri*, p. 463.

exchanging goods from their lands with Chinese products. Therefore, foreign merchants traveled to China under the pretext of bringing tribute, and the most valuable commodity they brought was jade. Once they entered China, officials and normal subjects handled their accommodation and transportation. In time, as these services and trade negatively affected the Chinese economy, the Emperor asked visitors from Turkestan not to send envoys anymore.⁵⁸

The Manuscripts Department of the V. I. Lenin State Library preserves the valuable donations of Konstantin Andrianovich Skachkov, collected by the Russian Consul in Chuguchak (Tarbagatay). The collection contains Chinese manuscripts, maps, and picture albums from the 1450s until 1859. The most prized part of the collection is the Xinjiang Collection. Some manuscripts are in three parts and contain the short petitions of rulers and their envoys to the Ming Dynasty court. These documents, which do not have Chinese titles, were labeled by Skachkov as “Dokladi Imperatoram Dayminskoy Dinastii iz Inozemnih i Dannicheskikh” (Reports from Foreigners and Subjects to the Emperors of the Daymin Dynasty). According to the documents, whose exact dates are not precisely known but are believed to be between the 14th and 15th centuries, Komul Khan Muhammad sent 200 jin of jade with his envoy Hasan.⁵⁹ Aladdin, an envoy from the Arab Caliphate, presented 50 jin of jade to the Chinese Emperor as tribute.⁶⁰ Ali, an envoy from Samarkand, presented 50 jin of jade as a gift to the Emperor.⁶¹ Lastly, Sanhal of Huozhou (Karahoca) sent a messenger with a jade stone weighing five jin.⁶²

In their dealings with China, the Turkestanis sometimes sent poor-quality jade, and the Chinese suffered financial losses. For example, Imil Khoja, who succeeded Isen Buka, the ruler of Ili Balyk (a khanate in East Turkestan), who died in 1445, sent camels to China as tribute; he also gifted an unprocessed jade stone weighing 3,800 jin,⁶³ but it was not of good quality. To avoid losses, the Chinese rulers demanded that for every two jin of jade, one ball of white silk would be sent, envoys should only come once every three to five years, and the delegation should not exceed ten individuals.⁶⁴ On another occasion, envoys from Samarkand brought jade to China, but only 24

⁵⁸ *Çin Kaynaklarında Türkistan Şehirleri*, p. 464.

⁵⁹ *Kitayskiye Dokumenti i Materiali po İstorii Vostochnogo Turkestana, Sredney Azii i Kazakhstana*, Almatı 1994, p. 24.

⁶⁰ *Kitayskiye Dokumenti*, p. 25.

⁶¹ *Kitayskiye Dokumenti*, p. 25.

⁶² *Kitayskiye Dokumenti*, p. 28.

⁶³ 1 jin is about 500 grams.

⁶⁴ *Ming Shi*, p. 8608; *Çin Kaynaklarında Türkistan Şehirleri*, p. 461.

pieces of it, weighing 68 jin, were suitable for processing. The remaining 5,900 jin were useless. The Chinese court offered to sell this jade themselves; the visiting delegation asked for one ball of cheap silk for every five jin of jade, to which the Chinese side agreed.⁶⁵

Merchants from Turkestan called themselves envoys and offered jade as tribute. Once they entered Chinese borders, all of their expenses were covered by China.⁶⁶ However, this put a significant burden on Chinese finances.

The Turks were not the only ones who used jade as an offering during official visits; frequently, the Chinese emperors presented jade as a gift in their dealings with states in Turkestan. For example, jade vessels were among the gifts sent by the Chinese Emperor to the ruler of Samarkand in the 10th month of 1445.⁶⁷

Conclusion

The people of Turkestan have mined and processed jade from East Turkestan and sold it to distant lands since very early periods. European historical sources have never recorded the mining and processing of jade. Except China, there are very few places outside Turkestan where this stone is processed; no raw jade has yet been found in excavations in Europe. Jade is of great importance in Turkestan-China relations. In my article, I tried to give information about the extraction of jade in Turkestan cities according to Chinese sources. In doing so, I presented detailed information from Chinese sources. Particularly interesting is the account of the extraction of jade in Yarkend in *Xiyu Wen Jian Lu*. I have also added information from some Arabic and Persian main sources. On the other hand, as a source of magic and healing Jade was helping with disease, brings good fortune, and protects its owner from trouble or bad luck. It also had a religious importance. In Turkic culture, jade also had sacred aspects. Shamans and common people were very interested in jade. It was a luxury item and an ornamental material. There were numerous historical records of this. There was a great importance of jade in tribute-trade relationship China-Turkistan. Chinese dynasties made every effort to obtain the stone. Traders from Turkestan called themselves envoys and offered jade as tribute and this material had the main value in these relations. Throughout history jade was the most precious gift that presented to the rulers. I have also tried to give examples from Chinese sources in the text.

⁶⁵ *Ming Shi*, p. 8600.

⁶⁶ *Ming Shi*, p. 8601.

⁶⁷ *Çin Kaynaklarında Türkistan Şehirleri*, p. 473.

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