

# A New Study on the Loulan Kingdom During the Han Dynasty

Kakinuma Yōhei

This study examines the location of the Loulan Kingdom during the Han Dynasty. The findings suggest that Loulan Kingdom was situated between Dunhuang and the Tarim Basin. Before the 4th year of Yuanfeng (77 B.C.E.), the kingdom was centered in Northern Loulan. After this, Loulan became known as Shanshan, and the newly appointed king, Weituqi, established his residence near Miran (Southern Loulan). The dual structure of Northern and Southern Loulan persisted into the periods of the Wei, Jin, and Northern and Southern Dynasties. The kingdom occupied a strategic crossroads where Western Region inhabitants mingled with Han Chinese, creating a multilingual environment, and much like Dunhuang, it functioned as a transit hub.

The ancient kingdom of Loulan 樓蘭 during the Han 漢 period (202 B.C.E.–220 C.E.) was sporadically documented in historical records such as the *Records of the Grand Historian* (*Shiji* 史記) and the *Book of Han* (*Hanshu* 漢書). Additionally, field surveys conducted by researchers such as Sven Hedin (1865–1952) and Aurel Stein (1862–1943) have significantly contributed to our understanding of Loulan. Despite these efforts, numerous aspects remain unclear. One of the most contentious issues concerns the precise location of the capital of the Loulan Kingdom. Resolving this question is not merely a matter of determining Loulan’s geographical location. It also clarifies the relationship between existing related archaeological sites and historical records, thereby elucidating the historical significance of this kingdom during the Han Dynasty.

Current research revisits the issue by analyzing wooden slips unearthed in the northwestern region of China. Of particular significance are recently available Han Dynasty slips from the Xuanquan 懸泉 site near Dunhuang 敦煌, which contain critical information on Loulan’s location. These slips, discovered at a Han Dynasty postal relay station (*zhi* 置), encompass a wide range of documents, such as imperial edicts, travel permits, legal codes, judicial records, registers, personal letters, and classical texts. Transcriptions have been compiled in a selected annotated translation (*shicui* 釋粹) (Hu/Zhang 2001) and more recently in the official reports, together with illustrations (*XH*). This article examines the location of Loulan during the Han Dynasty by utilizing these historical materials alongside other archaeological evidence.

## Debates surrounding Loulan

During the Han Dynasty, envoys and merchants traveling from the Western Region to Dunhuang were required to pass through the Loulan area. The Xiongnu 匈奴 were located to the north, while to the south a route from Cherchen (且末 Qiemmo) along the Southern Xiyu Route (*Xiyu nandao* 西域南道) extended into the Qaidam

Basin, leading to near Qinghai 青海 Lake and from there to the Ba-Shu 巴蜀 region, i.e., modern-day northern Sichuan 四川, or to Chang'an 長安. This Southern Route did not touch Dunhuang, but it did pass through the territory of Loulan, making the so-called Ancient City of Loulan (Loulan Gucheng 樓蘭故城) an unavoidable transit point for Western Region travelers heading to Han China (see Figure 1).

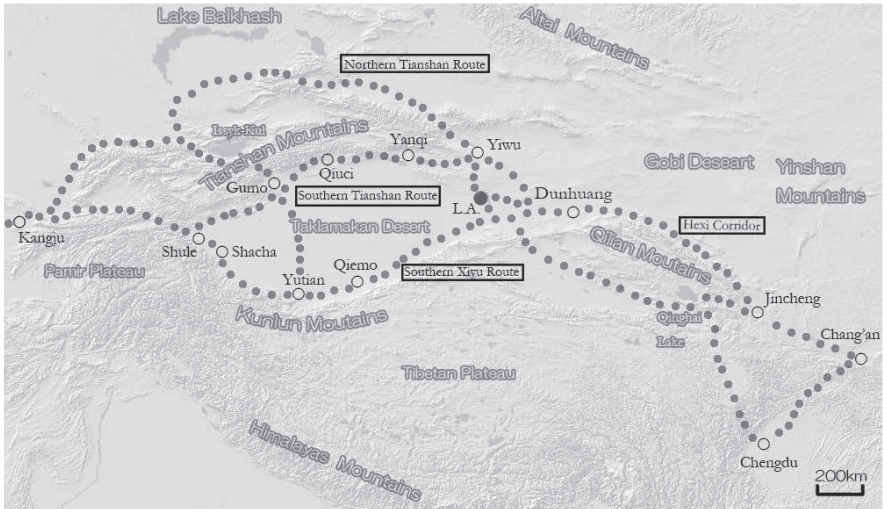


Fig. 1. Map of silk roads and oasis cities in the Han period.

The precise location of the Loulan Kingdom remains a significant issue. While it is generally accepted that Loulan was situated near the eastern edge of the Taklamakan Desert, the exact location of its capital has long been debated.

The toponym “Loulan” first appeared in *Shiji*. According to the “Narrative of the Xiongnu” (*Xiongnu liezhuan* 匈奴列傳) in *Shiji* 110.2895–96, the Xiongnu defeated the Yuezhi 月氏 in the 4th year of Emperor Wen (Wendi 文帝, r. 180–157 B.C.E.) of the Western Han (Xi Han 西漢, 202 B.C.E.–9 C.E.), i.e., in 176 B.C.E., subjugating “Loulan, Wusun, Hujie, and 26 other kingdoms in the vicinity” (樓蘭、烏孫、呼揭及其旁二十六國), and subsequently brought Loulan under their control. This suggests that Loulan was originally under the Yuezhi’s dominion before becoming a vassal state of the Xiongnu.

Nonetheless, in the 2nd year of Yuanfeng 元封 (109 B.C.E.), General Zhao Ponu 趙破奴 of the Han defeated the king of Loulan (*Shiji* 20.1040, 111.2945), leading to Loulan shifting allegiance from the Xiongnu to the Han. In the 4th year of Yuanfeng 元鳳 (77 B.C.E.), Loulan sent a hostage named Weituqi 尉屠耆 to the Han court while simultaneously maintaining amicable relations with the Xiongnu. In response, the Han dispatched a person named Fu Jiezi 傅介子, who assassinated King Angui

安歸 of Loulan at a banquet. Fu Jiezi was one of the military officers known for taking a strong stance against Loulan and Kucha, which had severed ties with the Han Dynasty and was allied with the Xiongnu. The Han then installed Weituqi as the new King of Loulan and renamed the country Shanshan 鄯善. At the time, Weituqi, a member of the Loulan royal family, had been detained in Chang'an.

Notably, the former Loulan king's son remained significant in local politics even after his father was assassinated, posing a threat to Weituqi's rule. To address this, according to the "Narrative of the Western Region" (*Xiyu zhuan* 西域傳) in *Hanshu* 96.3878, Weituqi petitioned Emperor Zhao (Zhaodi 昭帝, r. 87–74 B.C.E.) to station Han troops at Yixun Castle (Yixun Cheng 伊循城) in order to monitor Loulan (Shanshan). Additionally, the capital of Shanshan was subsequently established at Yuni Castle (Yuni Cheng 扞泥城) (*Hanshu* 96.3875).

This summary outlines Loulan's history during the Western Han period. Nevertheless, ambiguity remains regarding the references to "Loulan," "Shanshan," "Yixun," and "Yuni," as their precise locations and interrelationships remain unclear in historical records. Moreover, in the early 20th century, Sven Hedin discovered the so-called Ancient City of Loulan. This site was designated "L.A." by Aurel Stein (1921, 1: 370). Nonetheless, "Ancient City of Loulan" is merely a popular designation coined by Hedin, and its identification as the actual capital of the Loulan Kingdom requires further scrutiny.

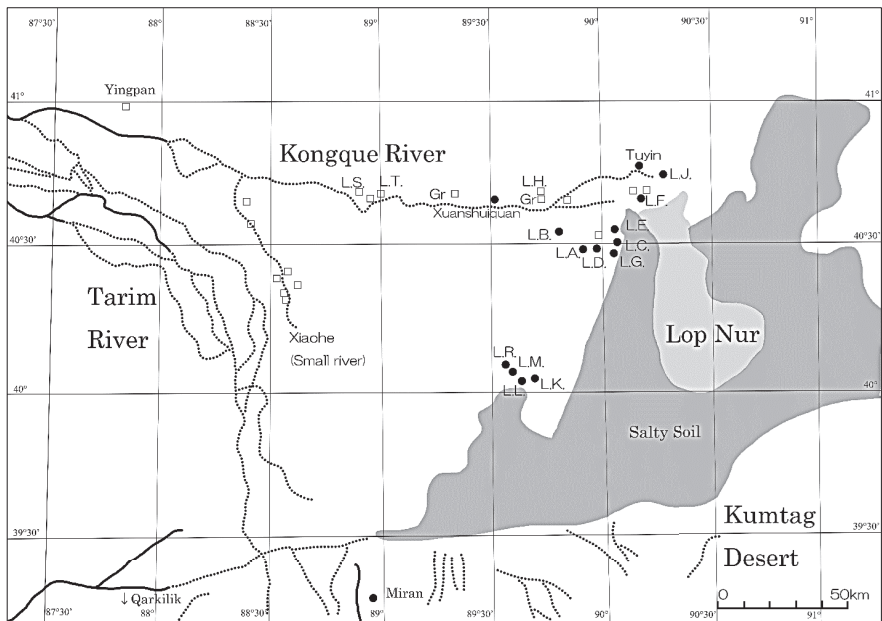


Fig. 2. Map of Loulan sites.

The distance from L.A. to Dunhuang's Yumen Gate (Yumen Guan 玉門關) is approximately 360 km in a straight line. Additionally, subsequent field investigations have revealed other sites near L.A., encompassing L.B. (a Buddhist site), L.C. (Han-Jin 晉 burial grounds), L.E. (a fortress), the site of Xianshuiquan Castle (Xianshuiquan Gucheng 咸水泉古城), and the Tuyin 土垠 site.<sup>1</sup> Collectively, these sites are referred to as “Northern Loulan.” Approximately 50 km southwest of L.A. lie other sites, labelled L.K. (the so-called Haitou Gucheng 海頭故城),<sup>2</sup> L.M. (residential remains), L.L. (a fortress), and L.R. (residential remains), and nearly 115 km southwest of L.K. is another site known as Miran (Chin. Milan 米蘭). Miran is an irregularly shaped rectangular fortress, referred to as M.I. by Stein. It is located at 39°13'35E, 88°58'26N. The fortress walls measure approximately 56 m from north to south and about 70 m from east to west. Although the fortress includes structures from the Eastern Han period (Dong Han 東漢, 25–220), most of them are believed to date to the Tibetan Empire period (Meng 2023: 94–105). Dating of the original establishment of the Miran site must be left to future investigations. This region, encompassing Miran, is hereafter referred to as “Southern Loulan.”

About 70 km west of Miran lies Qakilik (Ruoqiang 若羌), which also contains several archaeological sites, such as Qie'erqiduke 且尔乞都克 and Kongluke'adan 孔路克阿旦. Since these sites seem to include stupas, it is certain that they were in use after the Han Dynasty; however, the date of their original construction remains unclear at present (Chen 2022: 150–53).

L.B., L.C., and L.E. are located close to L.A. and can all be understood as part of the northern Loulan area. In contrast, L.L., L.M., and L.R. are situated away from both the northern and southern Loulan site clusters, lying in an intermediate zone between the two. However, since these sites are relatively close to L.A., they will all be considered part of the “Northern Loulan” in this context.

Thus, academic debates have emerged over the relationship among Loulan, Shanshan, Yixun 伊循, and Yuni 扞泥, as well as their correspondence to specific archaeological sites. Representative theories on this issue are as follows:<sup>3</sup>

- (1) The capital of Loulan before and after the 4th year of Yuanfeng (77 B.C.E.) = Yuni City, mentioned in *Hanshu* (which misinterprets Huni 扞泥, itself a Chinese transcription of *khvani* or *kuhani*, mentioned in the Kharoṣṭhī inscriptions from Loulan, lit., “royal city”) = L.A. (Enoki 1992b);<sup>4</sup> Yixun = Rtse-thon (mentioned in Tibetan records during the Tang period) = Issedon Serica (referenced in Ptolemy's *Geographia*, vol. 6.) = Miran (Enoki 1992d).

<sup>1</sup> The Xianshuiquan Castle is circular in shape, with a diameter of 300 m (Hu/He 2017). The Tuyin site is located at 40°46'30" N, 90°12'30" E. (Wang Binghua 2024: 73).

<sup>2</sup> L.K. is located at 40°05'15" N, 89°40'52" E (Chen 2022: 141).

<sup>3</sup> For discussions on the controversy, see also Itō (2017) and Yang/Liu (2019).

<sup>4</sup> Enoki (1992b) gives the location of L.A. as 40°30' N, 59°45' E, but “59” is obviously misspelled for “89,” which would otherwise render a location in Turkmenistan. Wang Guowei (1993) criticizes

- (2) The capital of Loulan before and after 77 B.C.E. = Yuni City, mentioned in *Hanshu* = L.A.; Yixun = Tuyin (Nagasawa 1996 a, 1996b).<sup>5</sup>
- (3) Yuni = Miran; Yixun = site near Ruoqiang (Qakilik) (Stein 1921, 1: 370; Fujita [1933] 1973: 253–63; Otani 1933; Matsuda 1963).
- (4) Yuni = site near Ruoqiang (Qakilik); Yixun = Miran (Heruman 1963; Su 2002 26, 88).<sup>6</sup>
- (5) The capital of Loulan before 77 B.C.E. = L.A. (which continued to be referred to as Loulan even after the change of capital); capital of Shanshan after 77 B.C.E. = Yuni = site near Miran; Yixun = Tuyin. Shanshan was a name imposed by the Han to refer to a broad region that encompassed Loulan. Loulan was merely one settlement within this area, and the name Loulan was employed continuously before and after 77 B.C.E. (Umehara 2001: 253–99).
- (6) Loulan (before 77 B.C.E.) = L.A.; Loulan (after 77 B.C.E.) = site near Miran. After 77 B.C.E., L.A. was converted into Han agricultural land; Haitou = L.K.; Yixun = Miran (Hou 1990: 219–53; 1995).<sup>7</sup>

Stein's identification of the capital city of Loulan with L.A., but Enoki (1992c) refutes the argument and reaffirms Stein's equation of Loulan's capital (until the mid-4th century) with L.A., whose actual location, according to the 1980 Chinese survey team, is 40°29' N, 89°55' E, which is located close to the site (40°31'34" N, 89°50'53" E) where Hedin (1905) set up camp from 4th to 10th March 1901, once again highlighting the remarkable accuracy of Hedin's surveying skills.

<sup>5</sup> Nagasawa (1996b) supports the argument presented in Enoki (1992d) but maintains that the location of Yixun remains unknown. Nonetheless, Nagasawa (1996a) concludes that Yixun = Tuyin. Considering the order in which the original manuscripts were written by Nagasawa, the latter view represents his final conclusion.

<sup>6</sup> Huang Wenbi 黃文弼 (1948: 28–29) was among the first to propose that Yixun = Miran. He criticized the interpretations of Stein and Fujita, arguing that Yixun was identical with the capital of Weituqi after 77 B.C.E. and that L.A. was reoccupied during the Huangchu 黃初 era (220–226) of Wei 魏 (i.e., the reign of Cao Pi 曹丕) but abandoned in 376 C.E. Furthermore, he suggested that before the 4th year of Yuanfeng (77 B.C.E.) the Loulan royal capital was not located to L.A. but along the Southern Tianshan Route (Tianshan Nandao 天山南道), likely west of Tuyin. Feng (1976: 25–35) and Hou/Yang (1999: 587) also adhere to this interpretation. Tan (1982: 37–38) similarly identifies Yuni with Ruoqiang and Shanshan with the Cherchen River region, while implying that Yixun was near Miran, east of Ruoqiang. Meng (2000: 249–69) argues that L.A. was referred to as Tuncheng 屯城 in the *Book of Later Han* (*Hou Hanshu* 後漢書, 5th c.) and the *Commentary on the Water Classic* (*Shuijing zhu* 水經注, ca. 500 C.E.) and was never the capital of the Loulan Kingdom, regardless of whether it was before or after the 4th year of Yuanfeng. Instead, he suggests that L.A. was established between the late Western Han and early Eastern Han, i.e., around the beginning of the 1st century C.E., with its structure and scale completed during the Wei-Jin period (220–420). By the Former Liang 涼 period (301–376), it served as the seat of the chief clerk of the Western Regions (*Xiyu zhangshi* 西域長史). Additionally, Meng maintains that the capital of Shanshan (Yuni) was consistently located near Ruoqiang.

<sup>7</sup> Additionally, Itō (2001) asserts that there are no Western Han sites near Ruoqiang and that there is no evidence that Yuni city was located either near L.A. or near Ruoqiang. Itō (1989) also notes that Later Han to Wei-Jin period artifacts have been excavated from L.A., identifying it as a Han military garrison at the time. Considering that the area around L.A. was a lush oasis during that

- (7) Capital of Loulan before 77 B.C.E. = L.E.; capital of Shanshan after 77 B.C.E. = site near Ruoqiang (Qakilik) (Lin 1998; Chen 2014: 190–91).<sup>8</sup>
- (8) Loulan before 77 B.C.E. = L.A.; Shanshan after 77 B.C.E. = Miran; Yuni = site near Ruoqiang; Yixun = location ca. 5 km east of Miran (Wang Binghua 2024: 11–42, 102–20); Tuyin = Juluzi Granary (Juluzi Cang 居盧訾倉) (idem, 71–101).
- (9) Tuyin = Juluzi Granary (Meng 2023: 65–89);<sup>9</sup> L.K. = Yixun (Meng 2023: 90–113); L.A. (which was constructed during the transition period between the Western and Eastern Han Dynasties, and later flourished as the government office of the chief clerk of the Western Region [*Xiyu zhangshi* 西域長史] mainly under the Wei 魏 [220–266], Jin [266–420], and Former Liang 涼 [301–376] Dynasties) = Haitou; capital of Shanshan after 77 B.C.E. = Yuni = site near Ruoqiang (Meng 2023: 200–203, 212–20).
- (10) Yixun = L.E. (Yu 2010).
- (11) L.A. = a location established during the Eastern Han Dynasty and flourishing in the Wei-Jin period, later mistakenly identified as the capital city of Loulan; the Xianshuiquan site = Loulan before 77 B.C.E.;<sup>10</sup> Loulan after 77 B.C.E. = Yuni = site near Ruoqiang County; Yixun = Miran; L.K. = a relay station connecting L.A., Miran, and Yuni. L.E. = the first military garrison site established by the Western Han in the Lop Nor region. Tuyin = Juluzi Granary, which supplied provisions to L.E. (Chen 2022: 133–209).

While the finer details of these theories vary even further, the above summarizes the existing main hypotheses.

How should these findings be interpreted? According to the historical records of Loulan, the Han army stationed troops at Yixun to monitor Loulan (Shanshan). Additionally, after the 4th year of Yuanfeng (77 B.C.E.), the capital of Shanshan was referred to as Yuni. Hence, regardless of the precise locations of these sites, the following three points remain contextually clear:

- (1) Yuni = capital of Shanshan after 77 B.C.E.
- (2) Yixun ≠ capital of Shanshan after 77 B.C.E.
- (3) Yixun ≠ Yuni.

These three points have remained largely uncontested in previous research. Thus, the issue lies elsewhere: what were the exact locations of Yixun and Yuni?

---

period, it is unlikely that there had been no city before 77 B.C.E. Itō therefore concludes that L.A. itself was the capital of Loulan before 77 B.C.E. For archaeological sites near Miran, see also Itō/U (2007).

<sup>8</sup> Huang Shengzhang 黃盛璋 (1996; 2000) criticizes Lin's (1998 [1995]) theory and firmly upholds the view that L.A. is the site of the capital of Loulan before 77 B.C.E.

<sup>9</sup> Li Yanling 李艷玲 (2023) also recognizes Tuyin as the Juluzi Granary.

<sup>10</sup> The theory that the Xianshuiquan site was Loulan before 77 B.C.E. was first proposed by Hu (2017) and Hu/He (2017).

## Southern Loulan and Yixun

One significant aspect to consider is that historical records related to the Western Region commonly indicate distances between cities using two measures: *li* 里, a unit of linear distance (with one *li* approximately the equivalent of 415 m), and travel days. Discrepancies and contradictions in the recorded *li* across sources have sparked debates. For instance, the “Narrative of the Western Region” in *Hanshu* provides both the distance from the Han capital, Chang’an, to the eastern Tianshan states and those from the Protectorate of the Western Region (Xiyu Duhufu 西域都護府), i.e., Wulei Castle (Wulei Cheng 烏壘城). While the former contains some errors, the accuracy of the latter has also been questioned (Matsuda 1970: 53–84). Nonetheless, the recorded distances in other contexts generally warrant no significant doubt.

In the “Narrative of the Western Region,” after the 4th year of Yuanfeng, the distance between Shanshan and Cherchen was recorded as 720 *li*:

鄯善當漢道衝，西通且末七百二十里。

Shanshan was located along the main Han route, extending 720 *li* westward to Qiemo (*Hanshu* 96. 3879).

It is widely agreed that ancient Qiemo 且末 corresponds to modern-day Cherchen (Qarqan, Chin. Qiemo). Considering that one *li* in the Han period was approximately 415 m, the distance between Shanshan and Cherchen would have been nearly 299 km. Satellite imagery shows that the straight-line distance from L.A. to Cherchen is over 400 km, while the distance from Miran to Cherchen is approximately 280–290 km. Thus, if Cherchen functions as the reference point, then the capital of Shanshan after 77 B.C.E. must have been in Southern Loulan (encompassing Miran) rather than in Northern Loulan (encompassing L.A.).

Let us examine the travel durations recorded in historical sources related to the Western Region to test this hypothesis. Travel speed naturally varies depending on individual capability and environmental factors. For instance, the “Chapter on Upholding the Law” (*Fafa pian* 法法篇) in *Master Guan* (*Guanzi* 管子), composed during the Spring and Autumn (Chunqiu 春秋) period (770–453 B.C.E.) in or after the 7th century B.C.E., and the “Chapter on Spook Stories” (*Jiyao pian* 紀妖篇) in *Discourses Weighed in the Balance* (*Lunheng* 論衡, 1st cent. C.E.) both state that the standard daily travel distance was 100 *li* (*Guanzi* 6.305; *Lunheng* 22.918), a figure also found in the Han documents on wooden tablets from Xuanquan (XH 2.245, II90DXT0112③:21). Conversely, the *Legal Case Reports* (*Zouyanshu* 奏讞書) from the Han bamboo slips excavated in Zhangjiashan (*Zhangjiashan Hanjian* 張家山漢簡) note that, during the 28th year of the reign of the First Emperor of Qin 秦 (219 B.C.E.), postal system users traveled 85 *li* per day (Case 18; ZH 363–70).<sup>11</sup>

<sup>11</sup> The Yuelu Academy collection of Qin documents (*Yuelu Qinjian* 岳麓秦簡) contains examples of traveling 80 *li* per day on horseback (slips 313–14; YQ 4, 198–99). There is also an example of

Further, a Han document from Juyan 居延 from the late Western Han to early Eastern Han period states the following:

官去府七十里。書一日一夜當行百六十里。書積二日少半日乃到。解何。書到，各推辟界中，必得事案。到如律令。……

The distance from the [prefectural] official's station to its branch office is 70 *li*. Documents should normally be deliverable over a distance of 160 *li* in one day and one night. [However], the delivery of [the previously mentioned] documents took slightly less than two and a half days. What could be the reason? Once the documents arrive, forward them to each *pi* (villages outside the prefectural castle) and make sure to have them confirm this matter. Handle it in accordance with the laws and regulations (*JX* 6. 680).

This example suggests a daily travel distance of approximately 80 *li*. Considering that one *li* was equal to nearly 415 m, 100 *li* corresponded to 41.5 km and 80 *li* to 33.2 km. Nevertheless, swift travel in the desert is challenging. In 1993, British explorer Charles Blackmore crossed the 1,400 km stretch between Luobuzhuang 羅布莊 and Merkit in 59 days, averaging 21 km per day (Blackmore 2000: 59, 61, 64, 104). Based on this example, the estimated daily travel distance for Han-era travelers ranged between 20 and 40 km, with approximately 20 km being a realistic estimate for travel in the Western Region's desert.

Considering this context, the focus shifts to Yixun. The Han documents from Juyan mention a “watchtower sentinel of Yixun” (Yixun hou 伊循候), who was involved in transporting the severed head of the king of Loulan to Dunhuang (II0215③:267; Hu/Zhang 2001: 126). Similarly, one of the Han documents from Xuanquan (I91DXT0309③:193) references a “Yixun Castle commandant” (*Yixun Cheng duwei* 伊循城都尉) (*XH* 2.83). Thus, “Yixun” refers to a castle where Han officials, comprising a commandant and a watchtower head, were stationed. The Han document from Xuanquan (I90DXT0111②:73) also notes the following:

□敦煌伊循都尉。大倉謂過所縣□

... Commandant of Yixun under Dunhuang Commandery. ... The Major Granary reported to the prefectures along the route that ... (*XH* 1.98).

This affirms that the Yixun commandant was affiliated with Dunhuang Commandery. As previously mentioned, when the new King Weituqi ascended the throne, Han troops were stationed in Yixun to monitor the former king's faction.<sup>12</sup>

---

traveling 70 *li* per day (slips 278–79; *YQ* 4: 160) as well as examples of pulling a cart or carrying loads while traveling 60 *li* per day (248–52; *YQ* 4, 150–51). Escorts for penal transportation also traveled 60 *li* per day (232–36; *YQ* 4, 145–46). According to the “Statutes on corvée labor” (*Yao li* 徭律) in *Statutes and Ordinances of the Second Year* (*Er nian lǜlìng* 二年律令), a cart carrying loads could travel 50 *li* per day, an empty cart could cover 70 *li*, and travel on foot could reach 80 *li* per day (411–15; *ZH* 248).

<sup>12</sup> For the administrative affiliation of the Yixun office, see Li Bingquan (2003).

The exact location of Yixun remains an open question. Nonetheless, the Han document from Xuanquan (II90DXT0115②:66B) provides additional insights. The relevant slip is held at the Gansu Jiandu Museum (Gansu Jiandu Bowuguan 甘肅簡牘博物館) in Lanzhou 蘭州, Gansu 甘肅 Province. On December 1, 2023, I was able to examine it by employing infrared photography, thanks to arrangements made by Director Zhu Jianjun 朱建軍. Based on this investigation, the transcription has been partially revised and now reads,

□□□一百 永光元年十二月廿二日發北軍二年二月廿九日至敦煌積五十九日。  
 □二十 出陽關積三月  
 □□□ 三月五日發敦煌十九日至文侯積十五日留四月廿三□□□•閏月  
 八日至伊循積十六日。

... one hundred.

On the 22nd day of the 12th month of the 1st year of Yongguang, they departed from Beijun. On the 29th day of the 2nd month of the 2nd year [of Yongguang], they arrived at Dunhuang. Total amount of days of travel was 59 days [by calculation].

... twenty.

Total amount of days of travel after leaving Yangguan was 3 months [by calculation].

...

On the 5th day of the 3rd month [of the 2nd year of Yongguang], they departed from Dunhuang. On the 19th day [of the same month], they arrived at Wenhou. Total amount of days of travel was 15 days [by calculation]. They stayed in Wenhou until the 23rd day of the 4th month [of the 2nd year of Yongguang]. ... On the 8th day of the intercalary month [of the same year], they arrived at Yixun. Total amount of days of travel was 16 days [by calculation] (back side) (XH 4.30).

The slip in question has two sides. The back side, transcribed above, appears to record the transport of personnel, while the content of the inscription on the front side remains unclear. Nonetheless, the slip as a whole most likely documents the transport of personnel from a city east of Dunhuang to Yixun. While prior studies have referenced this and other slips that mention Yixun,<sup>13</sup> the current study addresses the issue of Yixun's location from a new perspective.

<sup>13</sup> See Li Bingquan (2003), Wei/Zheng (2022), Zhang Defang (2009), and Zhang Junmin (2013). Older publications discuss this slip under the premise that it encompasses the phrase “1st year of Jianzhao” (建昭元年), which is obviously faulty—while the slip does mention an “intercalary month” (*runyue* 閏月) at the end, there was no intercalary month in the 1st year of Jianzhao. The following year, the 2nd year of Jianzhao, did have an intercalary month, but the “Annals of Emperor Yuan” (*Yuandi ji* 元帝紀) in *Hanshu* 9.294 recorded it as *run liuyue* 閏六月, whereas Wang Yizhi 王益之 (*jinshi* 進士 in 1187) of the Southern Song (Nan Song 南宋, 1126–1279), in his *Xi Han nianji* 西漢年紀, revised it to *run bayue* 閏八月. Zhu (2013: 138) also adopted *run bayue* 閏八月. If this were correct, then the travel duration recorded in the slip would have been excessively long. Conversely, the Han documents from Xuanquan (XH 4.336) revised the phrase to “1st year of Yongguang” (永光元年). In 2023, when I conducted the infrared examination, I concluded that it should indeed be read as “1st year of Yongguang.” Furthermore, considering that “2nd year” (二年) appears in the middle of the first line of this slip, the “intercalary month” (*runyue* 閏月) in the third line must correspond

According to the inscription, personnel or supplies departed from Beijun 北軍 on the 22nd day of the 12th month and arrived in Dunhuang on the 29th day of the 2nd month of the following year, i.e., the 2nd year of Yongguang. The term *ji* 積 in the Han documents from Xuanquan generally refers to the total amount of days of travel by calculation. Thus, *ji wushijiu ri* 積五十九日 no doubt means that “total amount of days of travel (from Beijun to Dunhuang) was 59 days by calculation.” The third line indicates that the personnel departed Dunhuang on the 5th day of the 3rd month and reached Wenhou 文侯 on the 19th day of the same month. The total amount of days of travel from Dunhuang to Wenhou was 15 days by calculation. After several days, personnel departed Wenhou on the 23rd day of the 4th month and arrived at Yixun on “the 8th day of the intercalary month.” Considering that the personnel or supplies made no stops after Wenhou, this suggests the absence of significant cities or settlements between Wenhou and Yixun.

Regarding the inscription at the top of the back side, the *shicui* edition concludes that it is illegible (Hu/Zhang 2001: 136), while some interpret it as “1st year of Jianzhao” 建昭 (i.e., 38 B.C.E., during the reign of Emperor Yuan of the Western Han). However, based on multi-angle infrared imaging conducted by the *Xuanquan Han-jian* editorial team, the text was determined to be 永光元年十二月廿二日 (“On the 22nd day of the 12th month of the 1st year of Yongguang,” i.e., January 20, 42 B.C.E.) (XH 4.30). The author also reached the same conclusion using his own multi-angle infrared imaging camera (see n. 13).

The journey from Wenhou to Yixun took 16 days, suggesting a total travel time of approximately 30 days from Dunhuang to Yixun. Given the average travel speed of Han-era travelers (previously noted as 20–40 km per day), the distance between Dunhuang and Yixun would therefore range from 600 to 1,200 km. Considering that the route went largely through desert terrain, the daily travel speed was likely to be around 20 km, resulting in an estimated total distance of at least 600 km.

Satellite imagery shows that the straight-line distance from Dunhuang (specifically, Guazhou 瓜州, where the Silk Road branched into two routes) to Yangguan 陽關 is 60 km, from Guazhou to Yumen Gate is 72 km, and from Yangguan to L.A. is 365 km.<sup>14</sup> Thus, the total distance from Guazhou to L.A. via Yangguan is 425 km. In comparison, the distance from Yangguan to Miran is 460 km, while the distance from L.A. to Miran is 167 km. Therefore, the total distance from Dunhuang to Miran via Yangguan and L.A. is 592 km. These calculations suggest that Yixun was not near L.A. but rather in Southern Loulan, near Miran. Given that Yixun served as the base for Han forces tasked with protecting the newly appointed King Weituqi and monitoring the Shanshan Kingdom, it was most likely located near the new king’s residence—the post-77 B.C.E. capital of Shanshan, identified as Yuni. Consequently, the king’s residence was also likely in southern Loulan, near Miran.

---

to the intercalary month of the 2nd year of Yongguang. According to Zhu (2013: 128–29), this intercalary month followed directly after the 3rd month, which aligns perfectly with all the calculations.

<sup>14</sup> Yumen Gate is identified as Xiaofang Pancheng 小方盤城 by Hirose (2019).

## History of Northern Loulan

How should the various sites in Northern Loulan be understood? Northern Loulan encompasses L.A., where the famous “Beauty of Loulan” was discovered. If the capital of Shanshan after 77 B.C.E. was in Southern Loulan (near Miran), what historical role did the Northern Loulan sites play?

From an archaeological perspective, it is evident that a population continued to reside in Northern Loulan even after 77 B.C.E. Artifacts from L.A. predominantly date to the Wei-Jin period. Additionally, paper documents unearthed at L.A., also primarily from the Wei-Jin period, contain references such as *Loulan gengzhong* 樓蘭耕種, “plant seeds in Loulan” (L.A.VI.ii.045; *LW* 464), and *yi Loulan* 詣樓蘭, “to Loulan” (L.A.VI.ii.022; *LW* 453). These references indicate that Northern Loulan remained inhabited after 77 B.C.E. and continued to be known as Loulan. Furthermore, some inhabitants were literate in Chinese.

At the Tuyin site in Northern Loulan, Han-era artifacts have also been discovered. Some researchers have identified Tuyin as the capital of Loulan, but slips from Tuyin (e.g., no. 56) bear the date “1st year of Huanglong, 10th month” (黃龍元年十月; Huang Wenbi 1948: 388–89). Given that the 1st year of Huanglong corresponds to 49 B.C.E. and the slip therefore dates to a later time, Tuyin cannot be considered Loulan’s earlier capital. Moreover, wooden slips with Chinese inscriptions found at Tuyin suggest that it functioned as a Han military outpost rather than the capital of Loulan. Northern Loulan contains burial sites such as the Pingtai 平台 and Gutai 孤台 cemeteries, dating to the transition period between the Western and Eastern Han Dynasties or to the early Eastern Han period (Hou 2022: 104–8).<sup>15</sup> This, too, indicates that Northern Loulan sustained a population after 77 B.C.E., comprising some Chinese-speaking inhabitants.

What about sites in Northern Loulan predating 77 B.C.E.? Among its fortifications, L.A. (ca. 330 m × 330 m), L.E. (ca. 137 m × 122 m), L.K. (ca. 163 m × 160 m), L.L. (ca. 71.5 m × 61 m), and the Xianshuiquan site (300 m in diameter) are relatively large. Artifacts from L.A., L.K., and L.L. predominantly date to the Wei-Jin period. As noted earlier, L.A. and Tuyin most probably postdate the 4th year of Yuanfeng (77 B.C.E.). While earlier Han-era layers may exist beneath L.A., no such evidence has been confirmed. The walls of L.A. were constructed using a method different from the traditional Chinese rammed earth technique (Wang Binghua 2024: 25). However, unless deeper stratigraphic layers are excavated, it remains unclear whether L.A. can be dated back to before 77 B.C.E. L.E. features fortifications resembling those at Han-era sites like Juyan (e.g., K710). Based on these characteristics, Chen Xiaolu 陳曉露 recently argued that L.E. was constructed during the Western Han period. Supporting this hypothesis are Western Jin Dynasty (266–316)

---

<sup>15</sup> Chen Xiaolu 陳曉露 has demonstrated that the Pingtai cemetery belonged to the mid-to-late Western Han period (Chen 2014: 41) and that the Gutai cemetery contains burials from the Eastern Han period (Chen 2014: 77).

documents unearthed at L.E., nearby Wei-Jin tombs to its northeast, and evidence of Han-era tamped-earth construction beneath later additions (Chen 2014: 155–57). Thus, L.E. was likely the capital of Loulan before 77 B.C.E. However, L.E. is rectangular in shape and not entirely without the influence of Chinese architecture, leaving doubt as to whether it can truly be identified as the Loulan city before 77 B.C.E. This leaves us, for the time being, with the Xianshuiquan site. Xianshuiquan Castle is circular in shape, with a diameter of 300 m. Artifacts dating from the late Eastern Han to the early Wei-Jin period have been unearthed from this site; however, these indicate the final period of use of the walls, and the construction of the fortress itself predates these artifacts. The circular form and other characteristics suggest a Central Asian origin, making it not implausible to consider it as the Loulan capital prior to 77 B.C.E. (Hu 2017; Hu/He 2017; Chen 2022: 133–209). Further archaeological excavations may hopefully yield material remains from the Former Han period.

Nonetheless, the scale of both L.E. and Xianshuiquan Castle is modest, falling far short of typical Han-era commandery or county capitals,<sup>16</sup> with an estimated capacity of only 200–300 households. It is interesting to note that the former capital of Loulan was captured by only 700 Han cavalry in 77 B.C.E. According to the “Narrative of Dayuan” (*Dayuan zhuan* 大宛傳) in *Shiji*,

天子已嘗使浞野侯攻樓蘭，以七百騎先至，虜其王。

The Emperor had previously sent the Marquis of Zhuoye to attack Loulan. With 700 horsemen, he advanced first and captured its king (*Shiji*: 123.3174).

This suggests that the Loulan capital before 77 B.C.E. was a small city. With 200–300 households, a Loulan army of 200–600 men (assuming one to two male soldiers per household) would not have been able to withstand an attack by a Han cavalry of 700 horsemen.

It follows that while the new king, Weitūqi, established his residence in Southern Loulan, the faction loyal to the ousted king probably remained in Northern Loulan. Northern Loulan continued to be inhabited during the late Western Han period and beyond, and both Northern and Southern Loulan were referred to as Loulan or Shanshan in Chinese documents.

As supporting evidence, the *Biography of Faxian* (*Faxian zhuan* 法顯傳) deserves attention. Faxian (337?–422?) was a Chinese Buddhist monk who traveled via the Southern Pacific Area to India to study Buddhism. The *Biography* contains a record of his 14-year journey, including his experiences and observations. It states that Faxian departed Dunhuang and arrived in Shanshan after 17 days. From there, he traveled northwest for 15 days to Wuyi 烏夷, generally identified as Karashar (*Faxian zhuan*, 7–11). Satellite imagery shows that the straight-line distance between Yangguan and L.A. is 365 km, between L.A. and Karashar 320 km, and between Miran and Karashar 420 km. The proportional relationship between the distances

<sup>16</sup> Regarding the scale of cities during the Qin and Han periods, see Xu (2013).

(365 km and 320 km) closely aligns with the 17-day and 15-day travel durations recorded by Faxian. This affirms that the “Shanshan” Faxian visited must have been near L.A. (Northern Loulan) and not Southern Loulan (near Miran).<sup>17</sup>

Had Faxian’s Shanshan been located near Miran, it would have been impossible to reach Shanshan from Dunhuang in just 17 days or to travel from Shanshan to Karashar in 15 days. The biography further states that the distance from Dunhuang to Shanshan was 1,500 *li* (623 km). If the 17-day stage attributed to Faxian indeed covered 623 km, then the subsequent 15 days would have to account for roughly 550 km, and a result that is implausible, as it far exceeds the straight-line distance from Shanshan to Karashar. It follows that the “Shanshan” reached by Faxian after 17 days and the “Shanshan” situated 1,500 *li* from Dunhuang should be understood as distinct locations, and the latter is most likely to be Miran. After the coup in 77 B.C.E., the Han renamed the kingdom Shanshan and relocated the new king, Weituqi, to Southern Loulan. The area around Southern Loulan saw the establishment of Yixun, which housed Han troops. Meanwhile, loyalists of the slain king’s family likely remained in Northern Loulan, alongside Han military outposts like Tuyin. Thereafter, both Southern and Northern Loulan were integrated into the Shanshan Kingdom and continued to be referred to as “Loulan” or “Shanshan.” Thus, Faxian’s visit to “Shanshan” in 399 C.E. was in all likelihood to Northern Loulan.

## Conclusion

This study examined the geographical position of the Loulan Kingdom during the Han Dynasty by drawing on Han documents from Xuanquan and other sources. The findings validate that the Loulan Kingdom was located between Dunhuang and the Tarim Basin. Before the 4th year of Yuanfeng (77 B.C.E.), the kingdom was centered in Northern Loulan, with Xianshuiquan being the most likely candidate for its capital. After 77 B.C.E., Loulan was renamed Shanshan, and the newly appointed king, Weituqi, established his residence near Miran (Southern Loulan). A new city, Yixun, was founded near his residence as a military outpost for Han troops.

Meanwhile, factions opposed to Weituqi remained in Northern Loulan. To monitor these factions, the Han stationed troops at Northern Loulan sites, such as the Tuyin outpost. Thus, Northern and Southern Loulan together constituted the Shanshan Kingdom, and this dual structure persisted into the periods of the Wei, Jin, and Northern and Southern Dynasties (Nanbeichao 南北朝, 420–589). The “Shanshan” that the Buddhist monk Faxian visited during his journey in 399 C.E. referred to Northern Loulan.

The Loulan Kingdom was strategically located at a crucial crossroads where Western Region inhabitants (comprising the Loulan people) and Han Chinese intermingled, and multiple languages were spoken. Loulan was not merely a destination or

---

<sup>17</sup> Various theories have been proposed regarding the location of Shanshan as visited by Faxian. My view aligns with Enoki (1992a), although my method of calculation differs slightly from his.

settlement but also a transit hub, much like Dunhuang. Consequently, Han Chinese often settled west of Loulan and Dunhuang, while Western Region inhabitants also lived to the east. For instance, the documents from Loulan (L.A.VI.ii.04) contain the following record:

兵支胡簿成 兵支胡重寅得 右二人共字驢四歲。

Soldier Zhihu Bo Cheng. Soldier Zhihu Chongyinde. These two individuals jointly own a donkey aged four years (*LW* 379).

*Zhihu* 支胡 appears to be a unique designation for certain ethnic groups from the Western Region. In the “Annals of Emperor Xian” (*Xiandi ji* 獻帝紀) as cited in Li Xian’s 李賢 (655–684) commentary to the “Biography of Dong Zhuo” (*Dong Zhuo zhuan* 董卓傳) in *Hou Hanshu* 後漢書, a subordinate of Dong Zhuo’s son-in-law, Niu Fu 牛輔, is referred to as Zhihu Chi’er 支胡赤兒 (*Hou Hanshu* 72.2332). This suggests that individuals that were deemed to be members of the Zhihu ethnic group from the Western Region were also present in Central China. Additionally, Luo Fuyi 羅福頤 has identified inscriptions such as “chieftain of the virtuous Zhihu people, who were affiliated with the Jin Empire” (晉支胡率善邑長), “commander of a thousand of the virtuous Zhihu people, who were affiliated with the Jin Empire” (晉支胡率善仟長), and “commander of a hundred of the virtuous Zhifu people, who were affiliated with the Jin Empire” (晉支胡率善佰長), and interprets Zhihu as an abbreviation for Yuezhihu 月支胡 or Dihu 氐胡 (Luo 1987: 355).<sup>18</sup>

Moreover, Shamoke 沙摩柯 (d. 222), king of the Hu 胡 (barbarians), who aided Liu Bei 劉備 (161–223) in the Battle of Yiling 夷陵 (221/22),<sup>19</sup> has a name phonetically like *Camaka*, which appears in Kharoṣṭhī inscriptions unearthed at L.A. (no. 678; *Inscriptions II*, 255). *Camaka* is also found in other Kharoṣṭhī documents from L.A. (no. 358) and Niya (nos. 244, 338), suggesting that it was a common name in the Loulan region (*Inscriptions I*, 93, 123, 130). It is plausible that the Shamoke’s clan originated in Loulan and migrated along the Western Qiang (Xi Qiang 西羌) route before eventually settling in the Yangtze 揚子 River basin. Supporting this hypothesis, a Tuyin slip (no. 34) mentions a person named Song Jun 宋鈞 from Nanyang 南陽 commandery, indicating interactions between Loulan and Nanyang commandery during the Han Dynasty.

Loulan was also home to individuals from beyond both Loulan and Han territories. Documents from L.A. mention names of other Western Region states, such as Yanqi 焉耆, Qiuci 龜茲, and Gaochang 高昌, reflecting regional exchanges. Notably, a document from L.A. (L.A.I.iii.1) states the following:

<sup>18</sup> Another individual, “Hu Che’er” 胡車兒, who was active in the Central Plains during the late Eastern Han period (see the quotation by Fu Xuan 傅玄 [217–278] quoted in the annotation of Pei Songzhi 裴松之 (372–451) to the “Biography of Zhang Xiu” [*Zhang Xiu zhuan* 張繡傳], his relative; *Sanguo zhi* 8. 878), was most likely also associated with the “Hu” people.

<sup>19</sup> See the “Biography of Lu Xun” (*Lu Xun zhuan* 陸遜傳), *Sanguo zhi* 58.3457.

建興十八年三月十七日粟□（特？）胡樓□（蘭？）☒

On the 17th day of the 3rd month, 18th year of Jianxing (330 C.E.), Sogdian officials in Loulan ... (LW 61).

The reign title *Jianxing* in all probability belongs to the Former Liang period, highlighting the presence of Sogdians in Loulan at least after the Han Dynasty.

Both Han Chinese and Western Region inhabitants migrated across Loulan and Dunhuang territories. Consequently, during the Han Dynasty these areas served as major transit hubs, fostering vibrant cultural exchange. A comparison of archaeological remains and artifacts from the two regions reveals that while Dunhuang experienced significant Han cultural assimilation, Loulan was less influenced.

## Glossary of special symbols

- A graph is clearly present but is too damaged to be transcribed.
- ☒ The slip breaks off at this point. An unknown number of graphs are missing.
- Probably marks separate sentences, or marks stages of ordinance creation and occasionally separate subsections.
- …… This part of the text has been abridged.

## References

### Primary sources

*Faxian zhuan* = Nagasawa Kazutoshi 長澤和俊 (1996): *Hokkenden. Yakuchu, kai-setsu: Hokusō-bon, Nansō-bon, Kōrai Daizōkyō-bon, Ishiyamadera-bon yonshu eiin to sono hikaku kenkyū* 法顯伝: 訳注解説——北宋本・南宋本・高麗大藏經本・石山寺本四種影印とその比較研究. Tōkyō: Yuzankaku.

*Guanzi* = Guan Zhong 管仲 (2004): *Guanzi jiaozhu* 管子校注. Ed. Li Xiangfeng 黎翔鳳. Beijing: Zhonghua Shuju.

*Hanshu* = Ban Gu 班固 (1962): *Hanshu* 漢書. 12 vols. Beijing: Zhonghua Shuju.

Hu Pingsheng 胡平生 / Zhang Defang 張德芳 (eds.) (2001): *Dunhuang Xuanquan Zhi Hanjian shicui* 敦煌懸泉置漢簡釋粹. Shanghai: Shanghai Guji Chubanshe.

*JX* = Zhang Defang 張德芳 (ed.) (2016): *Juyan xinjian jishi* 居延新簡集釋. 7 vols. Lanzhou: Gansu Wenhua Chubanshe.

*Inscriptions I* = Boyer, A[nne]-M[arie] / Rapson, E[dward] J[ames] / Senart, E[mile] (eds.) (1920): *Kharoṣṭhī Inscriptions: Discovered by Sir Aurel Stein in Chinese*

- Turkestan, Part I: Text of Inscriptions discovered at the Niya Site. 1901.* Oxford: Clarendon Press.
- Inscriptions II* = Boyer, A[nne]-M[arie] / Rapson, E[dward] J[ames] / Senart, É[mile] (eds.) (1927): *Kharoṣṭhī Inscriptions: Discovered by Sir Aurel Stein in Chinese Turkestan, Part II: Text of Inscriptions discovered at the Niya, Endere, and Lou-lan Sites. 1906–7.* Oxford: Clarendon Press.
- LW* = Hou Can 侯燦 / Yang Daixin 楊代欣 (eds.) (1999): *Loulan Hanwen jianzhi wenshu jicheng* 樓蘭漢文簡紙文書集成. 3 vols. Chengdu: Tiandi Chubanshe.
- Lunheng* = Wang Chong 王充 (1990): *Lunheng jiaoshi* 論衡校釋. Ed. Huang Hui 黃暉. Beijing: Zhonghua Shuju.
- Sanguo zhi* = Chen Shou 陳壽 (2012): *Sanguo zhi jijie* 三國志集解. Ann. Pei Songzhi 裴松之, ed. Lu Bi 盧弼. Shanghai: Shanghai Guji Chubanshe.
- Shiji* = Sima Qian 司馬遷 (1982): *Shiji* 史記. Beijing: Zhonghua Shuju.
- XH* = Gansu Jiandu Bowuguan 甘肅簡牘博物館 et al. (eds.) (2019–2024): *Xuanquan Hanjian* 懸泉漢簡. 4 vols. Shanghai: Zhongxi Shuju.
- YQ* = Zhu Hanmin 朱漢民 / Chen Songchang 陳松長 (eds.) (2010–2022): *Yuelu Shuyuan cang Qinjian* 岳麓書院藏秦簡. 7 vols. Shanghai: Shanghai Cishu Chubanshe.
- ZH* = Peng Hao 彭浩 / Chen Wei 陳偉 / Gongteng Yuannan [Kudō Motoo] 工藤元男 (eds.) (2007): *Er nian lüling yu Zouyanshu: Zhangjiashan er-si-qi hao Hanmu chutu falü wenxian shidu* 二年律令與奏讞書——張家山二四七號漢墓出土法律文獻釋讀. Shanghai: Shanghai Guji Chubanshe.

## Secondary literature

- Blackmore, Charles (2000): *Crossing the Desert of Death: Through the Fearsome Taklamakan.* London: John Murray.
- Chen Xiaolu 陈晓露 (2014): *Loulan kaogu* 樓蘭考古. Lanzhou: Lanzhou Daxue Chubanshe.
- (2022): *Luobubo kaogu yanjiu* 罗布泊考古研究. Shanghai: Shanghai Guji Chubanshe.
- Enoki Kazuo 榎一雄 (1992a): “Hokken no tsūka shita Zenzenkoku ni tsuite” 法顯の通過した鄯善国について. In: *Enoki Kazuo chosakushū* 榎一雄著作集. Ed. Enoki Kazuo Chosakushū Henshū Iinkai 榎一雄著作集編集委員会. 12 vols. Tōkyō: Kyūko Shoin, vol. 1, 121–48.
- (1992b): “Rōran” 樓蘭. In: *Enoki Kazuo chosakushū* 榎一雄著作集. Ed. Enoki Kazuo Chosakushū Henshū Iinkai 榎一雄著作集編集委員会. 12 vols. Tōkyō: Kyūko Shoin, vol. 1, 37–39.
- (1992c): “Rōran no ichi o shimesu futatsu no Karoshutū monjo ni tsuite” 樓蘭の位置を示す二つのカロシュティ文書について. In: *Enoki Kazuo Chosakushū* 榎一雄著作集. Ed. Enoki Kazuo Chosakushū Henshū Iinkai 榎一雄著作集編集委員会. 12 vols. Tōkyō: Kyūko Shoin, vol. 1, 51–66.

- (1992d): “Putoremaiosu ni mieru Isedōnesu Minzoku ni tsuite” 扶特列馬優斯に見える伊塞多涅斯民族について. In: *Enoki Kazuo Chosakushū* 榎一雄著作集. Ed. Enoki Kazuo Chosakushū Henshū Iinkai 榎一雄著作集編集委員会. 12 vols. Tōkyō: Kyūko Shoin, vol. 1, 40–50.
- Feng Chengjun 馮承鈞 (1976): “Loulan Shanshan wenti” 樓蘭鄯善問題. In: *Xiyu Nanhai shidi kaozheng lunzhu huiji* 西域南海史地考證論著彙輯. Xianggang: Zhonghua Shuju, 25–35.
- Fujita Toyohachi 藤田豊八 (1973 [1933]): “Saiiki kenkyū” 西域研究. In: *Tōzai kōshōshi no kenkyū: Saiiki hen* 東西交渉史の研究——西域篇. Tōkyō: Kokusho Kankōkai, 253–359.
- Hedin, Sven (1905): “The ruined houses of Lōu-lan.” Ch. 44 from: *Scientific Results of a Journey in Central Asia 1899–1902*, vol. 2: *Lop-nor*. Stockholm: Lithographic Institute of the General Staff of the Swedish Army, 619–36.
- Heruman, A. [Albert Herrmann] (2002): *Rōran: Ryūsa ni umoreta ōto* 樓蘭——流砂に埋もれた王都. Trans. Matsuda Hisao 松田寿男. Tōkyō: Heibonsha, 179–244.
- Hirose Kunio 廣瀨薫雄 (2019): “Ichi-kyū-kyū-hachi-nen Tonkō Shōhōbanchō shutsudo kantoku shotan: Kanete Gyokumon Tōifu to Gyokumonkan o ronzu” 一九九八年敦煌小方盤城出土簡牘初探——兼ねて玉門都尉府と玉門關を論ずる. In: Takamura Takeyuki 高村武幸 / Hirose Kunio 廣瀨薫雄 / Watanabe Hideyuki 渡邊英幸 (eds.): *Shūen ryōiki kara mita Shin Kan teikoku. 2* 周縁領域からみた秦漢帝国——2. Tōkyō: Rokuichi Shobō, 119–44.
- Hou Can 侯灿 (1990): *Gaochang Loulan yanjiu lunji* 高昌楼兰研究论集. Wulumuqi: Xinjiang Renmin Chubanshe.
- (1995): “Lun Loulan Cheng de fazhan ji qi shuaiifei” 论楼兰城的发展及其衰废. In: Mu Shunying 穆舜英 / Zhang Ping 张平 (eds.): *Loulan wenhua yanjiu lunji* 楼兰文化研究论集. Wulumuqi: Xinjiang Renmin Chubanshe, 20–55.
- (2022): *Loulan kaogu diaocha yu fajue baogao* 楼兰考古调查与发掘报告. Nanjing: Fenghuang Chubanshe.
- Hou Can 侯灿 / Yang Daixin 楊代欣 (eds.) (1999): *Loulan Hanwen jianzhi wenshu jicheng* 樓蘭漢文簡紙文書集成. Chengdu: Tiandi Chubanshe.
- Hu Xingjun 胡兴军 (2017): “Loulan Shanshan Ducheng xinkao” 楼兰、鄯善都城新考. In: *Xinjiang wenwu* 新疆文物 2017.2: 43–59.
- Hu Xingjun 胡兴军 / He Liping 何丽萍 (2017): “Xinjiang Weili xian Xianshuiquan Gucheng de faxian yu chubu renshi” 新疆尉犁县咸水泉古城的发现与初步认识. In: *Xiyu kaogu* 西域考古 2017.2: 122–25.
- Huang Shengzhang 黄盛璋 (1996): “Chulun Loulan guo shidu Loulan Cheng yu LE Cheng wenti” 初论楼兰国始都楼兰城与 LE 城问题. In: *Wenwu* 文物 1996.8: 62–72.
- (2000): “Loulan shidu zhenglun zhengjie jienan yu LA Cheng wei Xi Han Loulan Cheng xin lunzhen” 楼兰始都争论症结解与 LA 城为西汉楼兰城新论证. In: *Tulufanxue yanjiu* 吐鲁番学研究 2000.1: 61–75.
- Huang Wenbi 黄文弼 (1948): *Luobu Naor kaogu ji* 羅布淖爾攷古記. Beijing: Guoli Beiping Yanjiuyuan Shixue Yanjiusuo.

- Itō Toshio 伊藤敏雄 (1989): “Rōran no iseki: Kinnen no Rōran chōsa ni yosete” 楼蘭の遺跡——近年の楼蘭調査によせて. In: *Ōsaka Kyōiku Daigaku kiyō* 大阪教育大学紀要 (*Dai'ni bumon: Shakai kagaku, seikatsu kagaku* 第II部門: 社会科学・生活科学) 38.2: 129–43.
- (2001): “Nankyō no iseki chōsaki: Rōran (Zenzen) no kokuto mondai ni kanren shite” 南疆の遺跡調査記——楼蘭(鄯善)の国都問題に関連して. In: *Tōdai-shi kenkyū* 唐代史研究 2001.4: 122–47.
- (2017): “Nihon ni okeru Rōran kenkyū 100-nen” 日本における楼蘭研究一〇〇年. In: *Rekishi kenkyū* 歴史研究 54: 57–83.
- Itō Toshio 伊藤敏雄 / U Shiyū [Yu Zhiyong] 于志勇 (2007): “Miran no iseki to sono genjō” 米蘭の遺跡とその現状. In: *Seihoku shutsudo bunken kenkyū* 西北出土文献研究 2007.4: 55–64.
- Li Bingquan 李炳泉 (2003): “Xihan Xiyu Yixun tuntian kaolun” 西汉西域伊循屯田考论. In: *Xiyu yanjiu* 西域研究 2003.2: 1–9.
- Li Yanling 李艳玲 (2023): “Juluzi Cang zailun” 居卢訾仓再论. In: *Shilin* 史林 2023.6: 71–80.
- Lin Meicun 林梅村 (1998): “Loulan guo shidu kao” 楼兰国始都考. In: *Hantang Xiyu yu Zhongguo wenming* 汉唐西域与中国文明. Beijing: Wenwu Chubanshe, 279–89.
- Luo Fuyi 羅福頤 (ed.) (1987): *Qinhan Nanbeichao guanyin zhengcun* 秦漢南北朝官印徵存. Beijing: Wenwu Chubanshe.
- Matsuda Hisao 松田壽男 (1963): “Kaisetsu: A. Eruman o oginaitsutu” 解説——A・エルマンを補いつつ. In: Heruman, A. [Albert Herrmann]: *Rōran: Ryūsa ni umoreta ōto* 楼蘭——流沙に埋もれた王都. Trans. Matsuda Hisao 松田寿男. Tōkyō: Heibonsha, 179–244.
- (1970): *Kodai Tenzan no rekishi-chirigaku-teki kenkyū* 古代天山的歴史地理學的研究. Rev. edition. Tōkyō: Waseda Daigaku Shuppanbu.
- Meng Fanren 孟凡人 (1990): *Loulan xinshi* 楼蘭新史. Beijing: Guangming Ribao Chubanshe.
- (2000): “Lun Shanshan guodu de fangwei” 论鄯善国都的方位. In: *Xinjiang kaogu yu shidi lunji* 新疆考古与史地论集. Beijing: Kexue Chubanshe: 249–69.
- (2023): *Loulan xinshi* 楼兰新史. Rev. edition. Beijing: Shangwu Yinshuguan.
- Nagasawa Kazutoshi 長澤和俊 (1996a): “Kodai Rōran ōkoku no shigen to tenkai” 古代楼蘭王國の始源と展開. In: *Rōran ōkoku no kenkyū* 楼蘭王国史の研究. Tōkyō: Yūzankaku Shuppan, 65–94.
- (1996b): “Zenzen ōkoku no rekishi chiri” 鄯善王國の歴史地理. In: *Rōran ōkoku no kenkyū* 楼蘭王国史の研究. Tōkyō: Yūzankaku Shuppan: 243–61.
- Otani Shōsin 大谷勝真 (1933): “Zenzen koku tojo ko” 鄯善国都城考. In: *Ichimura hakase koki kinen: Tōyō shi ronsō* 市村博士古稀紀念——東洋史論叢. Tōkyō: Fūzanbō, 251–72.
- Stein, Aurel (1921): *Serindia: Detailed report of explorations in Central Asia and westernmost China. Carried out and described under the orders of H.M. Indian government.* 4 vols. Oxford: Clarendon Press.

- Su Qikang 蘇其康 (2002): *Xiyu shidi shiming* 西域史地釋名. Gaoxiong: Zhongshan Daxue Chubanshe.
- Tan Qixiang 譚其驥 (ed.) (1982): *Zhongguo lishi ditu ji* 中國歷史地圖集, vol 2: *Qin, Xi Han, Dong Han* 秦、西漢、東漢. Beijing: Zhongguo Ditu Chubanshe.
- Umehara Kaoru 梅原郁 (2001): “Zenzen koku no kōbō: Rōran no kyōjitsu” 鄯善国の興亡——樓蘭の虚實. In: Tomiya Itaru 冨谷至 (ed.): *Ryūsa shutsudo no moji shiryō: Rōran, Niya monjo o chūshin ni* 流沙出土の文字資料——樓蘭・尼雅(ニヤ)文書を中心に. Kyōto: Kyōto Daigaku Gakujutsu Shuppankai, 253–99.
- Wang Binghua 王炳华 (2024): *Xunzhao xiaoshi zai shamo shenchi de wenming: Loulan Shanshan kaogu yanjiu* 寻找消失在沙漠深处的文明——楼兰鄯善考古研究. Guangxi: Guangxi Shifan Daxue Chubanshe.
- Wang Guowei 王國維 (1993 [1914]): *Liusha zhujian* 流沙墜簡. Beijing: Zhonghua Shuju.
- Wei Yingchun 魏迎春 / Zheng Binglin 鄭炳林 (2022): “Xihan Dunhuang jun tong Xiyu Nandao yu Shanshan de jingying” 西漢敦煌郡通西域南道與鄯善的經營. In: *Dunhuang xue jikan* 敦煌學輯刊 2022.2: 1–16.
- Xu Longguo 徐龍國 (2013): *Qin Han chengyi kaoguxue yanjiu* 秦汉城邑考古学研究. Beijing: Zhongguo Shehui Kexue Chubanshe.
- Yang Fuxue 楊富學 / Liu Yuan 劉源 (2019): “Shanshan guo Sichou zhi lu: Haineiwai bainian yanjiu shuping” 鄯善国丝绸之路：海内外百年研究述評. In: *Sichou zhi lu* 丝绸之路 2019.1: 83–88.
- Yu Zhiyong 于志勇 (2010): “Xi Han shiqi Loulan ‘Yixun Cheng’ diwang kao” 西汉时期楼兰“伊循城”地望考. In: *Xinjiang wenwu* 新疆文物 1: 63–74.
- Zhang Defang 張德芳 (2009): “Cong Xuanquan Hanjian kan Loulan (Shanshan) tong Hanchao de guanxi” 从悬泉汉简看楼兰(鄯善)同汉朝的关系. In: *Xiyu yanjiu* 西域研究 4: 7–16.
- Zhang Junmin 張俊民 (2013): “Xihan Loulan, Shanshan jiandu ziliao gouchen” 西汉楼兰·鄯善简牍资料钩沉. In: *Ludong Daxue xuebao* 鲁东大学学报 (Zhexue shehui kexue ban 哲学社会科学版) 30.4: 63–69.
- Zhu Guichang 朱桂昌 (2013): *Taichu rili biao* 太初日曆表. Beijing: Zhonghua Shuju.

# A New Study on the Loulan Kingdom During the Han Dynasty

Kakinuma Yōhei

This study examines the location of the Loulan Kingdom during the Han Dynasty. The findings suggest that Loulan Kingdom was situated between Dunhuang and the Tarim Basin. Before the 4th year of Yuanfeng (77 B.C.E.), the kingdom was centered in Northern Loulan. After this, Loulan became known as Shanshan, and the newly appointed king, Weituqi, established his residence near Miran (Southern Loulan). The dual structure of Northern and Southern Loulan persisted into the periods of the Wei, Jin, and Northern and Southern Dynasties. The kingdom occupied a strategic crossroads where Western Region inhabitants mingled with Han Chinese, creating a multilingual environment, and much like Dunhuang, it functioned as a transit hub.

The ancient kingdom of Loulan 樓蘭 during the Han 漢 period (202 B.C.E.–220 C.E.) was sporadically documented in historical records such as the *Records of the Grand Historian* (*Shiji* 史記) and the *Book of Han* (*Hanshu* 漢書). Additionally, field surveys conducted by researchers such as Sven Hedin (1865–1952) and Aurel Stein (1862–1943) have significantly contributed to our understanding of Loulan. Despite these efforts, numerous aspects remain unclear. One of the most contentious issues concerns the precise location of the capital of the Loulan Kingdom. Resolving this question is not merely a matter of determining Loulan’s geographical location. It also clarifies the relationship between existing related archaeological sites and historical records, thereby elucidating the historical significance of this kingdom during the Han Dynasty.

Current research revisits the issue by analyzing wooden slips unearthed in the northwestern region of China. Of particular significance are recently available Han Dynasty slips from the Xuanquan 懸泉 site near Dunhuang 敦煌, which contain critical information on Loulan’s location. These slips, discovered at a Han Dynasty postal relay station (*zhi* 置), encompass a wide range of documents, such as imperial edicts, travel permits, legal codes, judicial records, registers, personal letters, and classical texts. Transcriptions have been compiled in a selected annotated translation (*shicui* 釋粹) (Hu/Zhang 2001) and more recently in the official reports, together with illustrations (*XH*). This article examines the location of Loulan during the Han Dynasty by utilizing these historical materials alongside other archaeological evidence.

## Debates surrounding Loulan

During the Han Dynasty, envoys and merchants traveling from the Western Region to Dunhuang were required to pass through the Loulan area. The Xiongnu 匈奴 were located to the north, while to the south a route from Cherchen (且末 Qiemmo) along the Southern Xiyu Route (*Xiyu nandao* 西域南道) extended into the Qaidam

Basin, leading to near Qinghai 青海 Lake and from there to the Ba-Shu 巴蜀 region, i.e., modern-day northern Sichuan 四川, or to Chang'an 長安. This Southern Route did not touch Dunhuang, but it did pass through the territory of Loulan, making the so-called Ancient City of Loulan (Loulan Gucheng 樓蘭故城) an unavoidable transit point for Western Region travelers heading to Han China (see Figure 1).

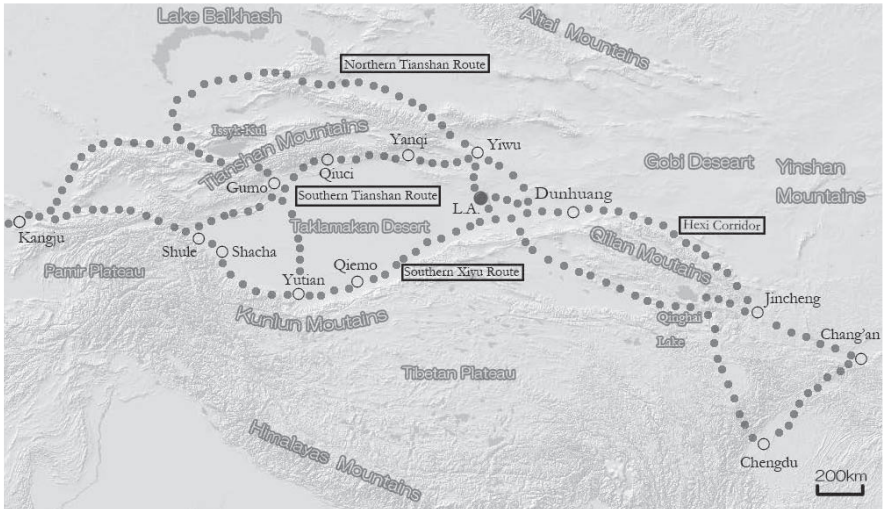


Fig. 1. Map of silk roads and oasis cities in the Han period.

The precise location of the Loulan Kingdom remains a significant issue. While it is generally accepted that Loulan was situated near the eastern edge of the Taklamakan Desert, the exact location of its capital has long been debated.

The toponym “Loulan” first appeared in *Shiji*. According to the “Narrative of the Xiongnu” (*Xiongnu liezhuan* 匈奴列傳) in *Shiji* 110.2895–96, the Xiongnu defeated the Yuezhi 月氏 in the 4th year of Emperor Wen (Wendi 文帝, r. 180–157 B.C.E.) of the Western Han (Xi Han 西漢, 202 B.C.E.–9 C.E.), i.e., in 176 B.C.E., subjugating “Loulan, Wusun, Hujie, and 26 other kingdoms in the vicinity” (樓蘭、烏孫、呼揭及其旁二十六國), and subsequently brought Loulan under their control. This suggests that Loulan was originally under the Yuezhi’s dominion before becoming a vassal state of the Xiongnu.

Nonetheless, in the 2nd year of Yuanfeng 元封 (109 B.C.E.), General Zhao Ponu 趙破奴 of the Han defeated the king of Loulan (*Shiji* 20.1040, 111.2945), leading to Loulan shifting allegiance from the Xiongnu to the Han. In the 4th year of Yuanfeng 元鳳 (77 B.C.E.), Loulan sent a hostage named Weituqi 尉屠耆 to the Han court while simultaneously maintaining amicable relations with the Xiongnu. In response, the Han dispatched a person named Fu Jiezi 傅介子, who assassinated King Angui

安歸 of Loulan at a banquet. Fu Jiezi was one of the military officers known for taking a strong stance against Loulan and Kucha, which had severed ties with the Han Dynasty and was allied with the Xiongnu. The Han then installed Weituqi as the new King of Loulan and renamed the country Shanshan 鄯善. At the time, Weituqi, a member of the Loulan royal family, had been detained in Chang'an.

Notably, the former Loulan king's son remained significant in local politics even after his father was assassinated, posing a threat to Weituqi's rule. To address this, according to the "Narrative of the Western Region" (*Xiyu zhuan* 西域傳) in *Hanshu* 96.3878, Weituqi petitioned Emperor Zhao (Zhaodi 昭帝, r. 87–74 B.C.E.) to station Han troops at Yixun Castle (Yixun Cheng 伊循城) in order to monitor Loulan (Shanshan). Additionally, the capital of Shanshan was subsequently established at Yuni Castle (Yuni Cheng 扞泥城) (*Hanshu* 96.3875).

This summary outlines Loulan's history during the Western Han period. Nevertheless, ambiguity remains regarding the references to "Loulan," "Shanshan," "Yixun," and "Yuni," as their precise locations and interrelationships remain unclear in historical records. Moreover, in the early 20th century, Sven Hedin discovered the so-called Ancient City of Loulan. This site was designated "L.A." by Aurel Stein (1921, 1: 370). Nonetheless, "Ancient City of Loulan" is merely a popular designation coined by Hedin, and its identification as the actual capital of the Loulan Kingdom requires further scrutiny.

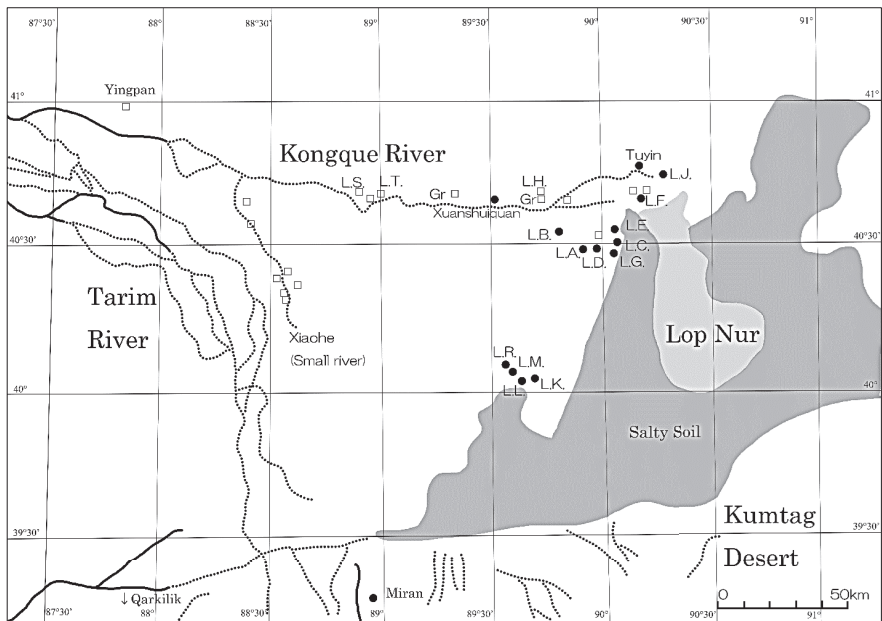


Fig. 2. Map of Loulan sites.

The distance from L.A. to Dunhuang's Yumen Gate (Yumen Guan 玉門關) is approximately 360 km in a straight line. Additionally, subsequent field investigations have revealed other sites near L.A., encompassing L.B. (a Buddhist site), L.C. (Han-Jin 晉 burial grounds), L.E. (a fortress), the site of Xianshuiquan Castle (Xianshuiquan Gucheng 咸水泉古城), and the Tuyin 土垠 site.<sup>1</sup> Collectively, these sites are referred to as “Northern Loulan.” Approximately 50 km southwest of L.A. lie other sites, labelled L.K. (the so-called Haitou Gucheng 海頭故城),<sup>2</sup> L.M. (residential remains), L.L. (a fortress), and L.R. (residential remains), and nearly 115 km southwest of L.K. is another site known as Miran (Chin. Milan 米蘭). Miran is an irregularly shaped rectangular fortress, referred to as M.I. by Stein. It is located at 39°13'35E, 88°58'26N. The fortress walls measure approximately 56 m from north to south and about 70 m from east to west. Although the fortress includes structures from the Eastern Han period (Dong Han 東漢, 25–220), most of them are believed to date to the Tibetan Empire period (Meng 2023: 94–105). Dating of the original establishment of the Miran site must be left to future investigations. This region, encompassing Miran, is hereafter referred to as “Southern Loulan.”

About 70 km west of Miran lies Qakilik (Ruoqiang 若羌), which also contains several archaeological sites, such as Qie'erqiduke 且尔乞都克 and Kongluke'adan 孔路克阿旦. Since these sites seem to include stupas, it is certain that they were in use after the Han Dynasty; however, the date of their original construction remains unclear at present (Chen 2022: 150–53).

L.B., L.C., and L.E. are located close to L.A. and can all be understood as part of the northern Loulan area. In contrast, L.L., L.M., and L.R. are situated away from both the northern and southern Loulan site clusters, lying in an intermediate zone between the two. However, since these sites are relatively close to L.A., they will all be considered part of the “Northern Loulan” in this context.

Thus, academic debates have emerged over the relationship among Loulan, Shanshan, Yixun 伊循, and Yuni 扞泥, as well as their correspondence to specific archaeological sites. Representative theories on this issue are as follows:<sup>3</sup>

- (1) The capital of Loulan before and after the 4th year of Yuanfeng (77 B.C.E.) = Yuni City, mentioned in *Hanshu* (which misinterprets Huni 扞泥, itself a Chinese transcription of *khvani* or *kuhani*, mentioned in the Kharoṣṭhī inscriptions from Loulan, lit., “royal city”) = L.A. (Enoki 1992b);<sup>4</sup> Yixun = Rtse-thon (mentioned in Tibetan records during the Tang period) = Issedon Serica (referenced in Ptolemy's *Geographia*, vol. 6.) = Miran (Enoki 1992d).

<sup>1</sup> The Xianshuiquan Castle is circular in shape, with a diameter of 300 m (Hu/He 2017). The Tuyin site is located at 40°46'30" N, 90°12'30" E. (Wang Binghua 2024: 73).

<sup>2</sup> L.K. is located at 40°05'15" N, 89°40'52" E (Chen 2022: 141).

<sup>3</sup> For discussions on the controversy, see also Itō (2017) and Yang/Liu (2019).

<sup>4</sup> Enoki (1992b) gives the location of L.A. as 40°30' N, 59°45' E, but “59” is obviously misspelled for “89,” which would otherwise render a location in Turkmenistan. Wang Guowei (1993) criticizes

- (2) The capital of Loulan before and after 77 B.C.E. = Yuni City, mentioned in *Hanshu* = L.A.; Yixun = Tuyin (Nagasawa 1996 a, 1996b).<sup>5</sup>
- (3) Yuni = Miran; Yixun = site near Ruoqiang (Qakilik) (Stein 1921, 1: 370; Fujita [1933] 1973: 253–63; Otani 1933; Matsuda 1963).
- (4) Yuni = site near Ruoqiang (Qakilik); Yixun = Miran (Heruman 1963; Su 2002 26, 88).<sup>6</sup>
- (5) The capital of Loulan before 77 B.C.E. = L.A. (which continued to be referred to as Loulan even after the change of capital); capital of Shanshan after 77 B.C.E. = Yuni = site near Miran; Yixun = Tuyin. Shanshan was a name imposed by the Han to refer to a broad region that encompassed Loulan. Loulan was merely one settlement within this area, and the name Loulan was employed continuously before and after 77 B.C.E. (Umehara 2001: 253–99).
- (6) Loulan (before 77 B.C.E.) = L.A.; Loulan (after 77 B.C.E.) = site near Miran. After 77 B.C.E., L.A. was converted into Han agricultural land; Haitou = L.K.; Yixun = Miran (Hou 1990: 219–53; 1995).<sup>7</sup>

Stein's identification of the capital city of Loulan with L.A., but Enoki (1992c) refutes the argument and reaffirms Stein's equation of Loulan's capital (until the mid-4th century) with L.A., whose actual location, according to the 1980 Chinese survey team, is 40°29' N, 89°55' E, which is located close to the site (40°31'34" N, 89°50'53" E) where Hedin (1905) set up camp from 4th to 10th March 1901, once again highlighting the remarkable accuracy of Hedin's surveying skills.

<sup>5</sup> Nagasawa (1996b) supports the argument presented in Enoki (1992d) but maintains that the location of Yixun remains unknown. Nonetheless, Nagasawa (1996a) concludes that Yixun = Tuyin. Considering the order in which the original manuscripts were written by Nagasawa, the latter view represents his final conclusion.

<sup>6</sup> Huang Wenbi 黃文弼 (1948: 28–29) was among the first to propose that Yixun = Miran. He criticized the interpretations of Stein and Fujita, arguing that Yixun was identical with the capital of Weituqi after 77 B.C.E. and that L.A. was reoccupied during the Huangchu 黃初 era (220–226) of Wei 魏 (i.e., the reign of Cao Pi 曹丕) but abandoned in 376 C.E. Furthermore, he suggested that before the 4th year of Yuanfeng (77 B.C.E.) the Loulan royal capital was not located to L.A. but along the Southern Tianshan Route (Tianshan Nandao 天山南道), likely west of Tuyin. Feng (1976: 25–35) and Hou/Yang (1999: 587) also adhere to this interpretation. Tan (1982: 37–38) similarly identifies Yuni with Ruoqiang and Shanshan with the Cherchen River region, while implying that Yixun was near Miran, east of Ruoqiang. Meng (2000: 249–69) argues that L.A. was referred to as Tuncheng 屯城 in the *Book of Later Han* (*Hou Hanshu* 後漢書, 5th c.) and the *Commentary on the Water Classic* (*Shuijing zhu* 水經注, ca. 500 C.E.) and was never the capital of the Loulan Kingdom, regardless of whether it was before or after the 4th year of Yuanfeng. Instead, he suggests that L.A. was established between the late Western Han and early Eastern Han, i.e., around the beginning of the 1st century C.E., with its structure and scale completed during the Wei-Jin period (220–420). By the Former Liang 涼 period (301–376), it served as the seat of the chief clerk of the Western Regions (*Xiyu zhangshi* 西域長史). Additionally, Meng maintains that the capital of Shanshan (Yuni) was consistently located near Ruoqiang.

<sup>7</sup> Additionally, Itō (2001) asserts that there are no Western Han sites near Ruoqiang and that there is no evidence that Yuni city was located either near L.A. or near Ruoqiang. Itō (1989) also notes that Later Han to Wei-Jin period artifacts have been excavated from L.A., identifying it as a Han military garrison at the time. Considering that the area around L.A. was a lush oasis during that

- (7) Capital of Loulan before 77 B.C.E. = L.E.; capital of Shanshan after 77 B.C.E. = site near Ruoqiang (Qakilik) (Lin 1998; Chen 2014: 190–91).<sup>8</sup>
- (8) Loulan before 77 B.C.E. = L.A.; Shanshan after 77 B.C.E. = Miran; Yuni = site near Ruoqiang; Yixun = location ca. 5 km east of Miran (Wang Binghua 2024: 11–42, 102–20); Tuyin = Juluzi Granary (Juluzi Cang 居盧訾倉) (idem, 71–101).
- (9) Tuyin = Juluzi Granary (Meng 2023: 65–89);<sup>9</sup> L.K. = Yixun (Meng 2023: 90–113); L.A. (which was constructed during the transition period between the Western and Eastern Han Dynasties, and later flourished as the government office of the chief clerk of the Western Region [*Xiyu zhangshi* 西域長史] mainly under the Wei 魏 [220–266], Jin [266–420], and Former Liang 涼 [301–376] Dynasties) = Haitou; capital of Shanshan after 77 B.C.E. = Yuni = site near Ruoqiang (Meng 2023: 200–203, 212–20).
- (10) Yixun = L.E. (Yu 2010).
- (11) L.A. = a location established during the Eastern Han Dynasty and flourishing in the Wei-Jin period, later mistakenly identified as the capital city of Loulan; the Xianshuiquan site = Loulan before 77 B.C.E.;<sup>10</sup> Loulan after 77 B.C.E. = Yuni = site near Ruoqiang County; Yixun = Miran; L.K. = a relay station connecting L.A., Miran, and Yuni. L.E. = the first military garrison site established by the Western Han in the Lop Nor region. Tuyin = Juluzi Granary, which supplied provisions to L.E. (Chen 2022: 133–209).

While the finer details of these theories vary even further, the above summarizes the existing main hypotheses.

How should these findings be interpreted? According to the historical records of Loulan, the Han army stationed troops at Yixun to monitor Loulan (Shanshan). Additionally, after the 4th year of Yuanfeng (77 B.C.E.), the capital of Shanshan was referred to as Yuni. Hence, regardless of the precise locations of these sites, the following three points remain contextually clear:

- (1) Yuni = capital of Shanshan after 77 B.C.E.
- (2) Yixun ≠ capital of Shanshan after 77 B.C.E.
- (3) Yixun ≠ Yuni.

These three points have remained largely uncontested in previous research. Thus, the issue lies elsewhere: what were the exact locations of Yixun and Yuni?

---

period, it is unlikely that there had been no city before 77 B.C.E. Itō therefore concludes that L.A. itself was the capital of Loulan before 77 B.C.E. For archaeological sites near Miran, see also Itō/U (2007).

<sup>8</sup> Huang Shengzhang 黃盛璋 (1996; 2000) criticizes Lin's (1998 [1995]) theory and firmly upholds the view that L.A. is the site of the capital of Loulan before 77 B.C.E.

<sup>9</sup> Li Yanling 李艷玲 (2023) also recognizes Tuyin as the Juluzi Granary.

<sup>10</sup> The theory that the Xianshuiquan site was Loulan before 77 B.C.E. was first proposed by Hu (2017) and Hu/He (2017).

## Southern Loulan and Yixun

One significant aspect to consider is that historical records related to the Western Region commonly indicate distances between cities using two measures: *li* 里, a unit of linear distance (with one *li* approximately the equivalent of 415 m), and travel days. Discrepancies and contradictions in the recorded *li* across sources have sparked debates. For instance, the “Narrative of the Western Region” in *Hanshu* provides both the distance from the Han capital, Chang’an, to the eastern Tianshan states and those from the Protectorate of the Western Region (Xiyu Duhufu 西域都護府), i.e., Wulei Castle (Wulei Cheng 烏壘城). While the former contains some errors, the accuracy of the latter has also been questioned (Matsuda 1970: 53–84). Nonetheless, the recorded distances in other contexts generally warrant no significant doubt.

In the “Narrative of the Western Region,” after the 4th year of Yuanfeng, the distance between Shanshan and Cherchen was recorded as 720 *li*:

鄯善當漢道衝，西通且末七百二十里。

Shanshan was located along the main Han route, extending 720 *li* westward to Qiemo (*Hanshu* 96. 3879).

It is widely agreed that ancient Qiemo 且末 corresponds to modern-day Cherchen (Qarqan, Chin. Qiemo). Considering that one *li* in the Han period was approximately 415 m, the distance between Shanshan and Cherchen would have been nearly 299 km. Satellite imagery shows that the straight-line distance from L.A. to Cherchen is over 400 km, while the distance from Miran to Cherchen is approximately 280–290 km. Thus, if Cherchen functions as the reference point, then the capital of Shanshan after 77 B.C.E. must have been in Southern Loulan (encompassing Miran) rather than in Northern Loulan (encompassing L.A.).

Let us examine the travel durations recorded in historical sources related to the Western Region to test this hypothesis. Travel speed naturally varies depending on individual capability and environmental factors. For instance, the “Chapter on Upholding the Law” (*Fafa pian* 法法篇) in *Master Guan* (*Guanzi* 管子), composed during the Spring and Autumn (Chunqiu 春秋) period (770–453 B.C.E.) in or after the 7th century B.C.E., and the “Chapter on Spook Stories” (*Jiyao pian* 紀妖篇) in *Discourses Weighed in the Balance* (*Lunheng* 論衡, 1st cent. C.E.) both state that the standard daily travel distance was 100 *li* (*Guanzi* 6.305; *Lunheng* 22.918), a figure also found in the Han documents on wooden tablets from Xuanquan (XH 2.245, II90DXT0112③:21). Conversely, the *Legal Case Reports* (*Zouyanshu* 奏讞書) from the Han bamboo slips excavated in Zhangjiashan (*Zhangjiashan Hanjian* 張家山漢簡) note that, during the 28th year of the reign of the First Emperor of Qin 秦 (219 B.C.E.), postal system users traveled 85 *li* per day (Case 18; ZH 363–70).<sup>11</sup>

<sup>11</sup> The Yuelu Academy collection of Qin documents (*Yuelu Qinjian* 岳麓秦簡) contains examples of traveling 80 *li* per day on horseback (slips 313–14; YQ 4, 198–99). There is also an example of

Further, a Han document from Juyan 居延 from the late Western Han to early Eastern Han period states the following:

官去府七十里。書一日一夜當行百六十里。書積二日少半日乃到。解何。書到，各推辟界中，必得事案。到如律令。……

The distance from the [prefectural] official's station to its branch office is 70 *li*. Documents should normally be deliverable over a distance of 160 *li* in one day and one night. [However], the delivery of [the previously mentioned] documents took slightly less than two and a half days. What could be the reason? Once the documents arrive, forward them to each *pi* (villages outside the prefectural castle) and make sure to have them confirm this matter. Handle it in accordance with the laws and regulations (*JX* 6. 680).

This example suggests a daily travel distance of approximately 80 *li*. Considering that one *li* was equal to nearly 415 m, 100 *li* corresponded to 41.5 km and 80 *li* to 33.2 km. Nevertheless, swift travel in the desert is challenging. In 1993, British explorer Charles Blackmore crossed the 1,400 km stretch between Luobuzhuang 羅布莊 and Merkit in 59 days, averaging 21 km per day (Blackmore 2000: 59, 61, 64, 104). Based on this example, the estimated daily travel distance for Han-era travelers ranged between 20 and 40 km, with approximately 20 km being a realistic estimate for travel in the Western Region's desert.

Considering this context, the focus shifts to Yixun. The Han documents from Juyan mention a “watchtower sentinel of Yixun” (Yixun hou 伊循候), who was involved in transporting the severed head of the king of Loulan to Dunhuang (II0215③:267; Hu/Zhang 2001: 126). Similarly, one of the Han documents from Xuanquan (I91DXT0309③:193) references a “Yixun Castle commandant” (*Yixun Cheng duwei* 伊循城都尉) (*XH* 2.83). Thus, “Yixun” refers to a castle where Han officials, comprising a commandant and a watchtower head, were stationed. The Han document from Xuanquan (I90DXT0111②:73) also notes the following:

□敦煌伊循都尉。大倉謂過所縣□

... Commandant of Yixun under Dunhuang Commandery. ... The Major Granary reported to the prefectures along the route that ... (*XH* 1.98).

This affirms that the Yixun commandant was affiliated with Dunhuang Commandery. As previously mentioned, when the new King Weituqi ascended the throne, Han troops were stationed in Yixun to monitor the former king's faction.<sup>12</sup>

---

traveling 70 *li* per day (slips 278–79; *YQ* 4: 160) as well as examples of pulling a cart or carrying loads while traveling 60 *li* per day (248–52; *YQ* 4, 150–51). Escorts for penal transportation also traveled 60 *li* per day (232–36; *YQ* 4, 145–46). According to the “Statutes on corvée labor” (*Yao lü* 徭律) in *Statutes and Ordinances of the Second Year* (*Er nian lüling* 二年律令), a cart carrying loads could travel 50 *li* per day, an empty cart could cover 70 *li*, and travel on foot could reach 80 *li* per day (411–15; *ZH* 248).

<sup>12</sup> For the administrative affiliation of the Yixun office, see Li Bingquan (2003).

The exact location of Yixun remains an open question. Nonetheless, the Han document from Xuanquan (II90DXT0115②:66B) provides additional insights. The relevant slip is held at the Gansu Jiandu Museum (Gansu Jiandu Bowuguan 甘肅簡牘博物館) in Lanzhou 蘭州, Gansu 甘肅 Province. On December 1, 2023, I was able to examine it by employing infrared photography, thanks to arrangements made by Director Zhu Jianjun 朱建軍. Based on this investigation, the transcription has been partially revised and now reads,

□□□一百 永光元年十二月廿二日發北軍二年二月廿九日至敦煌積五十九日。  
 □二十 出陽關積三月  
 □□□ 三月五日發敦煌十九日至文侯積十五日留四月廿三□□□•閏月  
 八日至伊循積十六日。

... one hundred.

On the 22nd day of the 12th month of the 1st year of Yongguang, they departed from Beijun. On the 29th day of the 2nd month of the 2nd year [of Yongguang], they arrived at Dunhuang. Total amount of days of travel was 59 days [by calculation].

... twenty.

Total amount of days of travel after leaving Yangguan was 3 months [by calculation].

...

On the 5th day of the 3rd month [of the 2nd year of Yongguang], they departed from Dunhuang. On the 19th day [of the same month], they arrived at Wenhou. Total amount of days of travel was 15 days [by calculation]. They stayed in Wenhou until the 23rd day of the 4th month [of the 2nd year of Yongguang]. ... On the 8th day of the intercalary month [of the same year], they arrived at Yixun. Total amount of days of travel was 16 days [by calculation] (back side) (*XH* 4.30).

The slip in question has two sides. The back side, transcribed above, appears to record the transport of personnel, while the content of the inscription on the front side remains unclear. Nonetheless, the slip as a whole most likely documents the transport of personnel from a city east of Dunhuang to Yixun. While prior studies have referenced this and other slips that mention Yixun,<sup>13</sup> the current study addresses the issue of Yixun's location from a new perspective.

<sup>13</sup> See Li Bingquan (2003), Wei/Zheng (2022), Zhang Defang (2009), and Zhang Junmin (2013). Older publications discuss this slip under the premise that it encompasses the phrase “1st year of Jianzhao” (建昭元年), which is obviously faulty—while the slip does mention an “intercalary month” (*runyue* 閏月) at the end, there was no intercalary month in the 1st year of Jianzhao. The following year, the 2nd year of Jianzhao, did have an intercalary month, but the “Annals of Emperor Yuan” (*Yuandi ji* 元帝紀) in *Hanshu* 9.294 recorded it as *run liuyue* 閏六月, whereas Wang Yizhi 王益之 (*jinshi* 進士 in 1187) of the Southern Song (Nan Song 南宋, 1126–1279), in his *Xi Han nianji* 西漢年紀, revised it to *run bayue* 閏八月. Zhu (2013: 138) also adopted *run bayue* 閏八月. If this were correct, then the travel duration recorded in the slip would have been excessively long. Conversely, the Han documents from Xuanquan (*XH* 4.336) revised the phrase to “1st year of Yongguang” (永光元年). In 2023, when I conducted the infrared examination, I concluded that it should indeed be read as “1st year of Yongguang.” Furthermore, considering that “2nd year” (二年) appears in the middle of the first line of this slip, the “intercalary month” (*runyue* 閏月) in the third line must correspond

According to the inscription, personnel or supplies departed from Beijun 北軍 on the 22nd day of the 12th month and arrived in Dunhuang on the 29th day of the 2nd month of the following year, i.e., the 2nd year of Yongguang. The term *ji* 積 in the Han documents from Xuanquan generally refers to the total amount of days of travel by calculation. Thus, *ji wushijiu ri* 積五十九日 no doubt means that “total amount of days of travel (from Beijun to Dunhuang) was 59 days by calculation.” The third line indicates that the personnel departed Dunhuang on the 5th day of the 3rd month and reached Wenhou 文侯 on the 19th day of the same month. The total amount of days of travel from Dunhuang to Wenhou was 15 days by calculation. After several days, personnel departed Wenhou on the 23rd day of the 4th month and arrived at Yixun on “the 8th day of the intercalary month.” Considering that the personnel or supplies made no stops after Wenhou, this suggests the absence of significant cities or settlements between Wenhou and Yixun.

Regarding the inscription at the top of the back side, the *shicui* edition concludes that it is illegible (Hu/Zhang 2001: 136), while some interpret it as “1st year of Jianzhao” 建昭 (i.e., 38 B.C.E., during the reign of Emperor Yuan of the Western Han). However, based on multi-angle infrared imaging conducted by the *Xuanquan Han-jian* editorial team, the text was determined to be 永光元年十二月廿二日 (“On the 22nd day of the 12th month of the 1st year of Yongguang,” i.e., January 20, 42 B.C.E.) (XH 4.30). The author also reached the same conclusion using his own multi-angle infrared imaging camera (see n. 13).

The journey from Wenhou to Yixun took 16 days, suggesting a total travel time of approximately 30 days from Dunhuang to Yixun. Given the average travel speed of Han-era travelers (previously noted as 20–40 km per day), the distance between Dunhuang and Yixun would therefore range from 600 to 1,200 km. Considering that the route went largely through desert terrain, the daily travel speed was likely to be around 20 km, resulting in an estimated total distance of at least 600 km.

Satellite imagery shows that the straight-line distance from Dunhuang (specifically, Guazhou 瓜州, where the Silk Road branched into two routes) to Yangguan 陽關 is 60 km, from Guazhou to Yumen Gate is 72 km, and from Yangguan to L.A. is 365 km.<sup>14</sup> Thus, the total distance from Guazhou to L.A. via Yangguan is 425 km. In comparison, the distance from Yangguan to Miran is 460 km, while the distance from L.A. to Miran is 167 km. Therefore, the total distance from Dunhuang to Miran via Yangguan and L.A. is 592 km. These calculations suggest that Yixun was not near L.A. but rather in Southern Loulan, near Miran. Given that Yixun served as the base for Han forces tasked with protecting the newly appointed King Weituqi and monitoring the Shanshan Kingdom, it was most likely located near the new king’s residence—the post-77 B.C.E. capital of Shanshan, identified as Yuni. Consequently, the king’s residence was also likely in southern Loulan, near Miran.

---

to the intercalary month of the 2nd year of Yongguang. According to Zhu (2013: 128–29), this intercalary month followed directly after the 3rd month, which aligns perfectly with all the calculations.

<sup>14</sup> Yumen Gate is identified as Xiaofang Pancheng 小方盤城 by Hirose (2019).

## History of Northern Loulan

How should the various sites in Northern Loulan be understood? Northern Loulan encompasses L.A., where the famous “Beauty of Loulan” was discovered. If the capital of Shanshan after 77 B.C.E. was in Southern Loulan (near Miran), what historical role did the Northern Loulan sites play?

From an archaeological perspective, it is evident that a population continued to reside in Northern Loulan even after 77 B.C.E. Artifacts from L.A. predominantly date to the Wei-Jin period. Additionally, paper documents unearthed at L.A., also primarily from the Wei-Jin period, contain references such as *Loulan gengzhong* 樓蘭耕種, “plant seeds in Loulan” (L.A.VI.ii.045; *LW* 464), and *yi Loulan* 詣樓蘭, “to Loulan” (L.A.VI.ii.022; *LW* 453). These references indicate that Northern Loulan remained inhabited after 77 B.C.E. and continued to be known as Loulan. Furthermore, some inhabitants were literate in Chinese.

At the Tuyin site in Northern Loulan, Han-era artifacts have also been discovered. Some researchers have identified Tuyin as the capital of Loulan, but slips from Tuyin (e.g., no. 56) bear the date “1st year of Huanglong, 10th month” (黃龍元年十月; Huang Wenbi 1948: 388–89). Given that the 1st year of Huanglong corresponds to 49 B.C.E. and the slip therefore dates to a later time, Tuyin cannot be considered Loulan’s earlier capital. Moreover, wooden slips with Chinese inscriptions found at Tuyin suggest that it functioned as a Han military outpost rather than the capital of Loulan. Northern Loulan contains burial sites such as the Pingtai 平台 and Gutai 孤台 cemeteries, dating to the transition period between the Western and Eastern Han Dynasties or to the early Eastern Han period (Hou 2022: 104–8).<sup>15</sup> This, too, indicates that Northern Loulan sustained a population after 77 B.C.E., comprising some Chinese-speaking inhabitants.

What about sites in Northern Loulan predating 77 B.C.E.? Among its fortifications, L.A. (ca. 330 m × 330 m), L.E. (ca. 137 m × 122 m), L.K. (ca. 163 m × 160 m), L.L. (ca. 71.5 m × 61 m), and the Xianshuiquan site (300 m in diameter) are relatively large. Artifacts from L.A., L.K., and L.L. predominantly date to the Wei-Jin period. As noted earlier, L.A. and Tuyin most probably postdate the 4th year of Yuanfeng (77 B.C.E.). While earlier Han-era layers may exist beneath L.A., no such evidence has been confirmed. The walls of L.A. were constructed using a method different from the traditional Chinese rammed earth technique (Wang Binghua 2024: 25). However, unless deeper stratigraphic layers are excavated, it remains unclear whether L.A. can be dated back to before 77 B.C.E. L.E. features fortifications resembling those at Han-era sites like Juyan (e.g., K710). Based on these characteristics, Chen Xiaolu 陳曉露 recently argued that L.E. was constructed during the Western Han period. Supporting this hypothesis are Western Jin Dynasty (266–316)

---

<sup>15</sup> Chen Xiaolu 陳曉露 has demonstrated that the Pingtai cemetery belonged to the mid-to-late Western Han period (Chen 2014: 41) and that the Gutai cemetery contains burials from the Eastern Han period (Chen 2014: 77).

documents unearthed at L.E., nearby Wei-Jin tombs to its northeast, and evidence of Han-era tamped-earth construction beneath later additions (Chen 2014: 155–57). Thus, L.E. was likely the capital of Loulan before 77 B.C.E. However, L.E. is rectangular in shape and not entirely without the influence of Chinese architecture, leaving doubt as to whether it can truly be identified as the Loulan city before 77 B.C.E. This leaves us, for the time being, with the Xianshuiquan site. Xianshuiquan Castle is circular in shape, with a diameter of 300 m. Artifacts dating from the late Eastern Han to the early Wei-Jin period have been unearthed from this site; however, these indicate the final period of use of the walls, and the construction of the fortress itself predates these artifacts. The circular form and other characteristics suggest a Central Asian origin, making it not implausible to consider it as the Loulan capital prior to 77 B.C.E. (Hu 2017; Hu/He 2017; Chen 2022: 133–209). Further archaeological excavations may hopefully yield material remains from the Former Han period.

Nonetheless, the scale of both L.E. and Xianshuiquan Castle is modest, falling far short of typical Han-era commandery or county capitals,<sup>16</sup> with an estimated capacity of only 200–300 households. It is interesting to note that the former capital of Loulan was captured by only 700 Han cavalry in 77 B.C.E. According to the “Narrative of Dayuan” (*Dayuan zhuan* 大宛傳) in *Shiji*,

天子已嘗使浞野侯攻樓蘭，以七百騎先至，虜其王。

The Emperor had previously sent the Marquis of Zhuoye to attack Loulan. With 700 horsemen, he advanced first and captured its king (*Shiji*: 123.3174).

This suggests that the Loulan capital before 77 B.C.E. was a small city. With 200–300 households, a Loulan army of 200–600 men (assuming one to two male soldiers per household) would not have been able to withstand an attack by a Han cavalry of 700 horsemen.

It follows that while the new king, Weitūqi, established his residence in Southern Loulan, the faction loyal to the ousted king probably remained in Northern Loulan. Northern Loulan continued to be inhabited during the late Western Han period and beyond, and both Northern and Southern Loulan were referred to as Loulan or Shanshan in Chinese documents.

As supporting evidence, the *Biography of Faxian* (*Faxian zhuan* 法顯傳) deserves attention. Faxian (337?–422?) was a Chinese Buddhist monk who traveled via the Southern Pacific Area to India to study Buddhism. The *Biography* contains a record of his 14-year journey, including his experiences and observations. It states that Faxian departed Dunhuang and arrived in Shanshan after 17 days. From there, he traveled northwest for 15 days to Wuyi 烏夷, generally identified as Karashar (*Faxian zhuan*, 7–11). Satellite imagery shows that the straight-line distance between Yangguan and L.A. is 365 km, between L.A. and Karashar 320 km, and between Miran and Karashar 420 km. The proportional relationship between the distances

<sup>16</sup> Regarding the scale of cities during the Qin and Han periods, see Xu (2013).

(365 km and 320 km) closely aligns with the 17-day and 15-day travel durations recorded by Faxian. This affirms that the “Shanshan” Faxian visited must have been near L.A. (Northern Loulan) and not Southern Loulan (near Miran).<sup>17</sup>

Had Faxian’s Shanshan been located near Miran, it would have been impossible to reach Shanshan from Dunhuang in just 17 days or to travel from Shanshan to Karashar in 15 days. The biography further states that the distance from Dunhuang to Shanshan was 1,500 *li* (623 km). If the 17-day stage attributed to Faxian indeed covered 623 km, then the subsequent 15 days would have to account for roughly 550 km, and a result that is implausible, as it far exceeds the straight-line distance from Shanshan to Karashar. It follows that the “Shanshan” reached by Faxian after 17 days and the “Shanshan” situated 1,500 *li* from Dunhuang should be understood as distinct locations, and the latter is most likely to be Miran. After the coup in 77 B.C.E., the Han renamed the kingdom Shanshan and relocated the new king, Weituqi, to Southern Loulan. The area around Southern Loulan saw the establishment of Yixun, which housed Han troops. Meanwhile, loyalists of the slain king’s family likely remained in Northern Loulan, alongside Han military outposts like Tuyin. Thereafter, both Southern and Northern Loulan were integrated into the Shanshan Kingdom and continued to be referred to as “Loulan” or “Shanshan.” Thus, Faxian’s visit to “Shanshan” in 399 C.E. was in all likelihood to Northern Loulan.

## Conclusion

This study examined the geographical position of the Loulan Kingdom during the Han Dynasty by drawing on Han documents from Xuanquan and other sources. The findings validate that the Loulan Kingdom was located between Dunhuang and the Tarim Basin. Before the 4th year of Yuanfeng (77 B.C.E.), the kingdom was centered in Northern Loulan, with Xianshuiquan being the most likely candidate for its capital. After 77 B.C.E., Loulan was renamed Shanshan, and the newly appointed king, Weituqi, established his residence near Miran (Southern Loulan). A new city, Yixun, was founded near his residence as a military outpost for Han troops.

Meanwhile, factions opposed to Weituqi remained in Northern Loulan. To monitor these factions, the Han stationed troops at Northern Loulan sites, such as the Tuyin outpost. Thus, Northern and Southern Loulan together constituted the Shanshan Kingdom, and this dual structure persisted into the periods of the Wei, Jin, and Northern and Southern Dynasties (Nanbeichao 南北朝, 420–589). The “Shanshan” that the Buddhist monk Faxian visited during his journey in 399 C.E. referred to Northern Loulan.

The Loulan Kingdom was strategically located at a crucial crossroads where Western Region inhabitants (comprising the Loulan people) and Han Chinese intermingled, and multiple languages were spoken. Loulan was not merely a destination or

---

<sup>17</sup> Various theories have been proposed regarding the location of Shanshan as visited by Faxian. My view aligns with Enoki (1992a), although my method of calculation differs slightly from his.

settlement but also a transit hub, much like Dunhuang. Consequently, Han Chinese often settled west of Loulan and Dunhuang, while Western Region inhabitants also lived to the east. For instance, the documents from Loulan (L.A.VI.ii.04) contain the following record:

兵支胡簿成 兵支胡重寅得 右二人共字驢四歲。

Soldier Zhihu Bo Cheng. Soldier Zhihu Chongyinde. These two individuals jointly own a donkey aged four years (*LW* 379).

*Zhihu* 支胡 appears to be a unique designation for certain ethnic groups from the Western Region. In the “Annals of Emperor Xian” (*Xiandi ji* 獻帝紀) as cited in Li Xian’s 李賢 (655–684) commentary to the “Biography of Dong Zhuo” (*Dong Zhuo zhuan* 董卓傳) in *Hou Hanshu* 後漢書, a subordinate of Dong Zhuo’s son-in-law, Niu Fu 牛輔, is referred to as Zhihu Chi’er 支胡赤兒 (*Hou Hanshu* 72.2332). This suggests that individuals that were deemed to be members of the Zhihu ethnic group from the Western Region were also present in Central China. Additionally, Luo Fuyi 羅福頤 has identified inscriptions such as “chieftain of the virtuous Zhihu people, who were affiliated with the Jin Empire” (晉支胡率善邑長), “commander of a thousand of the virtuous Zhihu people, who were affiliated with the Jin Empire” (晉支胡率善仟長), and “commander of a hundred of the virtuous Zhifu people, who were affiliated with the Jin Empire” (晉支胡率善佰長), and interprets Zhihu as an abbreviation for Yuezhihu 月支胡 or Dihu 氐胡 (Luo 1987: 355).<sup>18</sup>

Moreover, Shamoke 沙摩柯 (d. 222), king of the Hu 胡 (barbarians), who aided Liu Bei 劉備 (161–223) in the Battle of Yiling 夷陵 (221/22),<sup>19</sup> has a name phonetically like *Camaka*, which appears in Kharoṣṭhī inscriptions unearthed at L.A. (no. 678; *Inscriptions II*, 255). *Camaka* is also found in other Kharoṣṭhī documents from L.A. (no. 358) and Niya (nos. 244, 338), suggesting that it was a common name in the Loulan region (*Inscriptions I*, 93, 123, 130). It is plausible that the Shamoke’s clan originated in Loulan and migrated along the Western Qiang (Xi Qiang 西羌) route before eventually settling in the Yangtze 揚子 River basin. Supporting this hypothesis, a Tuyin slip (no. 34) mentions a person named Song Jun 宋鈞 from Nanyang 南陽 commandery, indicating interactions between Loulan and Nanyang commandery during the Han Dynasty.

Loulan was also home to individuals from beyond both Loulan and Han territories. Documents from L.A. mention names of other Western Region states, such as Yanqi 焉耆, Qiuci 龜茲, and Gaochang 高昌, reflecting regional exchanges. Notably, a document from L.A. (L.A.I.iii.1) states the following:

<sup>18</sup> Another individual, “Hu Che’er” 胡車兒, who was active in the Central Plains during the late Eastern Han period (see the quotation by Fu Xuan 傅玄 [217–278] quoted in the annotation of Pei Songzhi 裴松之 (372–451) to the “Biography of Zhang Xiu” [*Zhang Xiu zhuan* 張繡傳], his relative; *Sanguo zhi* 8. 878), was most likely also associated with the “Hu” people.

<sup>19</sup> See the “Biography of Lu Xun” (*Lu Xun zhuan* 陸遜傳), *Sanguo zhi* 58.3457.

建興十八年三月十七日粟□（特？）胡樓□（蘭？）☒

On the 17th day of the 3rd month, 18th year of Jianxing (330 C.E.), Sogdian officials in Loulan ... (LW 61).

The reign title *Jianxing* in all probability belongs to the Former Liang period, highlighting the presence of Sogdians in Loulan at least after the Han Dynasty.

Both Han Chinese and Western Region inhabitants migrated across Loulan and Dunhuang territories. Consequently, during the Han Dynasty these areas served as major transit hubs, fostering vibrant cultural exchange. A comparison of archaeological remains and artifacts from the two regions reveals that while Dunhuang experienced significant Han cultural assimilation, Loulan was less influenced.

## Glossary of special symbols

- A graph is clearly present but is too damaged to be transcribed.
- ☒ The slip breaks off at this point. An unknown number of graphs are missing.
- Probably marks separate sentences, or marks stages of ordinance creation and occasionally separate subsections.
- …… This part of the text has been abridged.

## References

### Primary sources

*Faxian zhuan* = Nagasawa Kazutoshi 長澤和俊 (1996): *Hokkenden. Yakuchu, kai-setsu: Hokusō-bon, Nansō-bon, Kōrai Daizōkyō-bon, Ishiyamadera-bon yonshu eiin to sono hikaku kenkyū* 法顯伝: 訳注解説——北宋本・南宋本・高麗大藏經本・石山寺本四種影印とその比較研究. Tōkyō: Yuzankaku.

*Guanzi* = Guan Zhong 管仲 (2004): *Guanzi jiaozhu* 管子校注. Ed. Li Xiangfeng 黎翔鳳. Beijing: Zhonghua Shuju.

*Hanshu* = Ban Gu 班固 (1962): *Hanshu* 漢書. 12 vols. Beijing: Zhonghua Shuju.

Hu Pingsheng 胡平生 / Zhang Defang 張德芳 (eds.) (2001): *Dunhuang Xuanquan Zhi Hanjian shicui* 敦煌懸泉置漢簡釋粹. Shanghai: Shanghai Guji Chubanshe.

*JX* = Zhang Defang 張德芳 (ed.) (2016): *Juyan xinjian jishi* 居延新簡集釋. 7 vols. Lanzhou: Gansu Wenhua Chubanshe.

*Inscriptions I* = Boyer, A[nne]-M[arie] / Rapson, E[dward] J[ames] / Senart, E[mile] (eds.) (1920): *Kharoṣṭhī Inscriptions: Discovered by Sir Aurel Stein in Chinese*

- Turkestan, Part I: Text of Inscriptions discovered at the Niya Site. 1901.* Oxford: Clarendon Press.
- Inscriptions II* = Boyer, A[nne]-M[arie] / Rapson, E[dward] J[ames] / Senart, É[mile] (eds.) (1927): *Kharoṣṭhī Inscriptions: Discovered by Sir Aurel Stein in Chinese Turkestan, Part II: Text of Inscriptions discovered at the Niya, Endere, and Lou-lan Sites. 1906–7.* Oxford: Clarendon Press.
- LW* = Hou Can 侯燦 / Yang Daixin 楊代欣 (eds.) (1999): *Loulan Hanwen jianzhi wenshu jicheng* 樓蘭漢文簡紙文書集成. 3 vols. Chengdu: Tiandi Chubanshe.
- Lunheng* = Wang Chong 王充 (1990): *Lunheng jiaoshi* 論衡校釋. Ed. Huang Hui 黃暉. Beijing: Zhonghua Shuju.
- Sanguo zhi* = Chen Shou 陳壽 (2012): *Sanguo zhi jijie* 三國志集解. Ann. Pei Songzhi 裴松之, ed. Lu Bi 盧弼. Shanghai: Shanghai Guji Chubanshe.
- Shiji* = Sima Qian 司馬遷 (1982): *Shiji* 史記. Beijing: Zhonghua Shuju.
- XH* = Gansu Jiandu Bowuguan 甘肅簡牘博物館 et al. (eds.) (2019–2024): *Xuanquan Hanjian* 懸泉漢簡. 4 vols. Shanghai: Zhongxi Shuju.
- YQ* = Zhu Hanmin 朱漢民 / Chen Songchang 陳松長 (eds.) (2010–2022): *Yuelu Shuyuan cang Qinjian* 岳麓書院藏秦簡. 7 vols. Shanghai: Shanghai Cishu Chubanshe.
- ZH* = Peng Hao 彭浩 / Chen Wei 陳偉 / Gongteng Yuannan [Kudō Motoo] 工藤元男 (eds.) (2007): *Er nian lüling yu Zouyanshu: Zhangjiashan er-si-qi hao Hanmu chutu falü wenxian shidu* 二年律令與奏讞書——張家山二四七號漢墓出土法律文獻釋讀. Shanghai: Shanghai Guji Chubanshe.

## Secondary literature

- Blackmore, Charles (2000): *Crossing the Desert of Death: Through the Fearsome Taklamakan.* London: John Murray.
- Chen Xiaolu 陈晓露 (2014): *Loulan kaogu* 樓蘭考古. Lanzhou: Lanzhou Daxue Chubanshe.
- (2022): *Luobubo kaogu yanjiu* 罗布泊考古研究. Shanghai: Shanghai Guji Chubanshe.
- Enoki Kazuo 榎一雄 (1992a): “Hokken no tsūka shita Zenzenkoku ni tsuite” 法顯の通過した鄯善国について. In: *Enoki Kazuo chosakushū* 榎一雄著作集. Ed. Enoki Kazuo Chosakushū Henshū Iinkai 榎一雄著作集編集委員会. 12 vols. Tōkyō: Kyūko Shoin, vol. 1, 121–48.
- (1992b): “Rōran” 樓蘭. In: *Enoki Kazuo chosakushū* 榎一雄著作集. Ed. Enoki Kazuo Chosakushū Henshū Iinkai 榎一雄著作集編集委員会. 12 vols. Tōkyō: Kyūko Shoin, vol. 1, 37–39.
- (1992c): “Rōran no ichi o shimesu futatsu no Karoshutū monjo ni tsuite” 樓蘭の位置を示す二つのカロシュティ文書について. In: *Enoki Kazuo Chosakushū* 榎一雄著作集. Ed. Enoki Kazuo Chosakushū Henshū Iinkai 榎一雄著作集編集委員会. 12 vols. Tōkyō: Kyūko Shoin, vol. 1, 51–66.

- (1992d): “Putoremaiosu ni mieru Isedōnesu Minzoku ni tsuite” 扶特列馬優斯に見える伊塞多涅斯民族について. In: *Enoki Kazuo Chosakushū* 榎一雄著作集. Ed. Enoki Kazuo Chosakushū Henshū Iinkai 榎一雄著作集編集委員会. 12 vols. Tōkyō: Kyūko Shoin, vol. 1, 40–50.
- Feng Chengjun 馮承鈞 (1976): “Loulan Shanshan wenti” 樓蘭鄯善問題. In: *Xiyu Nanhai shidi kaozheng lunzhu huiji* 西域南海史地考證論著彙輯. Xianggang: Zhonghua Shuju, 25–35.
- Fujita Toyohachi 藤田豊八 (1973 [1933]): “Saiiki kenkyū” 西域研究. In: *Tōzai kōshōshi no kenkyū: Saiiki hen* 東西交渉史の研究——西域篇. Tōkyō: Kokusho Kankōkai, 253–359.
- Hedin, Sven (1905): “The ruined houses of Lōu-lan.” Ch. 44 from: *Scientific Results of a Journey in Central Asia 1899–1902*, vol. 2: *Lop-nor*. Stockholm: Lithographic Institute of the General Staff of the Swedish Army, 619–36.
- Heruman, A. [Albert Herrmann] (2002): *Rōran: Ryūsa ni umoreta ōto* 樓蘭——流砂に埋もれた王都. Trans. Matsuda Hisao 松田寿男. Tōkyō: Heibonsha, 179–244.
- Hirose Kunio 廣瀨薫雄 (2019): “Ichi-kyū-kyū-hachi-nen Tonkō Shōhōbanchō shutsudo kantoku shotan: Kanete Gyokumon Tōifu to Gyokumonkan o ronzu” 一九九八年敦煌小方盤城出土簡牘初探——兼ねて玉門都尉府と玉門關を論ずる. In: Takamura Takeyuki 高村武幸 / Hirose Kunio 廣瀨薫雄 / Watanabe Hideyuki 渡邊英幸 (eds.): *Shūen ryōiki kara mita Shin Kan teikoku. 2* 周縁領域からみた秦漢帝国——2. Tōkyō: Rokuichi Shobō, 119–44.
- Hou Can 侯灿 (1990): *Gaochang Loulan yanjiu lunji* 高昌楼兰研究论集. Wulumuqi: Xinjiang Renmin Chubanshe.
- (1995): “Lun Loulan Cheng de fazhan ji qi shuaiifei” 论楼兰城的发展及其衰废. In: Mu Shunying 穆舜英 / Zhang Ping 张平 (eds.): *Loulan wenhua yanjiu lunji* 楼兰文化研究论集. Wulumuqi: Xinjiang Renmin Chubanshe, 20–55.
- (2022): *Loulan kaogu diaocha yu fajue baogao* 楼兰考古调查与发掘报告. Nanjing: Fenghuang Chubanshe.
- Hou Can 侯灿 / Yang Daixin 楊代欣 (eds.) (1999): *Loulan Hanwen jianzhi wenshu jicheng* 樓蘭漢文簡紙文書集成. Chengdu: Tiandi Chubanshe.
- Hu Xingjun 胡兴军 (2017): “Loulan Shanshan Ducheng xinkao” 楼兰、鄯善都城新考. In: *Xinjiang wenwu* 新疆文物 2017.2: 43–59.
- Hu Xingjun 胡兴军 / He Liping 何丽萍 (2017): “Xinjiang Weili xian Xianshuiquan Gucheng de faxian yu chubu renshi” 新疆尉犁县咸水泉古城的发现与初步认识. In: *Xiyu kaogu* 西域考古 2017.2: 122–25.
- Huang Shengzhang 黄盛璋 (1996): “Chulun Loulan guo shidu Loulan Cheng yu LE Cheng wenti” 初论楼兰国始都楼兰城与 LE 城问题. In: *Wenwu* 文物 1996.8: 62–72.
- (2000): “Loulan shidu zhenglun zhengjie jienan yu LA Cheng wei Xi Han Loulan Cheng xin lunzhen” 楼兰始都争论症结解难与 LA 城为西汉楼兰城新论证. In: *Tulufanxue yanjiu* 吐鲁番学研究 2000.1: 61–75.
- Huang Wenbi 黄文弼 (1948): *Luobu Naor kaogu ji* 羅布淖爾攷古記. Beijing: Guoli Beiping Yanjiuyuan Shixue Yanjiusuo.

- Itō Toshio 伊藤敏雄 (1989): “Rōran no iseki: Kinnen no Rōran chōsa ni yosete” 楼蘭の遺跡——近年の楼蘭調査によせて. In: *Ōsaka Kyōiku Daigaku kiyō* 大阪教育大学紀要 (*Dai'ni bumon: Shakai kagaku, seikatsu kagaku* 第II部門: 社会科学・生活科学) 38.2: 129–43.
- (2001): “Nankyō no iseki chōsaki: Rōran (Zenzen) no kokuto mondai ni kanren shite” 南疆の遺跡調査記——楼蘭(鄯善)の国都問題に関連して. In: *Tōdai-shi kenkyū* 唐代史研究 2001.4: 122–47.
- (2017): “Nihon ni okeru Rōran kenkyū 100-nen” 日本における楼蘭研究一〇〇年. In: *Rekishi kenkyū* 歴史研究 54: 57–83.
- Itō Toshio 伊藤敏雄 / U Shiyū [Yu Zhiyong] 于志勇 (2007): “Miran no iseki to sono genjō” 米蘭の遺跡とその現状. In: *Seihoku shutsudo bunken kenkyū* 西北出土文献研究 2007.4: 55–64.
- Li Bingquan 李炳泉 (2003): “Xihan Xiyu Yixun tuntian kaolun” 西汉西域伊循屯田考论. In: *Xiyu yanjiu* 西域研究 2003.2: 1–9.
- Li Yanling 李艳玲 (2023): “Juluzi Cang zailun” 居卢訾仓再论. In: *Shilin* 史林 2023.6: 71–80.
- Lin Meicun 林梅村 (1998): “Loulan guo shidu kao” 楼兰国始都考. In: *Hantang Xiyu yu Zhongguo wenming* 汉唐西域与中国文明. Beijing: Wenwu Chubanshe, 279–89.
- Luo Fuyi 羅福頤 (ed.) (1987): *Qinhan Nanbeichao guanyin zhengcun* 秦漢南北朝官印徵存. Beijing: Wenwu Chubanshe.
- Matsuda Hisao 松田壽男 (1963): “Kaisetsu: A. Eruman o oginaitsutu” 解説——A・エルマンを補いつつ. In: Heruman, A. [Albert Herrmann]: *Rōran: Ryūsa ni umoreta ōto* 楼蘭——流沙に埋もれた王都. Trans. Matsuda Hisao 松田寿男. Tōkyō: Heibonsha, 179–244.
- (1970): *Kodai Tenzan no rekishi-chirigaku-teki kenkyū* 古代天山的歴史地理學的研究. Rev. edition. Tōkyō: Waseda Daigaku Shuppanbu.
- Meng Fanren 孟凡人 (1990): *Loulan xinshi* 楼蘭新史. Beijing: Guangming Ribao Chubanshe.
- (2000): “Lun Shanshan guodu de fangwei” 论鄯善国都的方位. In: *Xinjiang kaogu yu shidi lunji* 新疆考古与史地论集. Beijing: Kexue Chubanshe: 249–69.
- (2023): *Loulan xinshi* 楼兰新史. Rev. edition. Beijing: Shangwu Yinshuguan.
- Nagasawa Kazutoshi 長澤和俊 (1996a): “Kodai Rōran ōkoku no shigen to tenkai” 古代楼蘭王國の始源と展開. In: *Rōran ōkoku no kenkyū* 楼蘭王国史の研究. Tōkyō: Yūzankaku Shuppan, 65–94.
- (1996b): “Zenzen ōkoku no rekishi chiri” 鄯善王國の歴史地理. In: *Rōran ōkoku no kenkyū* 楼蘭王国史の研究. Tōkyō: Yūzankaku Shuppan: 243–61.
- Otani Shōsin 大谷勝真 (1933): “Zenzen koku tojo ko” 鄯善国都城考. In: *Ichimura hakase koki kinen: Tōyō shi ronsō* 市村博士古稀紀念——東洋史論叢. Tōkyō: Fūzanbō, 251–72.
- Stein, Aurel (1921): *Serindia: Detailed report of explorations in Central Asia and westernmost China. Carried out and described under the orders of H.M. Indian government.* 4 vols. Oxford: Clarendon Press.

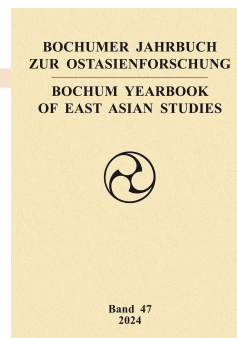
- Su Qikang 蘇其康 (2002): *Xiyu shidi shiming* 西域史地釋名. Gaoxiong: Zhongshan Daxue Chubanshe.
- Tan Qixiang 譚其驥 (ed.) (1982): *Zhongguo lishi ditu ji* 中國歷史地圖集, vol 2: *Qin, Xi Han, Dong Han* 秦、西漢、東漢. Beijing: Zhongguo Ditu Chubanshe.
- Umehara Kaoru 梅原郁 (2001): “Zenzen koku no kōbō: Rōran no kyōjitsu” 鄯善国の興亡——樓蘭の虚實. In: Tomiya Itaru 冨谷至 (ed.): *Ryūsa shutsudo no moji shiryō: Rōran, Niya monjo o chūshin ni* 流沙出土の文字資料——樓蘭・尼雅（ニヤ）文書を中心に. Kyōto: Kyōto Daigaku Gakujutsu Shuppankai, 253–99.
- Wang Binghua 王炳华 (2024): *Xunzhao xiaoshi zai shamo shenchi de wenming: Loulan Shanshan kaogu yanjiu* 寻找消失在沙漠深处的文明——楼兰鄯善考古研究. Guangxi: Guangxi Shifan Daxue Chubanshe.
- Wang Guowei 王國維 (1993 [1914]): *Liusha zhujian* 流沙墜簡. Beijing: Zhonghua Shuju.
- Wei Yingchun 魏迎春 / Zheng Binglin 鄭炳林 (2022): “Xihan Dunhuang jun tong Xiyu Nandao yu Shanshan de jingying” 西漢敦煌郡通西域南道與鄯善的經營. In: *Dunhuang xue jikan* 敦煌學輯刊 2022.2: 1–16.
- Xu Longguo 徐龍國 (2013): *Qin Han chengyi kaoguxue yanjiu* 秦汉城邑考古学研究. Beijing: Zhongguo Shehui Kexue Chubanshe.
- Yang Fuxue 楊富學 / Liu Yuan 劉源 (2019): “Shanshan guo Sichou zhi lu: Hainewai bainian yanjiu shuping” 鄯善国丝绸之路：海内外百年研究述評. In: *Sichou zhi lu* 丝绸之路 2019.1: 83–88.
- Yu Zhiyong 于志勇 (2010): “Xi Han shiqi Loulan ‘Yixun Cheng’ diwang kao” 西汉时期楼兰“伊循城”地望考. In: *Xinjiang wenwu* 新疆文物 1: 63–74.
- Zhang Defang 張德芳 (2009): “Cong Xuanquan Hanjian kan Loulan (Shanshan) tong Hanchao de guanxi” 从悬泉汉简看楼兰（鄯善）同汉朝的关系. In: *Xiyu yanjiu* 西域研究 4: 7–16.
- Zhang Junmin 張俊民 (2013): “Xihan Loulan, Shanshan jiandu ziliao gouchen” 西汉楼兰·鄯善简牍资料钩沉. In: *Ludong Daxue xuebao* 鲁东大学学报 (Zhexue shehui kexue ban 哲学社会科学版) 30.4: 63–69.
- Zhu Guichang 朱桂昌 (2013): *Taichu rili biao* 太初日曆表. Beijing: Zhonghua Shuju.

# OSTASIENWISSENSCHAFTEN

## FAKULTÄT FÜR OSTASIENWISSENSCHAFTEN (HRSG.) **BOCHUMER JAHRBUCH ZUR OSTASIEN- FORSCHUNG. BOCHUM YEARBOOK OF EAST ASIAN STUDIES 47 / 2024**

Herausgegeben von der Fakultät für Ostasienwissenschaften der  
Ruhr-Universität Bochum

2025, 276 Seiten, kt., 50,— EUR  
ISBN: 978-3-86205-189-2



Das *Bochumer Jahrbuch zur Ostasienforschung (BJOAF)* bietet ein internationales Forum für wissenschaftliche Publikationen zu den Ostasienwissenschaften. Publikationssprachen der Beiträge und Rezensionen sind Deutsch oder Englisch. Alle Artikel werden vor der Veröffentlichung durch ein Double-Blind-Peer-Review-Verfahren geprüft.

The *Bochumer Jahrbuch zur Ostasienforschung (BJOAF)* serves as an international forum for academic publications on East Asian research, with scholarly articles and reviews published in English or German. All papers submitted for publication undergo double-blind peer review.

### Table of Contents

#### Special Theme Section: Territorial Control in Ancient China (Ed. Maxim Korolkov)

Maxim KOROLKOV: Introduction · Jordan Thomas CHRISTOPHER: Landscapes Fixed and Fluid: Politics, Religion, and the Development of Territoriality in Early China and Ancient Greece · KAKINUMA Yōhei: A New Study on the Loulan Kingdom During the Han Dynasty · Samira MÜLLER: Controlling Remote Regions in the Han Period – A Philological Investigation of the Administration of Border Regions as Seen through the Xuanquan Manuscripts · Yuri PINES: Too Big to Succeed? Costs of Expansionism during the Springs-and-Autumns Period · YOU Yifei: Separation and Concentration of Power in Local Government: The Relationship Between the Early Chinese Commandery Systems in Qin and Chu

#### Articles

Sven OSTERKAMP: Translating '(Kanbun) Kundoku'

Gordian SCHREIBER: Adaptations of Sino-Japanese Translational Practices (*Kanbun kundoku*) to Colloquial Modern Chinese (*báihuà*)

Bernhard SCHEID: "Ein Stück echten nordischen Geistes". Religion und Nationalismus im Werk Wilhelm Gunderts

Robert F. WITTKAMP: The *Man'yōshū* Ur-Selection and the Shift to Chronological Historiography



IUDICIUM Verlag GmbH  
Dauthendeystr. 2 · D-81377 München  
Tel. +49 (0)89 718747 · info@iudicium.de  
Bestellungen richten Sie bitte an Ihre Buchhandlung oder an den Verlag.  
**Das Gesamtverzeichnis finden Sie im Internet unter [www.iudicium.de](http://www.iudicium.de)**