

EURASIAN HISTORICAL GEOGRAPHY AS REFLECTED IN
GEOGRAPHICAL LITERATURE AND IN MAPS FROM THE 13TH
TO THE MID-17TH CENTURIES

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Nurlan Kenzheakhmet. Eurasian Historical Geography as Reflected in Geographical Literature and in Maps from the 13th to the Mid-17th Centuries. Deutsche Ostasienstudien 24. Gossenberg: OSTASIEN Verlag, 2021. 380 p.

When we talk about Eurasian Historical Geography, usually the vast steppes between Asia and Europe come to mind. However, this geography included the great lands of Eurasia spanning from East to West that was connected by the historical Silk Road that contained important ancient cities along the road. Names of the cities that we remembered or forgotten about have lived and reached today in the memories of the societies, archival materials and maps. There are numerous books has written and will be published in the future as well that examines the perception of space and time in the historical background of the place names.

In this context, we can state that Nurlan Kenzheakhmet's book titled "Eurasian Historical Geography as Reflected in Geographical Literature and in Maps from the 13th to the Mid-17th Centuries" is one of the most important works added to the literature. In this book, published with the support of Germany's Alexander von Humboldt Foundation, Eurasian Historical Geography has taken into consideration a new understanding by comparing medieval Eastern and Western geographical sources and historical maps.

The book consists of three chapters, the first chapter named "The Place-Names of the Western Section on the Kangnido", place names in the Kangnido Map dated 1402 "The Honil kangni yöktae kukto chido" (Comprehensive Map of Integrated Lands and Regions of Historical Countries and Their Capitals) has been analyzed. First of all, the author touched on the historical and geographical background of the creation of the Kangnido Map, then he points out the similarities of this map with maps created by the al-Iṣṭakhrī, ibn Ḥawqal, al-Muqaddasī that comes from the Belh School of Geography (Balkhī School), and the maps of Maḥmūd al-Kāshgharī, Al-Idrīsī and Jamāl al-Dīn. In addition to that, it has also been compared with the Dushi map, as well as China's "Tangshu" and "Shengchao hunyi fangyu shenglan" publications. After these comparisons, he emphasized that the western part of the Kangnido Map, which includes the place names in Africa, Europe and West-Central Asia, especially

the Maghreb, al-'Irāq, Arabia, Persian, Balkans, Asia Minor and Crimean, were drawn on the basis of the maps of the Balkh school. At the end of this section, the author compares the place names in al-Idrīsī's (1154) map with the works of European geographers Duval (1664), de L'Isle (1706) and d'Anville (1737), and points out that in the creation of medieval European maps of the Central Asia works of al-Idrīsī's has played a certain role.

In the second chapter of the book, the author focuses on the three medieval maps of China named "Xiyu tudi renwu tu" (Atlas of the Territories and Peoples of the Western Regions), "Xiyu tudi neishu lüe" (Outline of the Annexed Territories of the Western Regions) and "Menggu shanshui ditu" (Mongolian Landscape Map). In this chapter, the author talks about the authors and history of these maps and gives detailed information about the features of these maps. Moreover, he explains the details of the "Xiyu tudi renwu lüe" map and the place names of 322 in this map. Therefore, he tries to analyze the relations between China and Central Asia, West Asia and the Mediterranean in the 16th century by using a wide range of sources in Arabic, Chinese, Persian and Turkish.

In the final chapter of the book, the author emphasized that the western part of the Kangnido Map is a work that emerged from the combination of Chinese and Muslim cartography, and the roots of most of the place names in the western part of the map are dated back to the 9th-11th century and some 13th-14th century. In addition, the author explains that the misnaming of the "Menggu shanshui ditu" map as "Silu shanshui tu" (Silk Road Landscape map) by the Palace Museum of China caused different discussions, where he puts forward that historical sources from 15th -16th centuries would confirm the correct place names. Lastly, transcription of the 657 place names is given with their explanations and a list of their current locations. Moreover, a comparison of the 322 place names in "Xiyu tudi renwu tu" and "Xiyu tudi neishu lüe" with medieval Chinese maps and identification of them has been provided. In addition, 211 place names in "Menggu shanshui ditu" map and "Xiyu tudi neishu lüe" map have been compared and identified in this chapter.

In summary, Nurlan Kenzheakhmet's new work is a successful continuation of the author's long years of scientific research. The author has numerous important publications in different formats in the field of historical geography where "Suiye" (in Chinese) in 2017, The Tūqmāq (Golden Horde), the Qazaq Khanate, the Shībānid Dynasty, Rūm (Ottoman Empire), and Moghūlistan in the XIV-XVI Centuries: from Original Sources" (in English) in 2019 are some of them. The field of historical geography explores the history of geographical discoveries that requires a multilingual study, as well as deep knowledge of history and geography.

Therefore, in his new scientific work, Nurlan Kenzheakhmet tried to reveal the mysteries of the centuries-old maps and thus redefine the historical geography of the entire Eurasian region by comparing the historical records and maps in ancient Arabic, Chinese, Persian, Turkish and other languages. As we can see from this book, it reached its goal and provided tangible results. In this book, it has been put forward and proved by important comparisons that medieval Chinese cartography is significantly influenced by the Muslim cartography, which could be considered as an innovative and new approach to geographical and cartographic studies.

Nurlan Kenzheakhmet's book titled "Eurasian Historical Geography as Reflected in Geographical Literature and in Maps from the 13th to the Mid-17th Centuries" would be a good reference to similar academic research that is yet to be conducted. In conclusion, I believe that Nurlan Kenzheakhmet's new work, with its rich content and special approach, will be of great interest to all readers, as well as academics, researchers and students who are closely interested in Eurasian Historical Geography studies, especially in Central Asia.