# HIGH TARTARY

BY
OWEN LATTIMORE
*Author of "The Desert Road to Turkestan"*

*WITH ILLUSTRATIONS*

*AND*
A NEW INTRODUCTION BY THE AUTHOR

AMS PRESS
NEW YORK
1975

Route of High Tartary 1926–1927

Earlier route taken by Mr. Lattimore 1926

English Miles

0 100 200 300 400 500

70 80 90 100E. 110 120 130

Novo-Sibersk
Semipalatinsk
Sergiopol
Chuguchak
Kobdo
Uliassutai
OUTER
TARBAGATAI
ZUNGARIA
Kulja
Urumchi
Ku Ch'eng-tze
Barköl
Turfan
Hami
Great Northern Route
Southern Route
Great Mongolian Road
TURKESTAN
Great Ancient Route
Aksu
CHINESE
Kashgar
Yarkand
Khotan
Ngan-hsi Chou
Ancient Lob Nor Route
RUSSIAN CENTRAL ASIA
Irtish River
Srinagar
KASHMIR
Indus River
Leh
LADAKH
TIBET
Delhi
NEPAL
BHUTAN
Brahmaputra River
Ganges River
INDIA
Calcutta
Bombay
BAY OF BENGAL
Lake Baikal
Verkhne Udinsk
Kiakhta
Selenga River
Urga
Kerulen River
Urga Route
MONGOLIA (Independent)
Siberia Road
INNER MONGOLIA
Small Mongolian Road
Kuei-hua
Kalgan
PEKING
Tientsin
Pao t'ou
Huang-ho
Yellow River
Lan Chou
Highway
Hsi-ngan (Ancient Capital of China)
MANCHURIA
Amur River
Ussuri River
Harbin
Vladivostok
Port Arthur
Tsing-tao
YELLOW SEA
Shanghai
EAST CHINA SEA
CHINA
Hankow
Yang-tze River
Tropic of Cancer
Hsi Chiang River
Hong Kong
Salwin River
Mekong River
SOUTH CHINA SEA
Irrawadi River

80 90 100E. 110 120

50 40 30 20

OWEN LATTIMORE AND THE FAITHFUL MOSES

CHINESE TURKESTAN

# HIGH TARTARY

BY

OWEN LATTIMORE

*Author of "The Desert Road to Turkestan"*

WITH ILLUSTRATIONS

BOSTON

LITTLE, BROWN, AND COMPANY

1930

Library of Congress Cataloging in Publication Data

Lattimore, Owen, 1900-
High Tartary.

Reprint of the 1930 ed. published by Little, Brown, Boston; with new introd.
Includes index.
1. Sinkiang—Description and travel. I. Title.
DS793.E2L16 1975 915.1'6'044 72-4433

Reprinted by arrangement with Owen Lattimore

Copyright © 1975 by AMS Press Inc.

All rights reserved. Published in the United States by AMS Press Inc., 56 East 13th Street, New York, N.Y. 10003

Library of Congress Catalog Card Number: 72-4433

International Standard Book Number: 0-404-10630-7

Manufactured in the United States of America

# INTRODUCTION TO THE AMS EDITION

In preparing an introduction for this reprinted edition of *High Tartary*, I had the great advantage of being able to revisit Sinkiang briefly in September, 1972. As I had previously revisited the province—or rather, its capital—in 1944, when accompanying Vice President Henry A. Wallace, who had been sent by President Roosevelt on a special mission to Siberia, Soviet Central Asia, and China (and also Mongolia, although that was not "official"), I had now three marks by which to adjust my sights for a fresh look at China's position in Central Asia.

In 1927 the province had been ruled, as described in *High Tartary*, by a man who was unlike any other warlord of the China of the 1920's. He was, rather, a hold-over from the Manchi-Chinese bureaucracy which had administered Sinkiang ever since its reconquest at the end of the great Moslem rebellions. He was murdered the year after my wife and I were there, and succeeded by Chin Shu-jen, the kindly old gentleman mentioned in this book as the "Tas-yin" of Aksu. After a brief time of troubles, which included an invasion of Chinese Moslems (T'ungkan or Dungan) from Kansu, he gave up the reins of power; they were taken over for the first time by a professional soldier, Sheng Shih-ts'ai, who was governor when I visited Uninichi in 1944.

Sheng Shih-ts'ai was an interesting man. He came from Manchuria, which is now officially not Manchuria (indeed, neither the Chinese nor the Manchus themselves ever used that name), but the Northeast. Some say that he was in fact a Manchu, not a Chinese. He served under a general, Kuo Sung-lin, who tried to overthrow Chang Tso-lin, the "Old Marshal" of the Northeast (whose son, Chang Hsueh-liang, the "Young Marshal," was later to kidnap Chiang Kai-shek at Sian in 1936, and then to become Chiang's prisoner). After the defeat and death of Kuo Sung-lin, Sheng Shih-ts'ai fled to Nanking, where he took service with Chiang Kai-shek's faction of the Kuomintang.

I have described in this book how the policy of Sinkiang was

to hold aloof from the central government of China and the civil wars of Chinese provinces. During the time of troubles under the interim government of Chin Shu-jen, however, an appeal for help had to made to Nanking. Sheng Shih-ts'ai was sent up as a staff-officer to reorganize the provincial forces. He beat off the invading Kansu Moslems—and then, once in power, began to develop his independence of Chiang Kai-shek's government. He revived the old policy of virtually independent relations with the Soviet Union. In 1931, when the Japanese, following the "Mukden incident," occupied the Northeast, a number of defeated Chinese troops retreated into Siberia, and were eventually repatriated by the Soviet authorities; but, since they could not be repatriated to the Japanese-created "Manchukuo," they were repatriated to Sinkiang. This gave the governor, himself a Northeasterner, a body of Northeastern troops who were all the more likely to be loyal to him because they had no other local political connections.

I mention all this in some detail because *High Tartary* is in large part a "geopolitical" book as well as a narrative of travel. Scattered all through the book, but notably in Chapter VIII, "A Frontier of Inner Asia," the reader will find remarks which prove that in 1927, when the journey was made, and 1929-30, when the book was written, I assumed that Sinkiang was drifting into the Soviet orbit, and that I even said (page 78) that "the Soviets are developing, almost unaltered, the old forward policy, the *Drang nach Osten*, of Imperial Russia."

At about the same time, and a little later, I developed these themes even more strongly, in a paper called "The Chinese as a Dominant Race," published in *Journal of the Royal Central Asian Society* (XV, part III, London, 1928), and also in *Asia* (New York, June, 1928), and in a paper called simply "Sinkiang," written at the request of the great Sinologue Berthold Laufer, and published in *The Open Court* (XLVII, No. 921; Chicago, March 1933). Both these papers are reprinted in my *Studies in Frontier History, Collected Papers, 1928-1958* (Paris-La Haye, 1962).

In the first of these papers I wrote that "The price, in fact, of Chinese dominion [in Sinkiang] is acquiescence in Russian economic expansion." Since, however, I was in this paper primarily discussing Chinese imperialism, my concluding sentence was that "...wherever the Chinese have secured (if only for a few days) some measure of power and initiative, they have

made it clear (even to their Russian 'advisers'), in spite of all the conflictions of domestic politics, that to their minds one of the chief functions of Chinese power is to assert Chinese domination—domination, not equality—over every race that comes within the scope of Chinese action." (In writing these words in 1928 I had in mind, of course, the breaking of the Kuomintang-Chinese Communist United Front by Chiang Kai-shek in 1927, and the expulsion of the Soviet advisers.)

In the second paper I asked and answered a question: "What, then, is the present state of Chinese Turkestan? The Chinese, after prolonged contact, have not amalgamated with the native population. Nor has Chinese culture penetrated deeply. It remains an alien veneer, affecting only a limited number of activities and a small proportion of the people. Chinese political and military supremacy, long a fiction, but a fiction handled with eminent skill and functioning well as a working theory, is in danger of collapse. The province is an insecure salient in the line of the frontier; and China itself, in the eyes of many of the subject peoples, appears to be crumbling inward on its own centre."

Later in the same paper I added: "In Russian Central Asia, on the other hand, the drift toward Chinese Turkestan is inexorable. The political-economic and social-economic movements there demand extension into Chinese Turkestan if they are to fulfill themselves."

The point of rehashing these "geopolitical" notions is that I do not believe in hiding my mistakes, but in pondering on them and trying to learn from them. After all, they were not mistakes that sprang from frivolous thinking. In fact, my thinking was formed by talking, in the course of travel, with a great diversity of people, very few of whom had intellectual pretensions, and by observing Chinese, Russians, Uighurs (whom in the book I called Turki), T'ungkan or Dungan (who are now officially called Hui Min), Mongols, Kazakhs, Kirghiz, and others. Books influenced me less. I doubt if at that time I even knew the word "geopolitics." Books of course did also influence me, but more in other fields of thought—like Ellsworth Huntington's *Pulse of Asia*, with its theories of dessication and "climatic pulsation"—but in a very few years I recovered from that.

There were two main reasons why the real Sinkiang diverged from the future that I predicted for it—the War, and the Chinese Revolution. They account for the fact that instead of

Sinkiang being "an insecure salient in the line of the frontier," and instead of "China itself...crumbling inward on its own centre," the situation has been entirely turned around. Sinkiang has never been more firmly attached to China in all its history, and even a brief visit is enough to make sure that relations between the Han Chinese and the other peoples are for the first time in history really good. It is true, of course, that nationalism lingers a long time, and that with a frontier that divides Kazakhs on the Chinese side from those on the Soviet side, and Chinese Uighurs from their close kinsmen the Soviet Uzbeks, there is bound to be a kind of competition between the Chinese and the Soviet policies on nationality.

Enough, for now, of the "geopolitical" themes in *High Tartary*. They are taken up again, in a deeper perspective in my retrospective introduction to the reprint edition of *Pivot of Asia: Sinkiang and the Inner Asian Frontier of China* (first published in 1950).

The strong point of *High Tartary* is that it remains, among the Sinkiang travel books of its time, the one most copiously based on a fluent command of the Chinese language, which made possible an easy, friendly, sometimes even intimate contact with all kinds of people: a handful of high officials and any number of carters, horse-handlers, innkeepers, soldiers, rich merchants and small traders. (Part of my exaggerated emphasis on the supposed menace of Soviet expansionism was an echo of the talk of people I met. It is obvious, looking back, that the Russians had in fact no territorial ambitions. If they had been headed for either old-fashioned or new-fashioned imperialism, they could have taken over Sinkiang rather easily.)

I do look back with discomfort, however, on the way in which a great deal of this book was written—the knowingness (a kind of boastfulness), the repeated suggestion that the cocky young traveller had special inside knowledge. Musing about it now, I am sure that I was a young man who was in fact not too sure of himself, who had not long been married, and who was trying to impress his wife. With the extraordinary generosity and wisdom that were hers all her life, she just let me work it out of my system.

There are a number of explanations of names and words in this book that are quite worthless. I did not at the time know Mongol, and on the journey the amount of Central Asian Turkish that I learned was inadequate for such speculations. On

page 80, for example, in the footnote, "Chuguchak," whatever it may mean, probably does not mean "a bowl;" nor does "Kukuirgen" mean "blue cloth." In Mongol "kuku" (a better transliteration is "kohkh") does mean "blue," and is a frequent element in place names, but "irghen" (preferably, "irgen") does not mean "cloth." It means "people," and also had two specific meanings, "civilian" and "Chinese."

There is one of my "folk-etymologies," however, which is rather interesting. On pages 5 and 6, describing a man whom the caravan men called the "Bastard of Barkol," I translated "Erh-hun-tze" as a Chinese word for "bastard." That was certainly what it meant to the caravan men, but I am now sure that "Erh-hun-tze" is the Chinese pronunciation of "Erke'un," plural "Erke'ut," the mediaeval Mongol name for Nestorian Christians. It survives as a clan name here and there in Mongolia, and is at the basis of the place-name of Irkutsk, in Siberia. Most interesting of all, Father Antoine Mostaert, the great Belgian Mongolist, discovered among the Ordos Mongols a small community of surviving "crypto-Nestorians." One may recall that Marco Polo, in his account of the Nestorians of the same general region in his time, got the notion (just like the Chinese caravan men) that they were a mixed race, or bastards. How close I came, in my young ignorance, to stumbling on a discovery of real importance! The discovery and, if possible, the straightening out of early mistakes, is one of the pleasures of old age.

Owen Lattimore
Levallois Perret
France
1973

CONTENTS


| | | |
|---|---|---|
| | PREFACE | xv |
| I | CARAVANSERAI | 3 |
| II | THE SNOW ROAD TO URUMCHI | 15 |
| III | THE CAPITAL OF HIGH TARTARY | 23 |
| IV | THE ROAD NORTH OF THE HEAVENLY MOUNTAINS | 34 |
| V | T'UNG-KAN | 43 |
| VI | WINTERING GROUNDS OF THE NOMADS | 53 |
| VII | OLD WINDY GAP | 60 |
| VIII | A FRONTIER OF INNER ASIA | 69 |
| IX | MEETING | 79 |
| X | ON BECOMING AN EXPEDITION | 91 |
| XI | NOMADS OF THE WESTERN MARCHES | 101 |
| XII | SPRING MIGRATION | 116 |
| XIII | THE LAND OF PIONEERS | 126 |
| XIV | BEYOND THE BOGDO OLA | 140 |
| XV | THE LAND OF LOST CITIES | 151 |
| XVI | VINEYARD AND DESERT | 162 |
| XVII | WESTWARD FOR KULJA | 176 |
| XVIII | PONIES | 190 |
| XIX | SAIRAM NOR AND THE TALKI PASS | 202 |
| XX | "ICH WEISS NICHT, WAS SOLL ES BEDEUTEN" | 214 |
| XXI | THE VALLEY OF THE ILI | 221 |
| XXII | INTO THE HEAVENLY MOUNTAINS | 230 |
| XXIII | QAZAQS OF THE HIGH PASTURES | 240 |
| XXIV | MARE'S MILK | 247 |