

THE GREAT WALL OF CHINA AND ITS FUNCTIONS

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Abstract: *Ancient civilizations left a unique mark on human history. Every civilization has its own ancient knowledge, great architectural examples, and historical lessons. They hold in their bosom the thousand-year-old secrets and forgotten truths of human history. Among them, we can mention the world's greatest monuments - Ancient Egyptian pyramids, and mysterious palaces in India whose doors have remained unopened for centuries. These ancient architectural monuments amaze with their grandeur and charm. In particular, we can talk about the "Great Wall of China," located in northeastern China, which stretches for about 9 thousand kilometers and has become a symbol and an integral part of the "Under-sky Country."*

Keywords: *Great Wall of China, Cemetery of the Dead, Yangshao culture, The Qing dynasty.*

This article analyzes the role of the Great Wall of China in the history of ancient Chinese civilization, the reasons and periods of its construction, as well as its military, political, and cultural significance. The reasons why the wall is rated as a "Cemetery of the Dead," in particular, the tragedies that occurred during the construction process, and issues related to the structure built at the expense of human life, are considered.

Ancient China is considered the cradle of early civilization with a thousand-year history. Here, the ancient inhabitants lived around the valley in the Loess Plateau, which was called the "Yellow Earth," that is, in the Huang He Valley, and founded the Yangshao culture[1]. This area is distinguished by its rich cultural heritage in society, state structure, and engineering marvels. One of the most famous of these marvels is the Great Wall of China. This structure, stretching from east to west, was built during the ancient Qing dynasty not only as a means of military defense but also as a symbol of Chinese strength, will, and thinking. The Qing dynasty, which marked a significant turning point in Chinese history, ruled from 221-206 BC and played an invaluable role in the centralization of the empire and the formation of a large state system. In this regard, the founder of the dynasty, Qin Shi Huangdi (In Zheng), was the first emperor in Chinese history, known for his politics, large-scale reforms, and strict rule. The necessity of building the Great Wall of China was necessary for Qin Shi Huangdi to unite the previously existing fortresses and walls, built separately by different kingdoms, into a single defensive system in order to safeguard the northern borders of the country. This enormous structure was intended primarily as a means of defense against the attacks of nomadic tribes such as the Juns, Dunhu, Huns (Xiongnu), and Yuezhi, who threatened from the north. Especially the Juns and Huns were considered fierce enemies of the Chinese[2]. The Huns consisted of fast and combat cavalry, which frequently invaded Chinese territories, plundered the population, and took many captives. The Qing emperor began building a strong wall using natural landscapes and structures to

mitigate this threat. Although the construction of the wall was not completely completed during the Qing dynasty, it was during this period that its foundations were laid. Later, the Han and especially the Ming (Min) dynasties expanded and strengthened this structure, bringing it to its present appearance.

The Great Wall of China is a monumental monument of Chinese architecture, the first construction works of which date back to the 4th-3rd centuries BC. The Chinese called this monument "Wangli Changcheng" - a wall 10,000 li long. The main reason for the wall being called "Wang" is connected with ancient Chinese folk legends. It states that despite the Chinese' initial efforts, the rebuilt wall continued to collapse. Then the emperor became confused and summoned the wise men to seek their advice. Among them, an elderly sage tells the emperor that to prevent the wall from collapsing, it is necessary to sacrifice a young man or woman entering into marriage in the country, and then things will go well. According to the order, the emperor's servants brought a young man named Wang, whose wedding was just about to take place. The young man was sacrificed and embalmed inside the wall under construction. After this, the wall did not collapse and stretched for ten thousand li. According to Chinese measurements, 1 Li was 400 meters.

The construction of the wall was carried out under strict control of the Central Authority, under very difficult and unfavorable conditions. Due to the arduous nature of the construction, the first large wall began to be erected during the Qing dynasty in the 3rd century BC. According to reports, three hundred thousand soldiers from Commander Min Tian's army were involved in the wall construction work. Nearly two million military soldiers, slaves, and prisoners, as well as ordinary farmers and artisans, were employed in the construction of the wall, totaling 2,300,000 people[3]. The early walls were built not of brick, but of gravel, compressed earth, wood, and stones, which were later reinforced with brick and stone during the Ming dynasty. This wall served in many ways as a means of military defense: it slowed down the enemy's movement, provided information exchange through signal towers, and created a strategic advantage for the soldiers[4]. At the same time, it served as a means of maintaining order within the walls, ensuring the stability of the borders, and strengthening the ruler's power throughout the empire. For instance, the birth of a boy was considered a tragedy in China at that time, as all men were sent to the construction of the wall upon reaching adulthood. Not everyone was fortunate enough to return safely from there. People died due to hard labor. The most terrible thing is that many workers were buried under the walls or inside them so that their separate burial would not require large expenses. Many medieval historians who studied these events assessed this monument as "a person's attempt to protect himself from his ignorance." It should be noted here that the Chinese emperors tried to protect not from external enemies, but from their inner weaknesses and fears of innovation through this wall. This structure became a huge cemetery built at the expense of many people's lives. We see that because of this policy, the government has exaggerated the isolation and conservatism that hinder the progress of thousands of people.

Indeed, during the reign of Qin Shi Huangdi, the construction of the Great Wall of China was a common obligation for farmers, soldiers, and especially prisoners. The Qing government sent those who committed crimes and disobeyed the order to the northern

borders and used them to build walls, resulting in hundreds of thousands of deaths. This is reflected in the historical records of the Han Dynasty - the inscriptions "Han Shu." To distinguish prisoners from ordinary workers, the government shaved off their hair, blackened their faces, and used them in chains. The famous Chinese historian Sima Xiang describes construction-related disasters in his Shiji-Historical Records.

The main line of the Great Wall of China extends 500 kilometers westward from Liaodong Bay in the Yellow Sea. The wall runs 40-45 kilometers northwest of Beijing, then southwest, passing through the city of Suojou and ending in the city of Zyauguan (Zyauyguan) in Gansu Province. The towers along the wall were located every 60-100 meters and were built from hard and colored rocks and bricks in a convenient position for informing others during attacks. That is why his life is long. Most importantly, it is strategically well-developed. The height of the wall is 6.6 meters, exceeding the height of a two-story, and in some places, a three-story building. The width of the lower part of the wall, i.e., the foundation, is 6.5 meters, and the width of the upper level is 5-5.5 meters. Due to its incredible thickness, chariots, troops, and even 5-6 mounted soldiers in each formation could move freely through it. During a study conducted by the State Administration of Cultural Heritage of China (SACH) in 2007-2012, it was found that the total length of the Great Wall of China is 21.196 km. However, researchers included not only parts of the wall made of basement stone and brick, but also fragments of trenches, mountains, and rivers, which were used as natural shields [5].

The main reason for the Great Wall of China's origin from the Yellow Sea was that the government believed the defensive structure against external enemies could be completed there. The Chinese compare the wall to a giant dragon stretching from east to west, as the eastern point of the wall was considered the "Dragon Head." The construction of the wall initially developed very slowly. Initially, after 500 kilometers of construction, it slows down due to time and weather. As a result of nomadic attacks, construction stopped. Construction continued in the 14th-15th centuries. In 1953, the part near Beijing was renovated. The landscape of the Great Wall of China created a landscape of a long stone serpent, forming a unified whole with the surroundings. However, photographs often show the middle part of the wall. According to ancient Chinese engineers, the construction of the wall began at the Yellow Sea, which allowed the defense system against external enemies to be completed at sea. The wall stretched from the shore to where the bottom of the water was much deeper. The main goal was to counteract the movement of infantry and cavalry of the enemy troops. The construction of the structure was not easy for the Chinese. The construction of the northern part dates back to the 5th century BC, a time of war between Chinese tribes. It follows that each dynasty built its own part of the wall. Each time, as a result of the change of dynasties and the loss of control, construction began in different places. This created a unique landscape landscape. It was thanks to Qin Shi Huangdi that the wars between the tribes were ended and the country was united. Separate fortresses in different locations were united by a single defensive wall. Despite the 11 years of reign of the Qing dynasty, they built a world-famous structure. Later, during the Ming Dynasty, the structure was modernized and reinforced. It should be noted that the Great Wall of China served as a border not only for protection from external enemies, but also to prevent its inhabitants from leaving. It should

be noted that over the past centuries, the country's borders have changed significantly. In particular, the starting point of the Great Wall of China now belongs to North Korea, and the western side of the wall is located in the far Jiujiang, that is, at the site of the westernmost guard posts called the "Nefrit Doors," dating back to the 2nd century BC.

Conclusion. The Great Wall of China represents the military-political views, architectural capabilities, and centralized governance system of ancient Chinese statehood. The construction of the wall was carried out during the reign of several dynasties, which served not only as a defense against external threats, but also to ensure political stability, control economic routes, and strengthen the power of the central government. Despite the passage of time, the wall has not lost its position. Today it has become an eternal symbol of human labor, will, and historical lessons. The Great Wall of China is an invaluable heritage not only for the Chinese people, but for the entire culture of humanity.

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