

Introduction and Spread of Non-Native Economic Crops to the Chu Valley in the Second Half of the First Millennium CE: Archaeobotanical Evidence from the Novopokrovka-2 Site

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Abstract

The Silk Road was the most elaborate network of communication and exchange in the ancient world; by the turn of the second half of the first millennium CE, commercial trade linked Asia and supported the development of a string of urban centers and settlements across Central Asia. The development of new settlements was directly associated with people, animal, and crop movements. Archaeobotany may generate evidence of population movement, cultural diffusion, and dietary diversification through time. In this preliminary archaeobotanical research, we present the first study of plant remains recovered at the Novopokrovka-2 site in the Chu Valley in Kyrgyzstan. The Novopokrovka-2 archaeobotanical samples yielded a larger spectrum of cereals, legumes, fruits, nuts, technical crop like cotton, and wild herbaceous plants that were culinary ingredients and fuel types used by people on the settlement. In this study, we contrast the results of this study with findings reported earlier from other archaeological sites in Central Asia dated to the second half of the first millennium CE. The aim of this study is to trace correlations between crops introductions and a far-reaching commercial market and cultural transmission processes in the seventh-ninth centuries CE throughout the region.