
CONFERENCE ARTICLE**Urban Culture Of Northwestern Ustrushana In The High Middle Ages: Based On Written And Archaeological Sources****Nosirov Dilshod Murodulla ugli**Independent researcher Jizzakh state pedagogical university, Uzbekistan

Abstract: This paper analyzes the political, economic and cultural development of the Jizzakh oasis, the northwestern part of Ustrushana, during the High Middle Ages on the basis of written and archaeological sources. Information on the city of Dizak, its rabats, trade routes and crafts found in the works of 9th–12th-century Arab and Persian geographers is studied comparatively with the material evidence obtained from archaeological sites such as Orda, Kizlartepa, Kuk Ravot and Turtkultepa. The results of the study show that a developed urban culture, trade and craft industries, and a frontier defense infrastructure took shape in the Lower Sangzor oasis.

Keywords: Ustrushana, Lower Sangzor, Jizzakh, Dizak, Orda, Kizlartepa, rabat, caravanserai, urban planning, archaeology, Samanids, Karakhanids.

INTRODUCTION

The Jizzakh oasis, located in the northwestern part of Ustrushana, is one of the important yet relatively understudied regions for the study of medieval history. In particular, the limited archaeological research on the High Middle Ages, i.e. the 9th–12th centuries, has left a number of questions concerning the political, economic and cultural history of the region insufficiently explored. At the same time, the works of 9th–12th-century historians and geographers contain valuable information on urban and rural settlements, trade routes, rabats and crafts in the Lower Sangzor oasis. Comparing these written data with archaeological materials makes it possible to reconstruct the historical appearance of the oasis in the Middle Ages.

According to written sources, Dizak (Jizzakh), the chief town of the Feknon rustaq, was located on an important caravan route linking Sughd and Shash, in an area bordering the nomadic pastoralists of the Syr Darya region. Al-Muqaddasi describes Dizak as a densely populated town rich in flowing water, with flourishing gardens and fields and comfortable caravanserais for merchants and travelers. Dizakni aholisi zich, oqar suvlarga boy, bog' va ekinzorlari rivojlangan, savdogar va sayyohlar uchun qulay karvonsaroylari mavjud shahar sifatida tavsiflaydi.

The "Hudud al-'Alam" records that a regular trade fair was held in the locality of Marsmanda near Dizak and that its economic scale was exceptionally large. This information indicates that Dizak occupied an important place not only in local but also in interregional trade. The geographical location of Dizak increased its significance within the system of caravan routes connecting Samarkand with Eastern Turkestan, China and Fergana. The movement of caravans along the Chach–Dizak, Fergana–Khavos–Dizak and Fergana–Bunjikat–Sabat–Zaamin–Dizak routes contributed to the development of trade and economic ties in the oasis.

The development of trade also influenced the specialization of crafts. Written sources note that the inhabitants of Dizak were engaged in making fabrics and clothing from wool and goat down, carpet weaving and felt making. Thus, alongside

agriculture, craft production was an important branch of economic life in the oasis.

In the 9th–10th centuries, Dizak functioned not only as a trade center but also as a strategically important frontier town. Written sources mention rabats and residences of "ghazis" around the town. Their main tasks were to control trade routes, protect the frontier areas and provide defense against raids by nomadic groups.

Archaeological research confirms this information to a certain extent. The recording of more than forty rural settlements, fortresses and rabats around the Kaliyatepa and Orda sites in the Jizzakh micro-oasis of the Lower Sangzor indicates that a developed settlement system existed in the area. The identification of about twenty rabats in the Kaliyatepa irrigation zone and more than ten around Orda shows that a defense system protecting the oasis had taken shape.

According to archaeological data, the urban culture of the Jizzakh oasis in antiquity and the Early Middle Ages is associated with Kaliyatepa. The destruction of Kaliyatepa during the Arab conquests of the mid-8th century and the resulting shift of urban life to the Orda area, located about 6 km to the northwest, was one of the major transformations in the urban development of the oasis. The ancient cemeteries identified in and around Orda, in particular the sites known as "Khoja-Goziyon" and "Khoja Mozor", are also historically noteworthy. The preservation of tombstones with Arabic inscriptions in these cemeteries testifies to the establishment of Islamic culture and epigraphic traditions in the area. The term "Khoja-Goziyon" itself is of historical and toponymic interest. While the word "ghazi" denotes a participant in a military campaign, "goziyon" is its plural form. Therefore, this toponym may reflect a historical memory connected with the frontier defense function of Dizak in the 9th–10th centuries. However, a special epigraphic study of the tombstone inscriptions is required to resolve this question definitively.

In studying the medieval history of the Lower Sangzor oasis, the location of the Khudaysar rabat is a distinct scholarly problem. Al-Istakhri, Ibn Hawqal and other medieval authors describe

Khudaysar as a prosperous and strategically important rabat situated very close to the nomadic territories. The sources report that it was built in the first quarter of the 9th century on the initiative of Haydar al-Afshin, a descendant of the rulers of Ustrushana.

There are several scholarly views regarding the exact location of Khudaysar. Some researchers associate it with the Kuk Ravot site in the Jizzakh district. This site lies 7–8 km north of Kaliyatepa and 15–16 km east of Orda; ceramics of the 9th–10th and 11th–12th centuries and brick samples of the Samanid period have been found there. The discovery of the remains of an ancient well near the site may also indicate its function as a stop on the caravan route. qadimiy quduq qoldig'ining aniqlangani ham uning karvon yo'li va qo'nim maskani sifatidagi funksiyasini ko'rsatishi mumkin.

The Kizlartepa site is of particular importance for illuminating the history of the Lower Sangzor oasis in the High Middle Ages. It is located within the city of Jizzakh, about 350–400 meters south of Kaliyatepa. The total preserved area of the site is about 0.7 hectares, and it has a two-tiered structure. Research carried out at Kizlartepa in the late 20th and early 21st centuries yielded important materials on the stratigraphy, architectural layout and material culture of the site. In particular, the remains of 14 rooms were identified during planigraphic excavations. Most of the dwellings were built of pakhsa (rammed earth) walls, their inner and outer surfaces were plastered with straw-mixed clay, and the floors were of tamped earth.

The archaeological assemblage includes glazed and decorated bowls, dishes, deep plates, lamps, as well as unglazed jugs, khums (large storage jars), cooking pots and water vessels made in the “murgoba” technique. Together with numismatic materials attributed to the Karakhanid period, these finds make it possible to date the upper cultural layers of Kizlartepa to the 11th–12th centuries.

The diversity of architectural and material culture at Kizlartepa shows that residential, craft and economic activities were well developed in the oasis. The proximity of the site to Kaliyatepa indicates that an interconnected system of urban settlements existed in the Lower Sangzor oasis.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the comparative analysis of written and archaeological sources shows that the Lower Sangzor oasis was one of the important economic, strategic and cultural regions of Ustrushana in the High Middle Ages. Dizak's location at the crossroads of caravan routes linking Samarkand, Chach, Fergana and Eastern Turkestan had a strong impact on the town's commercial and economic development.

The rabats and ancient settlements around Kaliyatepa and Orda, the residential complexes of Kizlartepa, and sites such as Kuk Ravot and Turtkultepa provide material evidence of developed urban planning, trade and crafts, and defense infrastructure in the oasis. In particular, the 11th–12th-century architectural and material culture finds from Kizlartepa show that urban life continued uninterrupted in the Lower Sangzor oasis during the High Middle Ages. At the same time, determining the exact location of the Khudaysar rabat, studying the epigraphic materials of the “Khoja-Goziyon” cemeteries, and conducting a comprehensive study of the frontier defense system of the Lower Sangzor remain important tasks for future research.

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