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## EPIGRAPHIC MONUMENTS AS A HISTORICAL SOURCE ON THE HISTORY AND CULTURE OF THE KARSHI OASIS

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**ABSTRACT:** Epigraphic monuments are an important historical source for the study of the history of Central Asia. In recent years, continuous archaeological and epigraphic surveys of the Karshi oasis have been undertaken. A significant number of epigraphic monuments - gravestones - have survived to this day. The value of such monuments is that they have preserved for us information on many issues of ethnic terminology, toponymic nomenclature, ethnic migrations in the past, the activities of builders, the role of the rural community. Particularly important are information about feudal rulers, their activities, social terminology, data on the specific history of the peoples of the Karshi oasis and Central Asia as a whole.

**KEYWORDS:** Epigraphy, stone master, calligrapher, arts, archeology, toponymy, Karshi oasis, tombstones, Central Asia, Sufism, Ishkiyya and Naqshbandiyya.

**INTRODUCTION:** Epigraphic monuments are an important historical source for the study of the history of Central Asia. The inscriptions, carved on hard materials or made on ceramics, as well as carved on wood, retain their former appearance for a long time and transmit the facts contained in them to future generations. Epigraphic monuments are the product of medieval stone-cutters and calligraphers, reflecting the inner and spiritual world of educated and cultural personalities of their era.

In recent years, the Department of Archeology of the National University of Uzbekistan has undertaken continuous archaeological and epigraphic surveys, and work is underway to compile an archaeological map and database based on the GIS (Geographic Information Systems) technology of the Karshi oasis.

A significant number of epigraphic monuments - gravestones - have survived to this day. For example, gravestones with inscriptions have been preserved mainly in old cemeteries, at sites associated with the cult of saints. Gravestones are usually placed in the open air, the

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surface of many of them has been destroyed by the influence of natural factors, as a result of which some of the inscriptions are unreadable or partially traced.

**THE MAIN FINDINGS AND RESULTS.** The expansion of cotton fields in the era of the socialist system and the development of the irrigation system associated with agricultural technology led to the deterioration of the soil in the zones where the monuments of architecture and gravestones are located. It should be especially noted that the rise of subsoil waters and salts leads to the destruction of cultural monuments. It should be borne in mind that many gravestones were destroyed, or disappeared and were not found. Here you can add the process of restoration and repair work, as a result of which the appearance of many architectural structures remains altered.

The gravestones of the Karshi oasis contain many, often very important, information about the economic, political, cultural and daily history of the peoples of Uzbekistan for several hundred years. The value of such monuments is that they have preserved us information on many issues of ethnic terminology, toponymic nomenclature, ethnic migrations in the past, the activities of builders, the role of the rural community. Particularly important are information about feudal rulers, their activities, social terminology, data on the specific history of the peoples of the Karshi oasis and Central Asia as a whole.

With the help of epigraphic data, you can get new information about the history of this little-studied region, especially in the genealogy and anthro-understanding of local religious figures (sheikhs, ishans), hereditary sayyids and khodjas (descendants of the Prophet Muhammad through his daughter Fatima and four righteous caliphs). Many tombstones at one time were installed in the memory of representatives of the state-administrative system and until now the names, epithets, nisbs of such persons are absent in other historical sources.

Thus, the inscriptions, as it were, supplement the history with new information and expand the field of source research. Studying them, we have the opportunity to obtain new information about the objects of Sufism, after the death of representatives of such orders, their burial places turned into objects of worship (ziyaratgahi), which are still frequently visited today.

Among such visiting centers, one can list the memorial and burial complexes of Abu Ubayd ibn Zharrah, Kurganch mosque-khanaka (Karshi city), Sultan Mir-Khaidar, Hezreti Khusam-ata

(Kasbinsky district), Imam Main, Hezreti Sheikh Shamsutdin Ata (Karshni ), etc. Together with these on the territory of the region there are dozens of objects of the cult of saints. In all these places there are gravestones testifying to the representatives of the Sufi eagles, such as Ishkiyya and Naqshbandiyya.

The results of studying the inscriptions on the gravestones provide new information about historical figures, especially about the genealogy and chronology of unknown religious figures and secular persons. Accurate information can also solve issues related to the cults of saints, whose history is still legendary.

The epitaphs on the gravestones, in comparison with other historical sources, make it possible to reconstruct the genealogy and make it possible to form new ideas about kinship and genealogy of certain social groups. In this regard, special attention is paid to the hereditary relations of religious groups of Sayyids, Khojas, Sheikhs, as well as emirs and other officials of a secular nature.

These kinship relations have not lost their significance in individual settlements, where strict adherence to kinship ties still exists. Representatives of such social strata are based on the "Shajar" of their ancestors to prove their innocence. They still keep written evidence at home with great care and refer to the data on the gravestones, where the names of their ancestors are present, in extreme cases, to the khanaka, macbarat or sagan, associated with the names of their authoritative ancestors.

Of great importance are the symbolic signs carved on the gravestones, for the study of which, in addition to historical research, art history analysis is also required. Here we must add the types and forms of gravestones, different in appearance and characteristic of each century. Research results in recent years show that, starting from the era of Amir Temur and temurids, well-worked, chest-like gravestones in the form of steles, and later elongated stones (tombstones of a trapezoidal section) are already encountered<sup>1</sup>. But the richest in decoration and ornamentation are the gravestones of the era of Amir Temur and temurids and, in part, Sheibanids.

On the gravestones there are often poetic texts - marsias (elegies), original in their kind and little-studied from the point of view of history and philology. In addition to the marsias

<sup>1</sup> Шоназаров Ш.Б. Классификация намогильных камней XV-XIX вв. (по материалам Каршинского оазиса) / Узбекистон тарихи. 2003. №1. С. 11-15.

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extracted from the poetic works of Saadi and Hafiz, specially composed days of important persons of that era can be noted.

Textual studies and paleographic analysis makes it possible to judge the literacy of the population, the calligraphic features of the medieval schools of calligraphy, the process and order of writing a text.

Inscriptions are the transmitter of the art of stone cutters and calligraphers. Based on them, we can identify the types and types of writing characteristic of different eras and for individual territories, note the impact and impact of one or another school of calligraphy. The study of grave inscriptions requires a comparative analysis with other types of writing, and most importantly, paleographic analysis.

Thus, a lot of facts can be cited about the significance of the epigraphic monuments of Muslim culture. Until now, only a small number of them have been used as a historical source. But, unfortunately, in recent years, their number began to decline sharply under the influence of climatic and environmental factors.

**CONCLUSION.** A large amount of epigraphic material has been accumulated, for the study of which the skills of a scientific approach are required, which will make it possible to turn to systems-analytical research based on modern methods, that is create a database, thanks to which a fund of information is created to identify interregional and long-distance ties between specialists.

Thus, the accumulated significant material and experience in the study of epigraphic monuments of the Karshi oasis find worthy application in archaeological, historical, linguistic, artistic, toponymic and other sciences.

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