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A REVIEW OF WRITTEN SOURCES ABOUT OGHUZ CITIES IN KAZAKHSTAN'S SECTION OF THE GREAT SILK ROAD

One of the routes of the Great Silk Road crossed the southern lands of present-day Republic of Kazakhstan. In the southern territories of Kazakhstan, that is, in the middle and lower parts of Syr Darya River, there are cities of the Oghuz period. There are over 50 settlements and towns of Oghuzs along the Syr Darya River. The towns in the lower part of Syr Darya are closely linked to the Great Silk Road, which runs along the caravan routes. During this period, the Oghuz lived in the east, neighboring China. They are mentioned in the inscriptions of the Orkhon. The article presents general information is given about medieval towns such as Sauran (Sabran, Kara Töbe), Signak, Barshin-kent (Barçınlığı Kent), Asanas (Aşanas), Zhend (Cend), Zhankent (New Town), which are known as Oghuz towns. The fact that the names of the cities changed not once, but several times, and the opinions of scientists were indicated. The names of historic cities are now widely known among researchers and the population. The article was written in connection with these titles. Moreover, in this study, extensive research was conducted examining the works of notably Russian historians and writers, as well as famous medieval historians.

Key words: Great Silk Road, Kazakhstan, Syr Darya River, medieval cities/towns, oghuzes.

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Ұлы Жібек жолының Қазақстан бөлігіндегі оғыз қалалары туралы жазба деректерге шолу

Ұлы Жібек сауда жолының Орта Азиядағы бір тармағы Қазақстанның Оңтүстік аумағы арқылы өтеді. Бүгінде Қазақстанның оңтүстік өңірлерінде, яғни Сырдарияның ортаңғы және төменгі ағысында орналасқан оғыз кезеңінің елуден астам елді-мекендері мен қалаларының орындары белгілі. Сырдария өзенін жағалай орналасқан бұл ескерткіштердің тыныс-тіршілігі Ұлы Жібек сауда жолы бойындағы сауда-қатынастарымен тығыз байланысты болды. Оғыз қалалары туралы алғашқы деректер Орхон жазба ескерткіштерінен бастау алады. Сонымен қатар, IX-XIV ғасырларда өмір сүрген араб-парсы-түркі тілдес саяхатшылардың, тарихшылардың, географтардың еңбектерінде оғыздардың әлеуметтік қарым-қатынасы, басқару жүйесі және олар мекендеген қалалардың тыныс-тіршілігі сипатталады. Мақалада Оғыз қалалары ретінде белгілі болған Сауран (Сабран), Сығанак, Баршынкент (Барчинлы Кент), Асанас (Ашанас), Жент, Жанкент (Жаңа-кент) сияқты ортағасырлық қалалар туралы жалпы мәліметтер келтірілген. Қалалардың атаулары бір емес, бірнеше рет өзгертілгені жайлы және ғалымдардың пікір-таластары көрсетілген. Оғыздардың тарихи қалалардың атаулары қазіргі таңда, зерттеушілер мен халықтың арасында кеңінен танымал. Мақалада осы атауларға байланысты пікір-талас, талдаулар жазылды. Сонымен қатар, зерттеу барысында ортағасырлық тарихшы-саяхатшылардың, сондай-ақ, орыс тарихшылары мен зерттеушілерінің еңбектеріне шолу жүргізілді.

Түйін сөздер: Ұлы Жібек жолы, Қазақстан, Сырдария өзені, ортағасырлық қалалар, оғыздар.

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Обзор письменных источников об огузских городах казахстанской части Великого Шелкового пути

Одно из ответвлений Великого Шелкового пути проходит через территорию современного Казахстана в Центральной Азии. Она охватывает среднюю и нижнюю течения реки Сырдарья (южные регионы Казахстана), в которых сохранились более пятидесяти поселений и городов огузского периода. Жизнедеятельность этих памятников, расположенных на берегу реки Сырдарья, была тесно связана с торгово-экономическими процессами на Великом Шелковом пути. Первые сведения об огузах относятся к орхонским надписям. В трудах арабо-персидско-тюркских путешественников, историков, географов IX-XIV веков описываются социальные отношения, система управления и города огузских племен. В данной статье приводятся сведения о таких средневековых городах – Сауран (Сабран), Сыгнак, Баршинкент, Асанас, Жент, Жанкент, известных как огузские города. О том, что названия городов менялись не один, а несколько раз, и были указаны мнения ученых. Названия исторических городов, которые затрагиваются в данном исследовании, в настоящее время широко известны среди исследователей и населения. Авторами статьи проводится анализ, опираясь на труды известных средневековых историков-путешественников, и особенно русских исследователей.

Ключевые слова: Великий Шелковый путь, Казахстан, р. Сырдарья, средневековые города, огузы.

Introduction

Between the 11th and 13th centuries, the main line of the Great Silk Road is determined as: Syria – Iran – Central Asia – Southern Kazakhstan – Talas steppe – Shu region – Issyk Lake – Eastern Turkestan – internal China. Another line of this road originates from the Byzantine and then crosses Derbent. It passes also through the Caspian Sea – Mangystau – Syr Darya River – Southern Kazakhstan and then joins the main road.

During this period, the Oguz lived in the regions that were adjacent to China in the east. The first information about the Oguz can be found in the Orkhon monuments (İbn Fazlan (translated by Şeşen), 1995: 135). During the period of İlterish Khagan, Oguz were in a great struggle with Gokturks. Although they were subjected to the Gok-Turks state after the wars that ended in defeats, they fought against Kutlug Khagan in 682-691, Bilge Khagan and Kultegin Khagan in 715. In recent years, the Turgish (Taşağıl, 2004: 92-93), some researchers by the Pechenegs (Jean-Paul Roux, 2007: 157) accepted as a continuation of Oguz, «Bilge Khagan» (716-734) were located more in the north than the Otuken. It is estimated that they came to the tribes of Syr Darya between 775-785 (during the time of Caliph al-Mahdi). At that time, this region was the territory of the Turgish, and previously the territory of the Western Gok-Turks (Taşağıl, 2004: 92-93). After the 9th century, large areas ranging from Ispidzhab (present-day Sairam)

to the Caspian Sea, including Mangishlak, became the home of the Oguzes (Taşağıl, 2004: 93). In the 9th and 10th centuries, in Central Asia, the Turkish-speaking konar-nomadic tribes, the Caspian region, and in general terms, the Circassian coast and the Aral Sea were the homeland of the Oguzes (Agacanov, 2002: 10-11).

According to Mesudi (Mesudi (translated by Şeşen), 2018: 87.), there were crowded Guz (Oguz) cities around the Caspian Sea. The homeland, which started from the city of Curcan in the known Iran today, continued until the Aral Sea. Biruni reports that Oguz tribes inhabited the territories of the Urals, the Lower Volga region, on the northern and eastern shores of the Caspian Sea, and in the lower reaches of the Syr Darya (Agadzhanov, 2002: 113). However, the Turkish border around Syr Darya stretched to Sabran. In the first half of the 10th century, the Oguzes lived in the steppes north of this river including the soils extending from the Caspian Sea to Farab (Karachuk-Otrar) and Ispidzhab (Sayram) in the middle bed of the Syr Darya River (Seykhun-Syr Darya) and Mangyshlak.

Some axes of the Great Silk Road began to pass through the territory of Kazakhstan, in connection with the formation of the Turkic states and the development of urban culture, in the Middle Ages. Today, there are more than fifty villages and cities known only by name to the Oguz around Syr Darya. The location of cities in the lower reaches of the Syr Darya River on caravan routes contributed to their development in trade relations with other

cities of the Great Silk Road. The caravan routes crossing the medieval cities throughout Syr Darya, connecting the south and north, the east and the west, had a significant impact on the development of the urban economy in the middle Ages and the increase of ethno-cultural ties with neighboring tribes. That road is passing through Sauran (Sabran), Sygnak, Barshinkent, Asanas, Zhent, Zhankent cities. The first data about the cities of Syr Darya are encountered in the works of medieval historians. The following authors gave information about those historical cities in Turkic, Arabic, Chagatai, and European languages. There are Medieval Islamic Authors and their work like Yaqut al-Hamewi al-Rumi's «Dictionary of Countries», İbn-i Ashir's «Collection of History», Al-Nasavy's «About the Life of the Sultan of Celaladdin», İbn Battuta and Cuveeyni's «Târih-i Cihân-güşâ», Reshiduddi's «Cami'ut-tevarih», Ruzbihan's «Mihman adı Bukhara» and M.K Dulati's «Tarihi Raşidi». In addition to this, there are Marco Polo's «About different countries and people of the world», Plano Carpini's «History of the Mongols» and Guillaume de Rubruk's «Journey to the East».

Materials and methods

The first data on the cities of Oguz, located along the Silk Road is considered the methodological features of the works of medieval historians. General information, literature and data about the cities of Oguz in the historical works of medieval Islamic writers, European travelers are written in Arabic, Turkish, Kazakh, Russian and European languages. Archaeological expeditions were conducted on the basis of these materials. The physical evidence found as a result provides concrete proof.

Results and Discussion

Oguz cities

Sauran (Sabran) is located 45 km north-west of Turkestan. According to sources, the name Sauran is mentioned for the first time in the first half of the 10th century, in the works of the Islamic geographer Istakhri, the Arab geographer El-Makdisi and Divanu Lugati-t Turk (Seydimbek, 2000: 51). The 11th century Mahmud Kashgari lexicographer, known for his work on Turkish languages, conveys what people call Sabran, but in his own work he calls this city «Sebran» (Sümer, 1980: 26-34). Idrisi, an Arab geographer, calls the city Sabran (Şeşen, 2001: 103-

104). The information about Sabran is contained in the anonymous work of the 13th century «Khudod al-Alam al-Athir» and «Dictionary of the Yakut States». There is also information in the works of the first half of the 15th century, for example, Tavarihi-i Guzede-i Nusretname of Munineddin Natanizi, Fathname of Molla Shadi and Sheybaniname of Kemaleddin al Hervi Binai (Svod pamyatnikov..., 1994: 309).

In the writings of the Islamic historian and traveler Ali ibn al-Ashir and the geographer and historian al-Hamawi Yaktut, it is reported that the town of Sauran was a large cultural, trade, and professional center located in South Kazakhstan. The Armenian ambassador, who lived in the middle of the 13th century, mentioned Sabran in the Getum Travel Book along with Sygnak, Marchuk (Karachuk) and Ason (Yassi) (Baypakov, 1992: 65).

Iranian historian of the 16th century Ruzbihan described the city in detail (Isfahani, 1976: 116). Sauran was surrounded by a seven-pointed fortress wall in the 10th century. The city was surrounded by fortifications to protect against the Oguz and Kipchak tribes. Rabat was inside the fort (surrounded by walls). In 1514-1515, La Vasifi, a poet and writer living in Sabran, qualifies it as one of the wonders of the world by mentioning that there are two minarets and madrasas.

Sauran was a strong fortress. According to historian Hafiz Tanis, «The fortress had enough water and food to withstand a few months of custody. The system that made Sauran intact was the fortress walls surrounded by towers, the durability of the entrance and exit gates, and finally the position of the castle and the moats.» When Abdullah Han conquered Sauran in 1598, catapults were thrown from Bukhara. Thanks to the catapults, the houses and wells in the city could be destroyed. Tunnels were dug under the walls and the waters of the ditches were evacuated, but they could not seize the city. Sauran became a small town near Turkestan in the mid-18th century.

Archaeological research in the city of Sauran started about 100 years ago. Russian archaeologist and orientalist P.I. Lerkh, Russian geographer and traveler A.P. Fedchenko mentions this city in his works. The first archaeological studies in the city were carried out in the late 1940s by the archaeological team of South Kazakhstan, headed by Russian archaeologist A.N. Bernshtam.

The city of *Sygnak* (Kyzylorda) is located 10 km northwest of Tomenarik Station. Sygnak ancient city started to be formed in 10th and 11th centuries. The ancient regions of Syr Darya were a site to the civilization and culture of the Kazakh tribes.

The old Saka tribes lived in the lower part of the Syr Darya River. Many city walls were built for the safety of the city. Later, it passed into the hands of the Kipchak tribe, which expanded its borders from Siberia to Crimea. The city of Sygnak, the capital of the Kipchaks, rapidly developed into a powerful economic center. Due to the development of economy and agriculture as well as handicrafts and trade, Sygnak gained a reputation as the political, economic and strategic center of the Kipchaks in the 8th and 10th centuries.

Located on the Great Silk Road, the city is a transit region connecting the Maverannehir region, the west and east, to the Chinese and Muslim worlds. Sygnak was described as one of the trade and economic centers by Arab historians and geographers. Ispidzhab, one of the neighboring regions of the city, was part of the Maverannehir region and was under the samanid rule. According to Arab geographer Al-Istahri, it took four days to go from the city of Shash, two days according to the Arab historian Al-Yaqubi. But according to the Arab geographer Makdisi, it is claimed to be at a distance of one day. The towns of the Ispidzhab region stretch from the Talas River to the town of Sauran. Another city in the Sygnak neighborhood; Farab (Barab) is one of the largest cities on the Syr Darya River. However, Islamic geographer and traveler al-Istahri and Islamic writer, geographer and historian Ibn el-Hacakal believes that the main city of the region is grief. In the meantime, Sygnak region in the Middle Ages can be seen as the main indicator of the cultural and social situation of the Turkish steppe.

Russian Orientalist V.V. Barthold gave this following information about the city of Sygnak (Муминов, 2004: 117 – 120): «Sygnak (Sunak-Kurgan) was one of the main cities of the ancient Oguzes. In the 10th century Persian geographic studies (Hudud al-'amam), Sygnak was one of the richest cities on Syrdarya. There, good vegetables and fruits were pulled in caravan trails».

The first data about the city are mentioned in the 9th and 10th centuries by the names of Sygnak and Sunnah in the annals of Arab and Persian historians. In the 10th century, in the Persian language «Hudud al-'alem' the Arab geographer al-Makdisi recalled that the sanctuary is adjacent to the city of Otrar and about 20 leagues (160 km) away (Ebu Hanifa, 1980: 363). In the 9th century, there is also information about the irrigated areas and hand-dug canals on the territory of the city of Sygnak. The inhabitants of Sygnak were engaged in agriculture, fishing and hunting. There was no water problem for the city and it had about 15-20 miles of arable land along

the Arctic canal. After the Mongol invasion, the city of Sygnak was not mentioned for about a century. Zhankent, which was the center of the Oguz in the 10th century, is located near Sygnak.

The cities of Sygnak, Otrar, Koylyk, and Taraz became the main stopping point in the steppes of Otrar at the intersection of caravan routes from Central Asia and China. The main trade goods were valuable seafood and horses, which were brought from Central Asia. After the rule of the Oghuzes Yabgu, this region was ruled by the Kipchak tribes and became the center of the Sygnak Kipchaks. Caravan routes from the Signak region to Mawarannahr constantly transported such goods as white silk, goat's hair, copper, iron, and especially military instruments, swords, daggers. The neighboring states closely watched the prosperous Sygnak region, and this led to a conflict between the Kipchak tribes and the Khorezmians. It is seen that Sygnak and the surrounding areas play a major role in terms of ethnic relations between Deshti-Kypchak and diplomatic cooperation. The culture and economy of the city influenced the traditions and political principles of neighboring regions. Sygnak's close contact with Deshti-Kypchak and its unification with Turkestan region helped to develop bilateral ethnic relations (El-Makdisi, 1877: 480).

Asanas city, one of the most important historical and cultural centers in the Middle Ages, is located 48 km southeast of the town of Kyzylorda and 8 km southwest of the Aydarli village of Syr Darya. The city of Asanas is mentioned in the middle Ages with the cities of Ozkent, Sygnak, Zhent and Barshinkent. The historian Cuveyni describes it as one of the towns conquered by the Mongolian army from Sygnak to Zhent in 1219 (Deniz, 2013: 390). Plano Karpini, who was driving along the lower reaches of the Syr Darya, says they saw numerous destroyed cities, castles, and empty settlements in this territory. According to him, on the banks of a large river, the name of which they did not know were the cities of Zhankent, Barkhin, Ornas, and several other unknown cities. (Путешествия в восточные страны..., 1993: 248). A Member of the Archaeological Commission P.I. Lerkh, who visited the lower reaches of the Syr Darya in the 1860s, claims that such cities can be Ornas-Asanas, Zhankent-Yangikent, Barkhin-Barshinkent together with cities in the lower part of the Syr Darya River. (Лерх, 1870). In 1899 V.A. Kallaur first discovered the location of Asanas and made a topographic description. Kallaur (Каллаур, 1903) called it «Suyuna Karakoz». In addition, one of the slopes near the village of Aktobe in Kyzylkum is

called drinking water, and the second is thin when the field is sown. The city of Asanas is round and measures 450 × 400 meters. The city is surrounded by a wall and a ditch with a strong tower. The four-door fortifications are now about 5 meters high. The width of the wall is 15 meters. The area of the citadel built in the eastern part is 40 × 50 meters and its height is one meter».

In 1954, with the discovery of the ethnographic archaeology of Khorezm, archaeological excavations were conducted in Asanas in 1960-1961. In 1968, N.N. Vakturskaya conducted stratigraphic investigations of the city. The ceramic artifacts discovered in the top layer during the excavations are generally 12th-15th centuries, while the second layer of ceramics in the 7th-9th centuries belongs to the Oguz. As a result, the city of Asanas developed in the 7th and 9th centuries and was used until the 15th century. Before the Khorezm exploration, it was claimed in the historical literature that the city was built by Sogdian merchants. Then according to what have been discovered from the excavation, it has been built by the Oguz.

50 m north of the city is the tomb of Asanas Ata. The tomb is made of four burnt bricks and measures 7.18 × 8.83 m. The Asanas Ata Tomb, which was restored in 2010, is one of the most important sanctuaries in Kazakhstan. One of the most important historical and cultural sites of the Kyzylorda region, the city of Asanas and the Asanas Ata Tomb are registered as cultural assets that need to be protected (Вактурская, 1979: 127-132).

Barshinkent is located in the lower part of Syr Darya, about 25 km southwest of the town of Kyzylorda, 6 km west of the current village of Kogaly. Barshinkent (Sırlı Tam, Kyz Kala, Kysh Kala) is a medieval city name. Today, among the people it is also known as Kyzkala. Information about Barshinkent is frequently seen in the writings of medieval historians and ambassadors. The city was first introduced by Italian diplomat Giovanni da Pian del Carpine in 1242. He said that the population in Syr Darya is speaking in Muslim language and its traditions are Muslim. There are many city and castle ruins in the region. Nearby is Yengikent, Barshin and Asanas. They have other cities as well, but he did not know the names (Özaydın, 1993: 360).

This city, which historians say was not a coincidence before the 12th century, was founded by Barshin Hatun of Salur Boyu and therefore called Barshinlik Kent (Sümer, 1980: 26-34). The Persian historian Cuveyni (Deniz, 2014: 405) describes the city which he called Barshinlik Kent as a place between Zhent and Suknak and tells how

the conquest of Ozkent and Barshinlik Kent. This last are part of the Oguz Yabgu cities on the coast of Syrdarya. The same issue is conveyed similarly by Barthold (Özaydın, 1993: 360).

Cemal Karshi, who spoke of the city in 1273 stated that Barshinlik Kent was a Turkmen homeland and that the Kipchaks lived together with the Oguz (Орта Азиядағы..., 2019). He also met a scholar in fiqh and exegesis named Husameddin Hamid B. Asim. This scientist wrote was the author of comments on famous works of that time, which were protected by copyright. According to Jemal Karshi, he wrote poetry in all three languages. Jemal Karshi believes that Husameddin's Arabic verses are small, and Turkish verses are authentic. (Sümer, 1980: 571-572). V. Kallaur, the orientalist and archaeologist who gave detailed information about Barshin Darya and Kok Kesene (Blue Mausoleum) for the first time in 1899 correctly concludes that Barshinlik Kent will also be this Barshin Darya (Sümer, 1980: 40; Deniz, 2014: 391).

Zhent. It is approximately 60 to 70 km from the village of Akkır in the Zhalagash district, 150 km from the town of Kyzylorda. Although it is located very close to Syrdarya, it remained in a deserted land since it was located at the beginning of the Kyzylkum Desert. Even in the old version of certain map it is shown within the Kyzylkum desert (Köymen, 1979).

The Persian historian Alladdin Ata Melik Cuveyni describes in his book *Tarih-i Cihan Guşa*, «Zhent Ruins are on the right bank of the Seyhun River» (Cuveyni (translated by M. Öztürk), 1999: 140). In Hijri 672 (1273), the historian Cemal Kars notes that Zhent was once a big city and then it became a damaged one. However, it was noted that Zhent was a place of commerce and that many merchants came there and all kinds of goods were bought and sold in its bazaar (Sümer, 1980: 572).

The sources do not contain information about the time of creation and the first ruler of the Zhent town. However, Barthold suggests that the roles of cities of Zhent, Yangikent, and Huvare were important warehouses for commercial activities in Central Asia. In his opinion, there were probably Muslim immigrants from Maverannahr in the 10th century. But Bartold also expresses the opinion that the cities are ruled by the Oghuz Turks (who have not yet converted to Islam). It has been mentioned also that the people who lived there do trade and Muslim merchants continue the tradition of trade colonization established by the Sogdlu in the Turkish steppes (Barthold, 1964: 79).

According to Devin De Weese, the city of Zhent was one of the major city centers in Lower Syr

Darya a few centuries before the Mongol conquest. The name was first mentioned in the second half of the 10th century and because of its importance, the Arab geographers called the Aral Sea «Zhent Sea». The city served as one of the main caravan stops on the roads connecting the cities of Khorezm and Maverannehir to the Kypchak steppes. And its connection with Khorezm was particularly important. When Khorezm gained independence from the Seljuks in the 12th century, Zhent became an important trade center and guardhouse of the khwarazmshah. The fact that Zhent's proportions became unknown among Central Asian and Khorasan writers clearly shows that Zhent disappeared as an important center and that its fate began to deteriorate. Among those who originated from Zhent, people who migrated from Central Asia to Anatolia were numerous. A foundation document dated 1272 from Kyrkala mentioned the immigrants from Zhent. When defining and determining the boundaries of the foundation real estate, Bahaeddin Hidir Zhend Sinan al-Zhendi, Siracuddin Ali Shir al-Zhendi and possibly Ali al-Zhendi's real estate, houses and shops are mentioned. Still according to Devin De Weese It is very likely that the publisher of this document confused Zhendi and Cundi (Devin De Weese, 1994: 61-65).

In the 10th century, the Cent people were subject to the Oguz Yabgu and paid tribute every year. The Oguz Yabgu had not yet become Muslim at that time (Yazıcı, 2002: 207). However, in the last quarter of the 10th century, Selcuk bin Durar, who was known for his nickname «Temir-yalığ» (Demir Yayılı) and commander of the army opened with Oguz Yabgusu due to his increasing influence and power. Probably it opened up with the influence of Yabgu's lady. He came from the Khorezm region to the Zhent region in the second half of the 10th century, along with the members of the Oguz family. Here he accepted Islam, then engaged in a great struggle and war (Genç, 2002: 66) against the non-Muslim Oguzes» and finally saved the Muslim people from paying tribute to the non-Muslim Oguz Yabgu (Sümer, 1980: 61-62).

Yaqut, one of the Abbasid historians, writes that the city became a major center in the 13th century and that the people were Sunni and Hanafi (Özaydın, 1993: 360).

Russian orientalist V.V. Barthold said that the city of Zhent was a place where fruit and animals were fed (Barthold, 1964: 228). Passengers on the sidewalk are like entering the world. This city is inspired by the garden and the field. In addition, the city of Zhent was a cultural center. The madrasas and mosques in the city were a source of spiritual teaching. It is a

city where poets and academics, singers and artists gathered every day (Tolstov, 1962:). At the same time the city of Cent was once the center of Islam. Thus, it is understood that in the middle Ages the region of Syr Darya was not only a spiritual center but also reached the highest cultural level.

Zhankent. The ruins of Zhankent are located in the village of Zhankent on the left bank of Syr Darya, south of the town of Kazaly. At the end of the 9th century and at the beginning of the 11th century, detailed information is given about the Oguz State in the historical and geographical works of Al-Yaqubi, Ibn-al-Fakihin, Ibn-Rustin, al-Mesudi, Ibn Havkalin and al-Idrisi. According to this; the winter center of Zhankent Oguz and the barracks and capital of Yabgusu was called Zhankent (Yangi - Kent, Yengi - Kent) (Turan, 1978: 67) based on Oguz Khagan in Turkish schools. The Arabs called it el – Medinet ul Cedide, el – Karyet – ul Hadise. And for the Persian, it was Dib-i Nev. In the Turkish works of the 13th century, the city should be the Zhankent, which the Kazakhs call Jane Kent nowadays (Sümer, 1980: 26-34; Şeşen, 2004: 104). In addition, it was said that there was trade by waterway transportation between Zhankent and Khoresm. In the work of the Persian historian Gardizi; It is stated that the trade routes to Kimaks who live on the Irtysh River pass through Zhankent. Although the 14th century historians Reshîduddîn Fazlullah-ı Hemedânî (Reshîdüddîn Fazlullah (translated by Khelejani), 2013: 5) and Cuveyni (Cuveyni (translated by M. Öztürk, 1999: 140) called Zhankent as «Şehrikent», in the work of Mahmud of Kashgari, the city of Zhankent is referred to as «Yengikent» (Mahmud Kashgari (translated by Atalay), 1936: 41).

According to the information given by Arab travelers (Материалы..., 1938); the lower regions of Syr Darya are called Zhankent, the capital of the Oghuz Yabgu State, or the capital of New Guzia. The most important reason for the election of Zhankent as the political center of the Oguz Yabgu State is the interaction and effective position with Khoresm and Maverannehir which are the biggest agricultural regions of Central Asia. Zhankent was on the important caravan road leading to the Kimaks steppes to Sarysu, Kengir, Esil and Nura. The trade route to Sygnak and the Southern Orallar passed through this city.

The historian of the Soviet period S.G. Agadzhanov believes that in the Middle Ages the towns of Zhent corresponded to the present ruins of Chan-Kala in the lower reaches of the Syr Darya River. The ruins of Yengikent are today located on the left bank of Syr Darya, 1.5 km south of the

village of Zhankent in the town of Kazaly. Until the middle of the 18th century, Zhankent was still protected by the stone walls remaining from the old city (Yengikent). Agadzhanov chanting

the city as Zhankent, saying «It was rumored that Zhankent was dispersed as a result of the snake attack among the locals» (Taşağıl, 2004: 92-93) (Fig. 1).

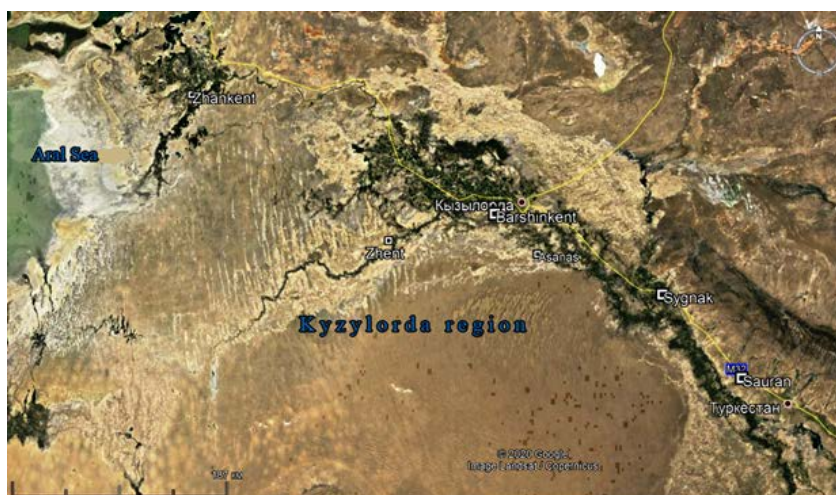


Figure 1 – The map of localization of the Oguz cities

Conclusion

Kazakhstan's medieval cities are the earliest historical sources on the Silk Road. Before the opening of the sea routes, the cities mentioned above played an important role on the Silk Road. The Silk Road's route through Yedisu, which connects China and Central Asia, through South Kazakhstan and Syr Darya River has become one of the most developed routes. During this period, the number of cities and city centers on the Silk Road has increased day by day. And this development has made a significant contribution to the development of the world economy and international trade.

All the historical cities on the Silk Road passing through Kazakhstan are located on the riverside. Generally speaking, in Asia, civilization was mostly developed by the river. At that time, the Turks lived and settled in a nomadic state. The tribes of Syr Darya and its environs have been inhabited by Turks since a very early age. Although some of the Oguz lived as nomads, the other part lived in the settled life in the crowded cities of Syr Darya. Before the Mongol invasion (1218), the city of Zhankent, Zhent, Barshinkent, Asanas, Sygnak and Sauran

were known as the cities of Oguz. And they were famous and densely populated Turkish trade cities. However, in the 13th century, there was great sorrow due to the Mongol invasion. The Mongol invasion has brought great irreparable damage, especially to cities. This historical event led to the transformation of the largest cities on the Silk Road into a desolate place. For example, despite the resistance of the Otrar people, the Zhungar soldiers burned down the city and the largest Otrar library in the Central Asian region at that time and took some of the population with them. Many houses have been abandoned and these places have become graves.

After the complete Mongolian rulers of the Central Asian region came to power, the Jenciz Khan Sons tried to improve the trade relations of the region. But despite the restoration of the destroyed cities, it was impossible to restore the cultural heritage that was there for thousands of years ago.

Based on the sources of the historian writers of the middle Ages, archeological excavations are still continuing in the cities of Oguz, which is found on the Silk Road. In addition, some of the old caravan roads have started to be used again and population movements in the region have increased.

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