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THE LATE MEDIEVAL CITY OF THE CHU VALLEY (XIII-XVI CC.)

This article examines the role of the Aspara settlement. The article provides archaeological data on the topographic features, found elements of material culture, the possibility of reconstruction of cultural, social life, based on historical, archaeological, ethnographic data about the medieval city. Archaeological research in recent years has largely clarified the state of sedentary culture in the Shu-Talas valley. The circle of monuments of the late Middle Ages expanded, collections of material culture were replenished. In the cities of the late Middle Ages, the cultural layers are not very pronounced; they are of certain interest as an indicator of the general state of the sedentary culture of that period. In addition, the archaeological materials of the 13th-16th centuries, despite their paucity, deserve attention, since the presence of a local agricultural population in medieval sources and folk was noted in the absence of cities. Aspara is a city surrounded by long walls with dimensions strikingly different from other settlements that existed at that time. Long walls were a kind of indicator of economic and political influence. According to this and other criteria described in this article, Aspara is a unique archaeological site of medieval urban culture on the territory of Kazakhstan.

Key words: late Medieval age, culture, archaeology, the Shu Valley, Aspara, Andas Batyr.

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Шу алқабындағы кейінгі ортағасырлық қала (XIII-XVI ғғ.)

Мақалада кейінгі ортағасырлық кезеңдегі Аспара қалашығының рөлі қарастырылады. Топографиялық ерекшеліктері, материалдық мәдениеттің табылған бөлшектері арқылы ортағасырлық қала туралы тарихи, археологиялық, этнографиялық деректерге сүйене отырып, мәдени, әлеуметтік өмірді қайта құру мүмкіндігі туралы деректер келтірілген. Соңғы жылдары жүргізілген археологиялық зерттеулер барысында Шу-Талас алқабындағы отырықшы мәдениеттің жағдайы нақтыланды. Кейінгі орта ғасырлардағы ескерткіштер ауқымы кеңейіп, материалдық мәдениет коллекцияларымен толықтырылды. Кейінгі орта ғасырлардағы қалаларда мәдени қабаттар онша айқын білінбейді; олар сол кезеңдегі отырықшы мәдениеттің жалпы жағдайының көрсеткіші ретінде үлкен қызығушылық тудырады. Сонымен қатар, XIII-XVI ғасырларға жататын археологиялық материалдардың аздығына қарамастан, ортағасырлық дереккөздерде қалалар болмағанның өзінде ауылшаруашылығымен айналысатын тұрғындар саны байқалады. Аспара – алып жатқан аумағы бойынша сол кездегі елді-мекендерден өзгеше, сырты ұзын қабырғалармен қоршалған қала болды. Ұзын қабырғалар экономикалық және саяси ықпалдың өзіндік көрсеткіші болды. Сондықтан да аталған мақалада қарастырылған сипаттамаларға сәйкес, Аспара Қазақстан аумағындағы ортағасырлық қалалық мәдениеттің бірегей археологиялық ескерткіші болып табылады.

Түйін сөздер: кейінгі ортағасырлар дәуірі, мәдениет, археология, Шу алқабы, Аспара, Андас батыр.

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Позднесредневековый город Чуйской долины (XIII-XVI вв.)

В данной статье рассматривается роль позднесредневекового городища Аспара. Приводятся археологические данные о топографических особенностях, найденных элементах материальной культуры, возможности реконструкции культурной, социальной жизни, исходя из исторических, археологических, этнографических источников о средневековом городе. Археологические исследования последних лет во многом уточнили состояние оседлой культуры на территории Шу-Таласской долины. Расширялся круг памятников позднего средневековья, пополнялись

коллекции материальной культуры. В городах позднего средневековья культурные слои не очень выражены; они представляют определенный интерес как индикатор общего состояния оседлой культуры того периода. Кроме того, археологические материалы XIII-XVI веков, несмотря на их малочисленность, заслуживают внимания, поскольку наличие местного земледельческого населения в средневековых источниках и народных отмечалось при отсутствии городов. Аспара представляет собой город, окруженный длинными стенами при размерах, разительно отличающихся от других поселений, существовавших в тот период. Длинные же стены являлись своеобразным показателем экономического, политического влияния. Поэтому, согласно другим критериям, описанным в данной статье, позднесредневековый город Аспара представляет собой уникальный археологический памятник средневековой городской культуры на территории Казахстана.

Ключевые слова: эпоха позднего средневековья, культура, археология, Чуйская долина, Аспара, Андас батыр.

Introduction

The lands of the South-West Zhetysu are irrigated by the Chu river and numerous rivers and streams flowing from the Kyrgyz ridge. The most abundant of them are Sokuluk, Alarcha, Kaindy, Aspara, Mirki and Karakat, Shalsu, Altynsu, Shybyndy, Makbal, the valley of which forms the western border of Zhetysu. The Kyrgyz Ala-Tau, which gives rise to these rivers, looks completely naked in comparison with the Zhungarsky and Trans-Ili Ala-Tau. There are almost no forests here. Nowadays, the timber has survived only in the Alarchi and Issykaty gorges. Convenient land for agriculture is located in oases on deluge cones in valleys. It is dominated by gray soils, which, with artificial irrigation, give excellent yields of grapes, sugar beets and sunflowers. On the lands located on the counters of the mountains and in the foothill zone, they grow rich harvests of wheat for bogara. Western Zhetysu has a slightly milder

climate than Eastern, although in some winters the temperature here drops to -25-28.

The ruins of the settlement are identified in the literature with the settlement of Aspara (Bartold, 1897: 31), known from the sources of the Timurid period. According to Ibn 'Arabshah, Timur sent his grandson Muhammad Sultan and Amir Sayfad-din to Mogolistan, who «occupied valleys and fields there and built several fortresses, the most remote of which is called Aspara. They built an impregnable fortress in it, ready for plunder and devastation. After the death of Timur, the commander Alladad was forced to leave Aspara «together with his family and children, retinue and army» under the onslaught of the Mongols, who occupied the fortress (Volin, 1960: 91-92). The last mention of Aspara in sources refers to the middle of the 15th century, when Abu Said, a Timurid on the Samarkand throne, defeated the Mongol army under Aspara, led by the Khan of Mogolistan Esen-Buka (Bartold, 1943: 88) (Ill.1).



Illustration 1 – Aerophoto of Aspara-site

Materials and methods

For the Mongolian time, a wide range of written sources is known that adequately cover this period in the history of the peoples of Central Asia, and archaeological data in these conditions are often of secondary importance. However, Arab-Persian and other sources report mainly on political events in the Chagatai ulus, which included the territory of modern South Kazakhstan. Therefore, archaeological materials can not only supplement, but also acquire the value of the primary source in the study of socio-economic relations and material culture of the 13th-15th centuries.

Special research of the Mongol-Timurid period monuments were undertaken by a detachment of the Semirechensk archaeological expedition in 1964. The main object of study was the settlement at the village. Andas batyr of the Merken district of the Dzhambul region, the identification of which with the city of Aspara, known from the sources of the 11th century, does not cause objections in the literature (Bartold, 1943).

In written sources, Aspara was first mentioned in the 7th century. in the notes of the Chinese Buddhist pilgrim Xuan-Jian as the city of Osubolai – Aspara. At the same time, Aspara was first mentioned by the Arab travelers Ibn Khordarбек and Kudama.

The monumental ruins of a medieval settlement are located near the village Andas Batyr on the right bank of the say, coming from the Asparinsky gorge. A number of factors indicate the correct determination of the location of the city: the self-name of the area has an identical name, or varies in letter equivalents (Aspara-Ashpara-Asrantobe). The next proof is the identity with the data given in historical sources (location 4 farshes (25 km) from the ancient city of Mirki). Another important confirmation is the uniqueness of the topographic nature of the ruins, which arose as a result of the need for a fortress city in the Timurid period in order to make campaigns to China in the 13th century. For these and other reasons, Aspara stands out among other middle-age cities for the monumentality of its ruins. The height of the most elevated part – the citadel – reaches 20 m, along the edges of the settlement there is a well-preserved rampart, under which powerful fortress walls are guessed, deep ditches up to 10 m wide surround it on all sides. Even now, it is difficult to approach Aspara due to the strong swampiness of the area, and only dams and ramps of entrances indicate the places through which they once entered the city.

Results and Discussion

The Aspara settlement is located at the southwestern outskirts of the Andas batyr village, about 0.5 km from the road to Merke. The hill fort has a rectangular shape of an elevated square, the sides of which are oriented to the cardinal points with slight deviations (from west to east – 350 m, from north to south – 240 m, which is approximately 10 °. In the center of the eastern wall there is a high hill, which united with the main area of the settlement by means of an earthen wall. The inner part of the studied site consists of 3 platforms with different heights. The first platform occupies almost the entire eastern part of the site, having the following dimensions: from north to south – 140 m, from west to east – 220 m. The height of the platform is approximately 5-6 m. The western part of the settlement, being higher than the eastern one, consists of two platforms. The size of the platform, located on the northern side, is 140 m from north to south, from west to east – 115 m, with a height, equal to 17 m. The size of the southern platform is 50 m from north to south, 130 m from west to east, with a height of 10 m. The platforms are surrounded by an earthen rampart, 4 to 5 m high, surrounding the entire territory of the settlement. Patsevich suggested that the highest platform is a citadel, divided by smaller squares of rectangular shape, surrounded by earthen ramparts about 1 m high (Patsevich, 1954: 229, 308-313).

At the western end of the eastern, lower platform, which is apparently the remains of a shakhristan, almost at the base of the walls of the citadel there is a crescent-shaped depression curved with its ends to the west, 140 m long and about 40 m wide. The bottom of this cavity, 5 m deep, is densely overgrown with grass and reeds. The protrusion adjoining the eastern side of the settlement is an almost circular platform about 15 m in diameter and about 5 m high above it. The platform is connected to the shakhristan square by a narrow corridor-like passage.

The area of the entire settlement is surrounded on all sides, except for the northern one, by a ditch, the width of which is 10-12 m, and the depth is approximately 5 m. The northern side of the settlement is surrounded by a very swampy area several kilometers long, the width is 200 m.

Both the moat surrounding the settlement and the reservoir inside the shakhristan were filled with water from numerous springs that emerge in different places of this site. In view of the fact that the traces of the gates inside the shakhristan were preserved only from the side of the swampy area, it

must be thought that a special dam was apparently built through the swampy area, traces of which have not survived to this day.

The Aspara' ruins are similar to other settlements, because the remains of buildings located on both sides of the old Aspara watercourse are scattered around the central hill. The boundaries of their distribution are strictly determined by the remnants of walls in the form of swollen shafts, which are destroyed in many places, but in general they can be traced quite well throughout and close completely, forming an irregular polyhedron, consisting of small segments on average 40-80 m long. The total length of the outer walls of the settlement was slightly more than 3000 m. In some parts of the rampart, the towers' mounds are clearly visible. The height of the shaft reaches 1.2 m, the width at the base is 10-12 m.

Almost the entire territory surrounded by a rampart is occupied by modern buildings and is plowed up for vegetable gardens. It is lined with separate terraces for easy irrigation. But even now there are many signs that suggest that this area was previously built up. They are, firstly, the remains of hills – the ruins of buildings that have survived in many places, and, secondly, fragments of ceramics and other finds found everywhere.

The most elevated part of the central ruins may have been rebuilt in the Timurid time, so here the early cultural layers were overlapped by the later ones. The lifting material collected here, mainly along the walls of the walls, consists of small fragments of rims, sidewalls and pallets of clay vessels, both made on a potter's wheel and stucco. Probably, these objects got into the wall from earlier cultural layers. Discovering a part of the sidewall of a bowl with blue glazed and dark brown painting and other fragments of ceramics confirms the assumption that this part of the settlement was inhabited in the Timurid time (Nurzhanov, 2010: 69-78).

Aspara, in comparison with other settlements with long walls, was much smaller in size. The restructuring of the shakhristan at a later time may have affected the indistinctness of the citadel in the topographic anatomy of the city.

Exploratory excavations and collection of lifting material, including numismatic (coins of

Bukhakhudats and Turgeshes were found), contributed to the establishment of the city's emergence time (approximately 6th-8th centuries), as well as the period of the most intensive growth (11th-early 12th centuries). Written Arabiansources of the 9th century mention Aspara without the epithet "big village" used for other cities.

In the post-Mongolian time, only the territory of the citadel settled down. Here, on an area of 350 square meters, the buildings of two building horizons of the 13th-14th centuries and 15th-16th centuries were opened. At the level of the lower building horizon, three houses or sections have been opened, which are part of a single residential complex. The living quarters had hearths, sufas along the walls. The walls of the buildings are made of rectangular mud bricks (Erzakovich, 1968: 87).

Residential and utility premises of the 12th-14th centuries, differing in size, layout, and internal structure, were discovered. In the walls of living rooms of various sizes, with sizes from 27 m² to 10 m², there were niches in which the best dishes and household utensils usually stood. Near the walls are adobe sufas, on which they rested and slept, on the floor are the remains of heating hearths, a small clay table on three low legs. In some of the rooms, huge earthen barrels-hums were found dug in flush with the floor, in which household supplies were kept. One of the rooms, the smallest in size (1.5 m²), served as a storage room for grain supplies.

In 1965, Timur's silver coin with the name of the dummy Khan Mahmud was found, minted in 1392/1393. Some analogs in ceramics also point to the 15th century. For example, the technique of coating the inner surface of jugs with glaze has become widespread in the pottery industry of Central Asia since the 15th century, and not glazed ceramics, in terms of forms, techniques and ornamentation, is very close to ceramics of the 15th century fortified settlements Sadyr – Kurgan of the Talas Valley.

Of particular interest are the inscriptions in the Turkic language, made in black paint on both sides of a cow's shoulder blade (Muratov, Erzakovich, 1967: 71-79). Fifteen persons are named in them, among whom are four beks, one khodja and more than five known by their nicknames, sadness over their death is expressed (Ill.2).



Illustration 2 – A cow's shoulder blade with the inscriptions in the Turkic language

The inscriptions are the result of the simultaneous death of many people who held a high position in Spare or in the district, which is established thanks to the nickname of one of them – Khagan Kuchkarsky. The Kuchkar or Koshkar area is mentioned in sources and is known as the name of the Chu upper flows. The inscriptions on the shoulder blade had ritual significance and, apparently, were read out during the performance of the funeral rite.

The finding of a Turkic inscription testifies to certain ethnic processes associated with the assimilation and dissolution of alien Mongol-speaking tribes in the Turkic environment in the foothills of the Tien Shan (Erzakovich, 1970: 97).

The finds of coins echo the reports of sources about the strengthening of Aspara by order of Timur in 1397/1398. This is how the biographer of Timur Ibn Arabshah wrote about this: «The story of his (Timur's) arrangement by the Mughals and China and what he did in these places. When he arrived in Samarkand, he sent his grandson Muhammad Sultan, the son of Jangir, together with the emir Seif ad-Din to the extreme point, to which his words reached and his decrees were in effect, and this is that for r. Seikhun ..., a month away from the country of Maverrannahr. They occupied valleys and fields there and built several fortresses, the most distant of them is called Aspara ... an impregnable fortress, ready for plunder and devastation ...» (Volin, 1960: 91).

Emir Argun Shah, one fog (10,000) troops and combined detachments were left in Aspara. However, the Mughals continued to harass the fortress with raids, and in 1403 Timur was forced to send a large reinforcement there, led by Emir Alladad, and

a year later he had to build a new fortress ten days' journey from Aspara to the east.

Apparently, even after these measures, the position of the garrisons was very fragile. In any case, in 1405 after the death of Timur, the head of the Aspara garrison Alladad considered it prudent to leave the fortress. «At the same time, he ordered his retinue and troops, and they took with them everything big and small, and he did not leave there from that which belonged to him, (even) dead and insignificant. They crawled, went slowly, and at times the earth prevented them with snow, at times a piece of sky fell on them ... The first Mughals rose from the east, headed towards Aspara and Issyk-Kul and spread in this country ...» (Volin, 1960: 91).

The shift of trade routes from the Volga region to Central Asia, which occurred as a result of the defeat of the Golden Horde' cities by Timur at the end of the 14th century, did not affect the cities of South Kazakhstan (Yakubovsky, 1933: 12). The caravans continued to follow the ancient «silk road», which can be seen from the route of the Shahrukh embassy (1419) – Herat, Balkh, Samarkand, Tashkent, Sairam, then along the northern slopes of the Kyrgyz ridge to Aspara, past Issyk-Kul, crossing or further to Turfan – Karakhodzha. The embassy was returning back by the southern road – through Khotan and Kashgar because of the riots (Yule, 1886: 287-290).

The last news about Aspara dates back to the beginning of the 16th century: «In the winter of nine hundred and nineteen (1513/1514) ... Kasym Khan left for Aspara for the sake of conquering his own countries» (Perevod V.P. Judina, list 29a). However, it is not clear from the above passage whether this refers to the city of Aspara or the area under the same

name, which has survived to this day. In the middle of the 16th century Muhammad-Haydar wrote only about the ruins of cities in the Chu Valley. Thus, the time of the active existence of the upper construction period of Aspara should be attributed to the 15th century, which, however, does not exclude the possibility of a later settlement of the ruins of the city by an insignificant sedentary population.

The archaeological materials obtained in Aspara are specific enough to judge how significant the decline of the sedentary culture in the Chui valley was, and how widespread this phenomenon was after the Mongol invasion.

In the Chu valley, seven settlements were recorded, the upper layers of which can be attributed to the Mongolian time (12th-14th centuries): Tortkul, Tash-Utkul, Kysychi, Kara-Dzhigach, Aleksandrovskoe, Belovodskoe and Aspara, which continues to exist much later.

The emergence and development of cities with long walls is one of the features of the town formation process in the Middle Ages in the valleys of the Talas and Chu rivers, in the places of traditional habitation of nomadic tribes. The process proceeded in conditions of close interaction between agricultural and nomadic cultures. This influenced the historical topography, structure and appearance of the monuments of the sedentary and semi-sedentary population (Akishev, 1983: 9). Early medieval cities and settlements were formed here among the mass of nomadic tribes. The sedentary population under such conditions could not settle in the same way as in the agricultural zone of Central Asia, where large agricultural oases arose on large rivers (Baypakov, 1975: 36). On the small rivers of the Chu-Talas valleys, flowing from the mountain gorges, oases of sedentary culture were formed, the center of which was the city.

The Talasso-Chu cities had an agrarian character from early times (Belenitsky, Bentovich, Bolshakov, 1973: 206), consisting in geographical features. For this reason, the lands in this territory were surrounded by long walls with a length of several tens of kilometers.

In the 6th-9th centuries, the cities of Chu-Talas were distinguished by such features as the presence of a shakhristan, a citadel and an agricultural district.

Judging by the outlines of the walls, the number of which increased due to the increase in the area of the city, it is possible to determine the direction of the growth process.

The walls fulfilled several functional meanings. First, the need to protect the territory from attacks and invasions indicated the degree of political and

economic development of the city. Secondly, the boundaries of land use were determined with the help of walls (Kozhemyako, 1959: 39).

Thus, the topographic features of the Chu-Talas cities acquired a certain look only by the end of the 9th century.

In the 10th-12th centuries there was a sharp jump in lifestyle changes (social, economic, cultural) in the urban cultural environment, which led to an increase in the territory due to rabads, a shift in the city center and a change in the topographic appearance (Baypakov, 1975: 36).

In subsequent centuries, the growth rate of the city was manifested in a change in the territorial structure, and later (10th-15th centuries) in the population density of the city.

Rabads were part of the topography, fitting into the structure of the city with long walls, which distinguished them from the cities located in Maveranahr (Senigova, 1972: 133-134).

The settlements of the Chu-Talas valley, due to the topographic features associated with the location within the city, surrounded by walls, of an agricultural district, are similar to the topographic anatomy of the Shash settlements, without significantly changing their appearance until the Mongol invasion.

Bernshtam A.N. wrote that the process of city formation is closely connected with the resettlement of the Sogdians; later, in the 9th-10th centuries, the intensive development of the rabad preceded the change in the city's appearance. Kozhemyako P.N. connects the topographic features of the cities of the Chu-Talas valley with the influence of past nomadic inhabitants.

Conclusion

A feature of the cities of the Western World region is the allocated citadel with a shakhristan along with the presence of a rabad, representing fortifications with long walls. The cities of Chu-Talas had a similar development, which was reflected in the topographic structure.

Archaeological research in recent years has largely concretized the idea of the state of sedentary culture on the territory of the Shu-Talas Valley during the era of the Mongol Empire and the Kazakh Khanate. The range of late medieval monuments has expanded, collections of material culture have been replenished, despite the fact that the layer of the 13th-16th centuries is usually of small thickness. The results of archaeological research of the settlements that existed in the 13th-first half of the 16th centuries, a comparison of archaeological materials,

written sources and numismatic information made it possible to determine the location of almost all cities on the territory of Kazakhstan in the 13th – 16th centuries. Also, archaeological materials of the 13th – 16th centuries, despite their small number, deserve attention because in medieval sources and folk legends the existence of a local sedentary agricultural population was noted.

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