



NOMADS IN THE LOWER SYRDARYA BASIN AND ISSUES OF THEIR RELATIONS WITH THE KHOREZM OASIS

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ABSTRACT

This article provides valuable information about the relations of the inhabitants of Ancient Khorezm with the nomadic tribes living in the lower Syrdarya basin. The article also substantiates that Khorezm's interaction with nomadic tribes began much earlier than the Kang period according to archaeological materials. In addition, the opinions and researches of world-renowned historians and scientists on the issue of relations between Khorezm and nomadic tribes are presented.

KEYWORDS: *nomads, Kang confederation, Kang period, Sak-massaget world, Kuyusay culture, Sarikamish delta, Khorezm Ma'mun Academy, the lower Amudarya, Charmanyap, Bazarkala, Kuzalikir, Kalalikir, Khiva, Aybugur, Khazarasp.*

It is known that the relations of the ancient Khorezm population with the nomadic tribes living in the lower Syrdarya basin is one of the least studied topics. The insufficiency of the sources makes it necessary to turn to archeological materials. The latest results of the scientists' research show that the interaction of nomadic, semi-nomadic and settled populations in the Kang confederation, located on the banks of the Syrdarya, made it possible to rise on the basis of the Kovunchi, Utrar-Koratou va Jetiasar cultures and, in turn, this factor has been proven to lead to political unification, sedentarization, and settlement [1]. It is also based on the fact that in ancient times, the development of mutual socio-economic political relations between the Kang and Kushan states led to positive changes in the living conditions of the Choch, Sughd, Dakhya and Yansay peoples (along the island) and started the crisis of nomadism. It should be said that as a result of the symbiosis of nomadic and settled cultures, a new architecture (the method of building a five-cornered and local circular arch) was created in the foothills of Syrdarya, which was also reflected in archaeological research.

Khorezm's close relations with nomadic tribes, according to archaeological materials, began much earlier than the Kang period and this issue was studied more on the basis of the archaeological monuments of Khorezm on the left bank. It should be said that the latest studies of science have emphasized the territorial location of the Khorezm people as the Turkmen-Khorasan highlands. According to this, as a result of the events of Kuchan-Mashhad and Herat, it was concluded that they were moved to the lower Amudarya basin during the Akhmenid period [2]. The Khorezmians who migrated in this way settled on the left bank of the lower Amudarya and their ancient monuments are on the left bank in Khorezm. It should not be forgotten that the geographical location of Khorezm on the left bank determined the relationship of this area with the nomadic tribes and communities living in the surrounding deserts and semi-deserts. Many scholars claim that Khorezm is a part of the

Sak-Massaget world of Central Asia and in their research, the problem of the relations of Khorezm residents with the surrounding nomadic tribes took an important place [3]. The results of the research show that the inhabitants of this area had strong cultural and political relations with the neighboring nomadic and semi-nomadic tribes in different periods of history. In particular, the archaeological monuments of pastoral tribes located directly on the borders of Khorezm can provide important information for this period. Although the issue of relations between Khorezm and nomadic tribes was raised by S.P.Tolstov, and the first studies were conducted in this regard, between 1950 and 1980, the results of the research carried out in the Uzboy, Zakaspian and Ustyurt regions, especially the burial mounds found in 1965 in the Sarikamish region of the left bank of Khorezm (Yassikir, Tuzkir, Tumek-Kichijik, Torimkoya and Shokhsanam) show that people began to occupy this land in the Neolithic period. Scientists show the entry of nomadic tribes into Khorezm in several stages. 1) VII century BC - the beginning of a new stage of land occupation during the arrival of new tribes (in the example of Kuyusay, Kuyusay 2 culture burial mounds), they are herders with cattle and horses, those who have permanent residence addresses, local crafts, i.e. bone and stone processing. Settlements are located directly on the banks of the river. 2) VI century BC - another new stage of economic occupying of Khorezm. Characteristic features of this period: emergence of irrigation facilities, the beginning of the construction of castles, frame construction being replaced by brick architecture, widespread use of the potter's wheel, The existence of farming and animal husbandry at the same status in the farm is evident in the example of the Kuzalikir and Yassikir cultures [4].

B.I.Weinberg, during the archaeological research conducted between the Tarimkoya and Kankakir hills, notes that the culture of the sedentary and semi-nomadic population in the Sarikamish delta was preserved until the IV century BC. Because many settlements were found on the banks of the



river, which had absolutely no connection with the irrigation system. This is also indicated by construction techniques and mold-based vessels reminiscent of Kuyisay culture. During the V-IV centuries BC, the nomadic population residing in the western outskirts of Khorezm actively integrated into the statehood and culture of Khorezm. Archaeologist B.I. Weinberg notes that these herding tribes founded Kanga Fortress and this fortress was undoubtedly their center [4]. Kanga Fortress is located on a hill opposite the Kanga Fortress, an ancient fortified settlement of the local population, and is connected to an active canal system of ancient riverbeds, where no irrigation facilities have been found.

As we know, the cultivated agricultural lands date back to the IV-III centuries BC and are located in narrow oases on the southern and northern sides of the Tunidarya and Davdan canals of the left bank of Khorezm. Scientists assume that the lands around Devkeskan and Kurgankala may have been occupied. In general, it is known to science that most of the Sarikamish delta is occupied by herding tribes. An example of this is the Tuzkir mound [5], where cremated bodies were buried, and it dates back to the IV-II centuries BC. As a result of archeological excavations conducted in the 60s of the last century, a large cemetery-fort with 200-250 graves was found here. The oldest date of this cemetery, where the cremated bodies were buried, is the VI-IV centuries BC [6]. In the 30 graves to its southwest, the bodies were buried in the catacombs. Scientists proved that they belong to the I-III centuries [7].

In general, in the IV century BC, the fortresses of Butentau I and II, Kanga Fortress, and Devkesken were the fortresses of the western border with nomadic tribes. There are catacombs and tombs belonging to the II-I centuries BC and the beginning of the AD century in many monuments found in the Sarikamish region. The main feature of these is that the body is buried with the head facing south (Tuzkir, Tumek-Kichijik). Similar tombs were also found in the Kalalikir I-II monument. This new catacomb tomb series is characterized by the presence of ram bones in the tomb, in addition to the general features of the burial. In addition to rituals, this situation represents the specific characteristics of the economic activity of the population group. It is worth mentioning that earthenwares, which are not characteristic of Khorezm pottery, were found in the excavations of the Tumek-Kichijik cemetery. B.I. Weinberg suggests that the Tuzkir and Tumek-Kichijik cemeteries were herders, taking into account the fact that they are located 15 km away from the agricultural oases and the ceramic finds, which are not characteristic of Khorezm pottery. The Yassikir I-II-III monuments studied by archaeologists also belong to the nomadic herding population, and they are located 5-6 km away from agricultural zones. The desert served as a boundary between the settlements of the herdsman and the farmer. In this case, it shows that the herdsman could only drive their herds through the occupied lands of Charmanyob in order to move to the winter pastures of Unguzboyi in Karakum. This, in turn, indicates a very good neighborly relationship between herdsman and farmers. Some monuments located in the left bank of Khorezm show that a

mixed population of settlers and herders lived here. An example of this is Kuyisay Fortress. Ossuary burial cemeteries and burial cemeteries of the same period were found around the castle.

By the I century AD, neighboring herding tribes established strong economic relations with oasis farmers, and they also began to become part of the Khorezm state. The absence of settlements engaged in animal husbandry and the abundance of small-horned animals in their herds indicate that this group is still unsettled and leads a nomadic lifestyle. It should be said that the resources of the Sarikamish delta were enough to feed livestock throughout the year. This, in turn, prevented migrations to the west of Sarikamish lake. Based on the presence of layers dating back to the I century AD in monuments such as Kanga Fortress, Butentau Fortress I and II, Kalajik Baba and Kurgan Fortress, they were supplied with water only from natural canals. At this time, Daryalik and Kangadarya rivers were undoubtedly flooded and flowed into Sarikamish lake. Moreover, these flooded tributaries themselves could have served as a barrier to tribal migrations beyond the basin boundaries. Recognizing that Tuzkir and Tumek-Kichijik are the wintering places of tribes engaged in animal husbandry, the maximum migration area of cattle herders did not exceed 40-50 km. Archaeologists have not found any agricultural finds here. Precisely, the strong economic relations of these times indicate that there was a division of the economy between herdsman and farmers. Because at that time pottery was widespread in the oasis south of Tuzkir (in the area of Tuzkir Fortress). Y.Y. Nerazik says that traces of pottery kilns were found in the ruins of many rural settlements inhabited by people [8]. Such a situation, that is, the emergence of pottery kilns in the border regions of the oasis, can be considered as the approach of the craftsman to the consumer. The same situation can be found in many monuments of the Kushan-Afrigian period around Charmanyob. As we mentioned above, the syncretism of the funeral rites reflects the relationship between the herdsman and the peasant population at that time. In addition, the fact that burials were carried out several times in the settlements also indicates that the movement of herding tribes became less frequent and the first elements of the settlement process. However, Weinberg remembers that local sedentary and semi-sedentary pastoral tribes lived in the Sarikamish basin in the VIII-VI centuries BC, and emphasizes that the population of this land was not ethnically homogeneous. In the IV-V centuries AD, ethnic mixing becomes more complicated. Ossuaries containing the bones and ashes of embalmed or cremated corpses, corpses buried with their heads facing south, bodies buried with their heads facing north-west and pits dug for placing pottery vessels, as well as pottery typical of Khorezm were found in Shokhsanam burial mounds of this period. The entry of the nomadic population into the territories of the left bank of Khorezm is also reflected in the materials of Kunya-Uaz, Kanga Fortress, settlements of the IV-V centuries and Torpak-kala [9].

In the Sarikamish deltas, in the V century AD, life stopped for several hundred years for unknown reasons. Not only herdsman's cemeteries, but also peasant settlements are not



found here. During this period, the archaic types that were mentioned in the sources of the settlements on the left bank of Khorezm and were preserved among the nomadic population until the last Middle Ages were widespread. The presence of such monuments in the Left Bank Khorezm is related to its economic characteristics, that is, the presence of pastoral tribes in the western region of Khorezm. In the materials of Koi Krylgan-kala and Toprak-kala, V.I.Salkin draws attention to the gradual increase in the weight of small-horned animals in the herd. This situation is explained by the specialization of animal husbandry in Khorezm and the active development of exchange between herdsmen and farmers [10]. The relationship between Khorezm's settled population and nomadic tribes is clearly visible in Sakar-chaga (Kuyusaykir) materials. Here, near the Kuyusay-kala monument, the remains of the ruined ossuary cemetery and several cemeteries where bodies were buried were found. This situation shows the mixed nature of the castle's population, which was a mixture of settled and semi-nomadic population. It is worth mentioning that the castle belongs to IV-II centuries BC and IV centuries AD. The circumstances discussed above show that the pastoral population, which settled for the first time on the left bank of the Khorezm oasis by the I century AD, established strong economic relations with the population of the neighboring agricultural micro-oases. On the other hand, it shows that they gradually entered the Khorezm state system. The lack of settlements and the predominance of small cattle in the herd among this group of nomadic pastoralists may indicate their semi-sedentary lifestyle. The natural possibilities of the right bank of Khorezm were slightly different from those of the left bank. There were no large grazing areas in the oasis, and irrigation conditions were also different. The lack of paleoanthropological materials makes it difficult to determine the ethnicity of the pastoral tribes that lived here. However, B.I.Weinberg, in connection with the specific characteristics of the Kuyusay culture, expresses the opinion that this population belongs to the Sak culture [11]. Studying 2 monuments of this culture, he draws attention to the differences between Kuyusay and Sak burial rites. And recognizing that Kuyusay people are Iranian-speaking herding tribes, he concludes that they lived in the northern borders of Iran in the VII century BC and moved to Khorezm in the middle of this century. It is worth mentioning that S.P.Tolstov, in his researches conducted in the right-bank Khorezm, noted that the carriers of the Tazabagyap culture were herdsmen and that they were directly influenced by the southern tribes. Amirabad culture is assumed to be the development of the Bronze Age when agriculture and animal husbandry combined into a productive economy. Based on the analysis of the found materials, i.e. on the basis of the increase in the number of livestock, widespread use of horses and wheeled vehicles, looking for new pastures, the increase in the desire to produce excess products and, in connection with this, exchange, availability of sources of raw materials such as copper and tin, he concludes that the development of bronze metallurgy was the factor that helped to activate internal and external relations in the Northern Desert region [12].

It is necessary to pay attention to Yakkaparsan 2 materials belonging to this culture. The existence of workshops of

craftsmen found here, to be more precise, the existence of "pottery rooms" indicates not only the emergence of skilled craftsmen, but also the formation of property and social stratification [13]. This process is more visible in the northern Tegiskan necropolises of the lower Syrdarya. Archaeologists have already found rich tombs of tribal chiefs here [14]. The large and high-quality brick architecture of the Tegiskan tombs, the presence of pottery among the grave finds, including wheel-shaped ware, and some jewelry, all confirm the penetration of elements of southern farming culture into the north.

On the other hand, the presence of potters' Andronovo ceramics type local molded pottery, Amirabad pottery, and bronze tools and ornaments next to these southern materials indicates their connection with the local desert bronze culture [15].

Many monuments of nomadic and semi-nomadic steppe tribes of Khorezm were found in the ancient delta of Syrdarya and its dry riverbeds, which are the northeastern part of Inkadarya, Janidarya and Kuvandarya. Khorezm's connections with the nomadic tribes of the lower Syrdarya are clearly visible in the ruins of Chirik Rabat, Babish Mulla, Balandi, Jetiasar, Altinasar, Uygargak, Chagirlik settlements located in these areas. The analysis of Jetiasar culture based on archaeological materials shows that Khorezm steppe tribes, especially Opasiaks, established contact during this period [16]. Already, N.L.Levina also noted that there is a similarity to the Khorezmian monuments in the construction technique and architecture of castle houses, special buildings that serve as mausoleums [17]. We can see Khorezm's relations with the settlers of the lower Syrdarya basin in the example of the Balandi monument. If we take into account that the foundations of the settlements with a defense system in the early periods of Khorezm were built of bricks and surrounded by two defensive walls (thickness 2-2.5m) and there was no corridor between the walls, Akchingul and Balandi on the borders of Khorezm were also built in this style. G.Khodjaniyozov states that he has views on the ancient monuments of Akchingul and Ketmonchi Baba, that they were a stopping place on one of the three international trade routes [18]. In addition, in the latest works of researchers [19], it is shown that Khorezm style techniques were used in the construction of the Alip-kala, Kabil-kala, Shirik 3 monuments and the fortress walls of the cities of Chirik Rabat and Babish Mulla in the lower Syrdarya. The builders who built the first defensive walls of the Balandi I fortress used Khorezm's experience in the laws of defense construction. The presence of "hidden" or "additional" gates in the fortification wall of the early period of the castle cannot be explained in any other way. The influence of the Khorezm fortification tradition is clearly visible from the bullet holes in the castle wall. The results of the research conducted by the Chirik Rabat archaeological expedition of Kazakh archaeologists in 2007-2014 confirm our opinion [20].

While periodizing the ancient history of Central Asian peoples, scientists divide it into four periods [21]. The first period is VIII-IV centuries BC – "Sak-Massaget period". Historical sources provide information about the Sak-



Massaget tribes living in Central Asia during this period. S.P.Tolstov, based on this information, in his researches emphasized that 4 large groups of Saks lived in the lower Syrdarya and placed them geographically as follows: Opasiaks (Chirik Rabat culture) lived in Janidarya basin, Tokhars (Jetiasar culture) lived in the Kuvandarya basin, the Augasiys lived between the lower Syrdarya and Kuvandarya. Inkadarya sakavarals (Tegiskan, Uygarak) lived in the south of the lower reaches of Syrdarya [22]. Contrary to this division, Litvinsky says that the saka-khaumavarka were located in the valleys of Fergana-Alay, and they lived in the lower Amudarya, including the saka-tigrakhauda and the massagets [23]. In his research, Akishev concludes that the saka-tigrakhauda occupied the territory to the south-west of Aral and the Altai Mountains. If we pay attention to the above geographical location of Khorezm according to the descriptions of Greek-Roman and Ahmani sources, we will see that it was surrounded by nomadic herding tribes. This situation naturally creates the need for them to enter into mutual economic and neighborly relations. Especially friendly relations with Tagiskan and Uygarak Sakavalars, Kuvandarya Augasiys, Jetiasar Tokhars and Chirikrabat Apasiaks of the lower Syrdarya basin are clearly visible not only in the construction style of the above-mentioned cultural monuments, but also in the order of burial and other ceremonies. Archaeologists witness the following options for burials in mounds in these settlements, especially in Chirikrabat, Janbaskala and Balandi: burnt corpses, availability of crematoriums, the body was buried in ossuaries without bones, the body is placed with its head facing south, the head of the corpse is directed to the west, the body is lying on its back with its head facing north, body with knees bent, on the head side of the corpse there are ceramic vessels, there are jewels around the body, tombs with coffins, graves plastered with reeds and twigs. All of this shows that people in these areas are engaged in a complex economy that includes cattle breeding, farming, fishing, and hunting.

Also, The discovery of traces of the Kukchadeniz culture, i.e. bronze objects or the finding of iron armor of the Scythian and Opasiak warriors in the fortresses of Chirikrabat in tombs such as Sengirtam, Babush Mulla, Tegiskan shows that there is a clash of cultures and a process of rapprochement with the surrounding tribes.

In addition, it means that a general state of religious imagination is emerging. Hundreds of archaeologists, historians, ethnographers, numismatists compete irreconcilably about the ancient history of Khorezm. The historiography of this challenge is a different issue. It should be said that S.P.Tolstov's Khorezm expedition provided us with the initial information on the history of this region. We call it "pioneer data". We will focus on the archaeological investigations conducted in these areas in recent times. The scientists of Khorezm Ma'mun Academy and Urganch State University, namely S.Baratov, Sh.Matrasulov, and K.Sobirov, along with scientists from the Karakalpakstan Department of the Academy of Sciences of Uzbekistan, Institute of History, Archeology, and Ethnography, and the University of Sydney, Australia, such as Yagodin, Helms, and Khodzhanizayov,

have conducted studies in this field. The research conducted by McLaren, Sneddon, Colin, and Betts are also extremely essential in this regard. Based on their researches, the following conclusions can be drawn.

1. Nomadic herders were active along almost the entire borders of the ancient Khorezm state. In fact, the surroundings of the oasis were favorable for the development of nomadic animal husbandry. Nomadic herders constantly moved in search of pasture for their livestock such as horses, sheep, and goats. Their houses (yurts) are adapted to constant migration. They were quick to assemble, easy to set up and easy to carry around. In ancient times, the houses of nomadic herders were built on carts. They always went with their homes. It was convenient for them to move quickly. Nomadic pastoralists occupied and settled the lands in four stages (VIII-VII centuries BC, VI-IV centuries BC, IV-IV centuries BC).
2. The western border fortresses of the left-bank Khorezm with nomadic tribes in the VI-IV centuries BC were Kanga Fortress, Butentau I and II, and undoubtedly Devkesken.
3. The relations of the right-bank Khorezm with nomadic herders can be seen in the archaeological monuments of Akchingul, Balandi, Chirikrabat, Tegiskan, and Babish Mulla on the borders of Khorezm.
4. Settled and nomadic tribes of the lower Amudarya and lower Syrdarya established peaceful neighborly and trade relations with each other in the early periods. It corresponded to the VII century BC. Archaeological objects show that the economic and cultural development of this region is equal to the advanced economies of Turanian land. In the middle of the VI century BC, several historical processes took place that led to the creation of micro-oases like Charmanyap and Bazarkala. This also led to the centralization of production, the stratification of property, the development of crafts, and the ethnic process. As a result, the military confederation of the Sak-Massaget tribes was formed, along with the development of ethnic relations.

The emergence of military confederations shows that pastoral tribes officially entered the field of history as a political force. Mutual relations between the settled and herding tribes of the lower Amudarya and Syrdarya basins developed rapidly, and sometimes sharp conflicts arose in order to expand the spheres of influence in the regions. The demand for livestock pastures has led to increased fighting between tribes. As a result, the settler-peasant population began to surround their places of residence with thick walls. During the V century BC, the oasis of Khorezm had a line of defense on its border with nomads. This line of defense was made up of large and medium-sized cities that were surrounded by defensive walls. Additionally, small rural settlements formed a defense for the internal agricultural oases along the tributaries [24]. Kuzalikir and Kalalikir served as a military border built at a height on the border with the nomads, protecting the territory of Khorezm from the attacks of the nomads from the west and south, as well as from the Ahmonites. Recent studies show that Khiva,



Aybugur, and Khazarasp fortresses were built for the purpose of protection from the southern settlers [25]. At the same time, Bozorkala was established as a military border town against the threat of nomads from the north-eastern regions. It should be noted that the complexity of a number of elements in the defense system, in addition to the urbanization processes, also shows the progress of the surrounding tribes, their unification, and the improvement of production relations. Especially, the defense structure in front of the gate, found in the fortresses, did not allow the enemy to enter the city directly.

The fact that this structure was built at a distance of 17-20 meters from the entrance gate of the fortress and the presence of one or two roundabouts reflects the complicated relations with the neighboring tribes.

The IV and II centuries BC are defined by the years of the establishment and rule of the Kang state in Central Asia. In the literature, this history is divided into the Great and Little Kang eras. The Great Kang period is the IV and II centuries BC, and archaeological and ethnological studies say that Khorezm was not part of this state. However, it was during this period (from the IV century BC) that a large number of cities and small villages were built on the right and left banks of the Amudarya, and new historical-geographical, irrigation and agricultural oases were created. Such a situation indicates the existence of a political union, the stability of the political situation, and the highly developed socio-economic and ethno-cultural relations in this region. According to historical sources, by the second half of the III century BC, Khorezm expanded its political sphere of influence in the area that reached the Caspian Sea in the south-west, the border of Ustyurt in the south-east, and the Greco-Bactrian lands in the north-east. The second Kang period corresponds to the II century BC to the II century AD. According to scientists, Khorezm was part of it for a while and quickly left [26]. The results of archaeological research also show this. Because, from the IV century BC to the II century BC, the construction of many castles and fortified villages is observed, from the II century BC to the I century AD, the renovation of the existing castles is observed, that is, during this period, no castle constructions are observed. On the contrary, the strengthening of defense walls and the increase of shooting points are observed. This process determines the attitude of the settled population to the surrounding events.

At this point, it should also be noted that during this period, a part of the Opasiak-Sakaravak tribes surrounding the Khorezm region entered the territory of Khorezm due to the large-scale military campaigns of the Scythians in the south. This is evidenced not only by the ceramics of the last Kang period, which starts from the II century BC but also by various finds excavated from the layer belonging to the last life of the Koi Krylgan-kala, spread among the steppe tribes and brought here by them. This is evidenced by the appearance of villages belonging to an earlier period and founded by the Opasiaks themselves in the southwestern edges of the Khorezm region.

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