

THE SIGNIFICANCE OF SIGNAL TOWERS IN THE PAST

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Abstract:

The article tells about the historical monuments of the X-XIII centuries in the Aral Sea region - the role of lighthouse towers for the life of the population in the past. The author gives interesting information about the characteristics of lighthouses located in the southeast of Ustyurt and on the Sultan-Uvais ridge along the banks of the Amu Darya.

Keywords: South-Eastern Ustyurt, Aral Sea region, signal towers, lighthouse, caravan route, Mongols, nomads.

Introduction

The Chilpiq monument in Amudarya district attracts the attention of the beholder. This monument, considered a symbol of Karakalpakstan, has been proven to have fulfilled a number of tasks in history. Sources say that Chilpiq performed the function of a dakhma (a burial place) during the reign of Zoroastrian culture [1], according to some reports, it was used as a defense-fortress against enemies in the Middle Ages, and this monument also performed the function of a lighthouse (signal tower) [2].

In addition to this, dozens of signal towers were found in Karakalpakstan, which were included in the protected monuments of state importance [3].

Signal towers were built in Khorezm state in the X-XIII centuries [4]. It was determined that the jug vessels found during archaeological excavations belong to the XII-XIII centuries [5, p. 15]. As it is known from history, in the 9th-13th centuries, the main tributary of Amudarya (Daryalyq channel) flowed along the eastern Chink foothills of Ustyurt, that is, from Aibuyir to Sudochoye lake. During these times, the lighthouses (signal towers) built along the eastern part of Ustyurt also served as a guide for ships.

The rapid development of fortresses along the eastern part of Ustyurt can be attributed to the establishment of shipping communication on the now dry Daryalyq channel. Signal towers (lighthouses) located every 8-10 km along Chink served for waterway trade. [6, p. 81-82]. When merchant ships approached, firstly, these beacons served as navigational functions, and secondly, the people living nearby were notified. For this, a fire was lit on the top of the tower in the dark, and reeds were lit during the day, because the smoke of the reeds was so thick that it was visible for tens of kilometers.

The connections of the peoples of Central Asia depended on the overland caravan route on the right and left banks of the Amudarya, where many settlements were located. The Great Silk Road along the Amudarya River was constantly changing its direction. The direction of this road went sometimes to the right bank of the river, sometimes to the left. The direction of the road on the coast depended on the possibilities of ship communication. Also, the importance of building



lighthouses along the river to facilitate ship communication [6, p. 81-82].

Signal towers built along the chink in Ustyurt also became important for nomadic tribes. Nomads who have been engaged in animal husbandry and hunting in the deserts of Ustyurt for almost three thousand years exchanged their products when traders came. For example, nomads used to catch hundreds of thousands of ungulates such as saiga, gazelle, kulon, tarpan in one year by building enclosure (aran). Between 1840 and 1850, more than 344,000 saiga horns were sold to China in Ustyurt. It is only about the number of male saigas [7, p. 181]. It is known from history that the practice of making medicine from saiga horns has been popular in China since ancient times. Nomads living in Ustyurt used to exchange their prey for trade caravans in this way. The fact that a large number of bones of kulan, saiga, and gazelle were found in the fortress of Korgansha (Dauletkerey), located 220 km north of Kungrad in South-Eastern Ustyurt region, can be a proof of this. Also, the identification of a pottery kiln by archaeologists near this Qorgansha monument [5, p. 270] testifies to the fact that semi-sedentary peoples also lived there and that they also exchanged their products with trade caravans.

Near the Qorgansha fortress, a signal tower has been preserved in Chink. As a result of the collapse of the plateau, the fortress and the tower were divided into two. It has been determined by scientists that there are 9 lighthouse towers located on the Amudarya coast along the Southern Sultan Uvayis mountain ranges, except for South-Eastern Ustyurt. For example, the Khojakol minaret, belonging to the XII-XIV centuries, served as a lighthouse. At its end is a tube-like path, and a small stove is placed at the bottom. A fire was lit there. The smoke of the fire was drawn away with a pipe-backed head.

Often, during excavations, many remains of reeds were found. The reason is that reed is a plant that burns quickly and emits thick smoke. Most of the majority lighthouses in the Karakalpakstan region were built in this way. Beacons were lit in specially built furnaces in the towers and were used to signal the arrival of caravans to nearby villages and to warn the people against enemies. It was possible to signal from them when an enemy or a caravan approached, either in the evening or during the day, by fire or smoke. Within an hour after the signal was given, all garrisons on the border were mobilized under any circumstances.

According to Yu.Manylov, an archeologist who studied the signal beacons of Sultan Uvayis Mountain, in the 10th-11th centuries, the state of Khorezm was always threatened by Oghuz Turks tribes living around the Aral Sea. Therefore, such signal towers are installed on the hills [4, p. 65-71]. Also, the scientist notes that the towers in Ustyurt were the basis for the development of friendly relations between the Khorezms and the Oghuz-Pechenegs [7, p.172].

Such defense structures and signal towers were built in the 12th-13th centuries during the reign of the last Khorezmshah Muhammed along the borders of the country. The towers in Qaratau were also built to defend against Mongol invasion. The Karatau ridge became a natural obstacle for the Mongols, who were rapidly advancing all over the place.

In the areas where the minaret is located, it is possible to see the wide development of artistry. This is because trade caravans not only sold goods, but also had purchasing power. It can be said that the mining of more than 300 precious stones was discovered by Y.P.Manylov in Sultan Uvayis Mountain near the place where the minaret is located. At the foot of the mountain, stone-carved workshops were found. It should also be said that the capital made of marble was also found in the present Museum of History and Culture of Karakalpakstan. Similar objects related to the



Middle Ages can be found in the museums of many countries. For example, a teapot made of molten stone in one of the museums in the city of Khiva, a capital made of stone and various other items were found in Egypt.

Scientists include lighthouse minarets in the structure of buildings along the road.

It was determined that four monuments were found in the vicinity of the Aral region, and that they were lighthouse minarets. They are minarets on Kyrantau, Kuskhana, Porlytau and Tokkala hills. It is assumed that these four minarets had a separate relationship with the remaining minarets due to their geographical location. For example, if we look at their location, it can be seen that they stretched from Kat to Kerder Castle in the middle ages, and to the Khaiwankala archaeological site in the north. These routes include Sultan Baba, Khojakul, Koyanchik, Chilpiq, Nazarkhan, Kuskhana, Tokkala, Kyrantau and Porlytau lighthouses. Chilpik can also be included among the lighthouse towers in this system. This may be due to the fact that there are no minarets other than the Chilpik monument on the Amu Daryo River and between the Koyanshik and Nazarkhan minarets. It was climbed from a clay soil wall to the top of a natural hill. In the Middle Ages, it was used as a lighthouse minaret [8].

It is known that in the ancient and middle ages, Central Asian countries were connected with Eastern Europe and the Volga by trade caravan routes in Ustyurt. We said that lighthouse minarets were installed along the caravan routes. The differences of the lighthouse minarets found in Ustyurt have been preserved to this day, and they were built from small stone tiles taken from the plateau of Ustyurt. A total of 25 lighthouse minarets have been identified in the distance from Dekshe near Sarykamys Lake to Korganasha on the shores of the Aral Sea on the Silk Road from Iran to Turkmenistan in the Aral Sea region. The average distance between each of them is 20, 30, 40 km, covering a total distance of 300 km [8].

According to the late scientist H. Esbergenov, who studied the historical and cultural monuments of Konyrat, "it is possible that the towers of the minarets were dedicated to some spirit, especially to the spirit of water (god of water). According to modern people, the source of all water is the sky, rain, snow, and therefore, the spirits of the waters of the rivers and lakes must be worshiped" [9, p. 46].

Lighthouses (Urga, Kiyajol) in South-Eastern Ustyurt chinks played an important role in the life of the people until the 60s of the last century. In the last century, a large fishing industry operated in the village of Urga, which is now a ruin. Beavers and muskrats were raised there, and their skins were delivered to Moscow. Urga was given water, food, clothes, etc. It is transmitted from the center.

Large barges transported goods from the city of Aral in Kazakhstan to Urga and Moinak. These barges and night fishing vessels are signaled by beacons.

As a rule, the lighthouses in the Ustyurt chink are placed at intervals so that they are visible to each other. If a fire is lit in one of them, it will be clearly visible to the nearest person at a distance of 7-8 km.

The construction materials of the lighthouse-towers are adapted according to their location. The minarets in the distance from Sultan Uwais mountain range to Chilpikka were made of clay bricks. Lighthouses in south-eastern Ustyurt are made of crushed stones.

We visited the Khojakul lighthouse and Karaumbet, Kiyazhol, Urga, Korgansha lighthouses in South-East Ustyurt dozens of times during 2015-2022. We got acquainted with the ecological



condition of these historical monuments. We should look at these memories as monuments built on the basis of folk wisdom, because the mentioned lighthouses do not have a foundation, but they have been standing for thousands of years. For example, the minaret in Khojakul is made of brick and has no foundation.

The foundations of the minarets in Ustyurt have not been laid either. However, natural processes cannot leave their mark on historical monuments. Rain, frost, incessant wind and tectonic movements cause the collapse of minarets in Ustyurt.

The minarets in Urga are more affected by humans than by nature.

Tourists and passengers traveling along Chink climb to the top of this thousand-year-old monument to see the beautiful view of Sudoche Lake, as a result of which the stones are falling and the archeological monument is being trampled. These monuments are included in the national list of immovable objects of tangible cultural heritage [3]. But even so, it is not felt that any measures are being taken to save them. There are no signs to protect it near the crumbling lighthouses.

In general, it is important to preserve historical and interesting lighthouses in the Aral Sea region, their restoration or conservation, and their wide promotion as tourist objects. If our historical monuments, which have served many generations for thousands of years, are falling apart today, it is clear that the future generation will not forgive us for this.

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