



Archaeological And Written Sources On The Trade Cities Of Khorezm In The 14th–15th Centuries

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ABSTRACT

This thesis analyzes the scholarly significance of written sources and archaeological research in studying the role of Khorezm in the international trade system in the 14th–15th centuries. Based on Nizam al-Din Shami's "Zafarnama", the accounts of European travelers, and the scholarly works of M.Sh. Qdirniyozov and other researchers, the role of Khorezm in the Great Silk Road and broader Eurasian trade relations is examined. The results of archaeological research conducted in 1958–2025 are also analyzed, revealing their scholarly significance in reconstructing the topography, economic life, trade infrastructure, and political development of the cities of Khorezm.

KEYWORDS: Khorezm, 14th–15th centuries, international trade, Great Silk Road, archaeological research, written sources, Timurid period, Golden Horde, trade cities, historiography.

INTRODUCTION

The role of Khorezm in general Eurasian trade in the 13th–14th centuries, its socio-economic condition during this period, and its place in the economic and cultural life of the Golden Horde were especially thoroughly studied by the Karakalpak archaeologist and historian M.Sh. Qdirniyozov. He is the author of numerous monographs and articles on this subject. He also proved, on the basis of written sources and archaeological research, that Khorezm played a significant role in the trade of the Great Silk Road in the 13th–14th centuries [1].

During the 1970s–1990s, systematic excavations and scientific research were carried out at archaeological monuments of Khorezm dating to the 14th–15th centuries. In particular, archaeological investigations were conducted at Janpiqqal'a in 1973, 1978–1981, 1981–1983, and 1985–1987; at Mizdahqon in 1980, 1985, and 1986–1987; at the Shahrlik monument in 1963 and 1965; and at Voyangan (Ardakhushmisan) in 1973–1974. These studies made it possible to identify important scientific data concerning the topographic structure, economic activity, and social life of the cities of Khorezm in the 14th–15th centuries. At the same time, the archaeological materials obtained also served to reconstruct certain aspects of the political processes that took place in the oasis during this period and to interpret historical events on a scientific basis [2].

A new stage in the archaeological study of trade cities dating to the 13th–16th centuries began in 1958 with the establishment of the Department of Archaeology within the Karakalpakstan Branch of the Academy of Sciences of Uzbekistan. As a result of the organization of the activities of this scientific structure, its specialists gained the opportunity to conduct archaeological research independently of the Khorezm Archaeological and Ethnographic Expedition.



Consequently, during 1958–2025, numerous archaeological expeditions were organized by this institution to study the medieval history of the Khorezm oasis, particularly the cities and trade centers dating to the 13th–16th centuries. As a result of these studies, important scientific data were collected on the urban development, trade infrastructure, and material culture of the oasis [3]. In particular, between 1958 and 1961, the Khorezm Archaeological and Ethnographic Expedition conducted comprehensive archaeological research at Shahrlik, Puljoy, Bug'roxon, Munchoqli, Zamakhshar, Tuproqqal'a, Yorbakirqal'a, and Hazorasp, which were considered important medieval trade and urban centers of the oasis. As a result of these investigations, important scientific information concerning the historical topography, material culture, handicrafts, and trade activities of these cities was obtained, serving as an important source for studying the economic development of medieval Khorezm [4].

As a result of these archaeological studies, scholarly understanding of the historical development of the cities of the Khorezm oasis in the 14th–15th centuries was significantly enriched with new evidence and archaeological materials. The results obtained made it possible to conduct a deeper analysis of the urban development, socio-economic life, and political processes of the oasis.

From the 1370s until the end of the 15th century, Khorezm was incorporated into the centralized state under the rule of Amir Temur and the Timurids. However, this process occurred as a result of prolonged military and political struggles. In particular, between 1372 and 1388, Amir Temur conducted an intense struggle in the north-western territories of Khorezm, which belonged to the Golden Horde, against the governors of the Jochid Ulus and the local Qong'irotsufis. During these confrontations, the military campaigns of 1372, 1373, 1377–1378, 1379, and 1388 caused serious losses and material destruction in the oasis. Therefore, medieval sources interpret the internal political situation of this period in different ways, and some authors put forward differing and sometimes controversial views.

One of the most important and relatively early written sources covering the history of the Amir Temur period is the work "Zafarnama" ("Temur Zafarnama"), written by the court historian Nizam al-Din Shami. This source is of significant historical importance for studying the political events, military campaigns, and issues of state administration of Temur's empire. Some chapters of the work were later translated into Russian by V.G. Tiesenhausen and included in "Sbornik materialov, otnosyashchikhsya k istorii Zolotoy Ordya" (Vol. II), and were also translated into Czech by F. Gauer in 1937 and introduced into scholarly circulation [5].

The historical events described in "Zafarnama" mainly cover the period up to the end of 1404. In the process of writing the work, Nizam al-Din Shami made extensive use of various written sources related to the period of Temur, diary records kept during military campaigns, and oral accounts of his contemporaries. In this respect, the work is recognized as one of the reliable and important primary sources for studying the reign of Amir Temur. The work was later published in Russia in 1941, while its scholarly edition in Uzbek was published in Tashkent in 1972 under the editorship of the orientalist scholar O. O'rinboyev [6].

Researchers from a number of European countries also paid special attention to the trade cities of Khorezm in their scholarly and travel works. Along with providing information on the geographical location, economic potential, and role of these cities in the international trade system, they also expressed their scholarly views on these issues. In particular, the memoirs of the English traveler G. Lansdell contain a special section devoted to the historical monuments

of Khorezm, in which valuable observations concerning some historical sites and cities of the oasis are presented. Nevertheless, since the author did not have the opportunity to describe the monuments of Khorezm comprehensively and in detail, his information does not fully reveal the historical and geographical features of the region [7].

In the 13th–15th centuries, the Khorezm oasis functioned as one of the important links in the trade system of Central Asia and Eurasia as a whole. During this period, the complex processes that took place in the political life of the oasis, particularly the military and political events of the Golden Horde and Amir Temur periods, had a significant impact on urban development and trade relations. Nevertheless, owing to its strategic geographical location and economic potential, Khorezm retained an important position in international trade relations.

The results of written sources and archaeological research made it possible to scientifically reconstruct the topographic structure, material culture, handicrafts, and trade infrastructure of the cities of Khorezm in the 14th–15th centuries. In particular, research conducted at Janpiqqal'a, Mizdahqon, Shahrlik, Voyangan, and other monuments serves as an important scholarly source for elucidating the economic and cultural development of the oasis. In addition, Nizam al-Din Shami's "Zafarnama" and the information left by European travelers are of particular importance as important written sources that complement archaeological findings.

In general, a comparative analysis of archaeological and written sources makes it possible to provide a deeper understanding of Khorezm's place in the Great Silk Road system, the economic development of its cities, and its position in international trade relations in the 13th–15th centuries. The results of these studies are of significant scholarly importance for reassessing the medieval history of Khorezm on the basis of new scientific evidence and for enriching the historiography of the region.

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