

The Socio-Economic Life of the Ancient Khorezm Region's Population in Written Sources and the Issue of Their Interpretation

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Abstract: Istakhri states that there were nearly 4,000 fortresses along the canals surrounding Bukhara. Narshakhi wrote that 700 fortresses were built by Kushan merchants who had been resettled by the Arabs around Bukhara. Yaqubi mentioned that there were approximately 400 fortresses in Ustrushana.

The Kharezmians played a key role in transmitting Aramaic script to the nomadic tribes of Central Asia. The chronology of Teshik Qala was determined using numismatic sources. It was active during the reigns of two rulers during its second phase of construction. Coins from two rulers were found there. On one coin, the ruler is depicted wearing a stepped-tooth crown. Arab sources from the 9th–10th centuries mention the presence of numerous fortresses during the Arab conquest. In this article is analyzed socio-economic life of the ancient Khorezm region's population in written sources and the issue of their interpretation.

Keywords: socio-economic life, ancient period, middle ages, sources, written sources.

Introduction. The history of the Khorezm state during the 5th–8th centuries CE is considered one of the most problematic periods. Although certain written sources have preserved information about this era, they are insufficient, as a significant portion of them were destroyed during the Arab conquest. For this reason, the analysis of the remaining written sources is crucial. These sources, written in various languages such as Greek, Chinese, Persian, Armenian, Arabic, and the local language, have provided insights into the socio-political, economic, and cultural life of the early medieval Khorezm state. Archaeological research has also played a significant role in this analysis.

Analyses. There are almost no written sources preserved about the history of Khorezm from the 5th–6th centuries CE. The history of this period has been analyzed primarily through archaeological and numismatic data. The study of Chinese sources by researchers has revealed information about the ruling dynasties of Khorezm during that time. In Chinese sources, Khorezm is referred to as Khosyun or Kholisimi. Notably, Chinese historical records like Bei Shi ("History of the Northern Dynasties"), Sui Shu ("History of the Sui Dynasty"), and Tang Shu ("History of the Tang Dynasty") provide information about all the states and territories in Central Asia, including Khorezm, which is described as a peripheral region. Researchers have concluded, based on Chinese sources, that the states in Central Asia during the early medieval period were ruled by dynasties belonging to a single tribal lineage.

According to the Tang Shu chronicles, as interpreted by I. Bichurin, rulers in various regions of Central Asia, such as An (Bukhara), Sao (Kabudon), Shi (Chach), Mi (Maymurg), He (Kushania/Kattakurgan), Khosyun (Khorezm), Maodi (possibly Bitik), and Shishi (Kesh), were

all members of the Chjaovu dynasty [3, p.310]. Researchers have deduced from these records that rulers in Central Asia during the early medieval period belonged to related ethnic lineages and governed their respective territories for extended periods. These dynasties preserved the lineage name of the Yuezhi (Great Yuezhi) tribes, which settled in Central Asia. The Yuezhi tribes were Turkic and were referred to as "Tocharians" in Russian sources.

In his research, A. Otakhojaev identified the Chjaovu dynasty as descendants of the Kan family, which produced rulers not only for Bukhara but also for Samarkand, Kushania, Ishtikhon, Kesh, Nakhshab, Ustrushana, Chach, Khorezm, Fergana, and territories south of the Amu Darya. This dynasty governed Bukhara for 400 years, and its Samarkand branch ruled other territories from the 1st century CE onward. In Sogdian sources, this dynasty is referred to as *yn kwtr'k* ("Kan Dynasty"). According to Chinese records (Bei Shi, Sui Shu, Tang Shu), this dynasty was related to the Western Turkic Khaganate and assimilated among the local population of Central Asia under Sogdian (Eastern Iranian) influence [5, p. 66]. Some scholars interpret the term Chjaovu differently, suggesting that it denotes the title of "ruler" or yabgu among the Turks [6, p. 257]. Sh. Kamoliddinov also analyzed this issue and concluded that branches of this lineage ruled various regions, including Samarkand, Bukhara, Kushan, Ishtikhon, Kesh, Nakhshab, Ustrushana, and Chach. He emphasized that their rule can be traced back to the Kushan era. Chinese sources state that this ruling family originated from the Yuezhi, who initially resided in the northern part of the Silyan-Shan mountains, in the city of Chjaovu. After being defeated by the Xiongnu, they crossed the Tian Shan mountains and migrated westward, establishing separate kingdoms while maintaining the name Chjaovu, signifying their lineage [3, p.271, 280, 310].

This information is also supported by numismatic evidence. Coins discovered across various regions bear similar tamga (tribal symbols), which correspond to those on Kushan coins. In Sogdiana, four major clans used tamga symbols on their coins that resembled the ones used by the Kushans [10, p. 254]. In the Byzantine Empire, documents were maintained in Greek script and language. Byzantine sources contain records about diplomatic relations with the Turkic Khaganate. In 568, the Turkic Khaganate sent an envoy to Byzantium, providing information about their conquered territories and establishing diplomatic relations. Around 570, Byzantine envoys visited the Turkic Khaganate. They requested the Khaganate to send envoys from its vassal states as well. However, the Turkic Khagan permitted sending an envoy only to the Kharezmians, claiming that they alone were allowed this privilege. Researchers believe that "Kharezm" refers to the Khwarazm state, which was formally subordinated to the Turkic Khaganate but retained self-governance. Narshakhi, in his History of Bukhara, notes that in the 8th century, Khwarezm coins displaced the local Bukhara coins.

Among early medieval sources, Arab written records provide extensive details about the Arab conquest of Kharezm. These details are found in the works of al-Tabari, Narshakhi, and al-Maqdisi. These sources describe the campaigns led by Qutayba ibn Muslim to conquer Kharezm. Al-Tabari states that in 712, the ruler of Kharezm who fought against Qutayba was named Chagon. He also mentions the rivalry between Chagon and his brother Khurzad. This internal political strife weakened Kharezm and led to its subjugation by the Arabs.

Al-Tabari describes events in the state during this period. Khurzad's subjects complained about oppression and the seizure of their valuable possessions by Chagon's men. Chagon admitted his inability to confront Khurzad and secretly negotiated with Qutayba ibn Muslim to oppose his brother. Chagon promised Qutayba allegiance and great wealth. Subsequently, Qutayba spread rumors of planning a campaign against Sughd. When Khurzad heard this, he dismissed his troops, saying, "Qutayba is going to Sughd this year; we can calmly focus on our own affairs." However, Qutayba unexpectedly arrived in Fil city near Chagon with a thousand cavalry.

The Kharezmians panicked upon seeing the Arabs and called on Khurzad for help. Realizing Chagon's involvement in the Arabs' entry, Khurzad tried to gather an army and fought Qutayba but was captured. Chagon then asked Qutayba to execute Khurzad and punish his men. He also

sought Qutayba's assistance in combating the governor of Hamjird city, who frequently attacked Kharezm.

According to Ibn al-Athir, Qutayba decided to fully conquer Kharezm. In 712, he established Arab control over the region [12, p. 127]. After subjugating Kharezm, Qutayba demanded the Kharezmshah provide wealth and slaves—10,000 or, in some sources, 100,000 people [12, p. 127]. Qutayba appointed his deputy in Kharezm and left. However, uprisings soon began again, prompting Qutayba to send a large army led by Mugayra bin Abdullah to suppress the rebellion. Mugayra reconquered Kharezm, killing many, taking others as captives, and forcing the remaining inhabitants to agree to pay the jizya tax.

The Kharezmshah Chagon fled to Qutayba, who appointed him governor of Nishapur [12, p. 128]. According to Baladhuri, there is a slightly different version of events. After Qutayba's campaign in Kharezm, he left Chagon on the throne. Dissatisfied with this, the Khwarezmians killed Chagon. Qutayba then placed Chagon's son, Askajamuq, on the throne, preserving his dynasty. However, the rulers of Kharezm were merely nominal kings. In reality, the state was governed by the caliphate's deputy in Khorasan, while military governors (amirs) wielded actual power. Askajamuq resided in Kat, while the deputy initially resided in Mizdakhkan and later in Gurganj. In Abu Tahir Turtushi's work, it is mentioned that the army of Kharezmians, led by the Kharezmshah's nephew and son, was a key supporter of Abu Muslim. This information shows that the Kharezmians were involved in movements against Arab rule. They supported Abu Muslim in his struggle against the Umayyads. However, there are no written records about events involving Kharezmians in later periods.

Chinese chronicles report that in 751, the ruler of Kharezm, Shaoshifin, sent envoys to the court of the Chinese emperor. The name Shaoshifin is referred to as Shovshafar in the works of Abu Rayhan al-Biruni. In 762, during the reign of Baolin, a second envoy was sent, as recorded in the chronicles. Researchers believe that during this period, the Afrighid dynasty ruled Kharezm [7]. Inscriptions on coins from early medieval Kharezm have been studied and compared with written sources. A coin from the mid-8th century contains an inscription in cursive script, which researchers were able to fully decipher. They read the name as Shaushafar, consistent with the name in al-Biruni's works and Chinese records [8, p. 134]. According to Abu Rayhan al-Biruni, Shaush ruled Kharezm at the end of the 6th century CE. Researchers studying coins from this period read the name as Suyavush [9]. Coins from the early 7th century CE, particularly silver coins, lacked cursive inscriptions, leading to debates in the 1960s about deciphering the names of rulers. On copper coins, only the phrase "Honorable King of Kharezm" could be read. An expedition led by S.P. Tolstov analyzed ancient and early medieval coins and reconstructed the Kharezmian alphabet, which was based on Aramaic script. Using this alphabet, inscriptions on silver bowls were also deciphered. This breakthrough was a significant achievement in studying the history of ancient and early medieval Kharezm. Before the Arab conquest, the ruler of Kharezm was named Askajamuk [2, p. 392-395]. Researchers analyzed this name, noting that individuals and clans with similar names were also present in other parts of Central Asia and mentioned in Chinese sources. Based on this, they concluded that such individuals were likely large landowners in the early medieval period. In Chinese sources, this name is transcribed as Zhao-wu [1, p. 128]. During the era of the Turkic Khaganate, rulers in some regions were replaced by members of the Ashina dynasty. The rulers from this lineage resided in palaces. According to A.M. Belinsky, their traditions were connected to those of the Kushans [2, p. 392-395]. Coins from the 5th–6th centuries depict a beardless king on the obverse, with a tamga on the reverse. This tamga resembles those of the Hephthalites. Researchers such as S.P. Tolstov have suggested that the Kharezmian kings of that time were related to the Hephthalites and Kushans [8, p. 134]. Similarly, N. Veselovsky argued that Kharezm influenced the formation of the Hephthalite state [11, p. 13]. The city of Kerder is thought to have been a headquarters for the Hephthalites (or Kidarites), and its name is believed to have been given by the Kidarites. Additionally, al-Muqaddasi mentioned two locations named Kerder: one on the right bank of the Amu Darya and another on the left, known

Kederan Kas. Among the Kyrgyz, there was also a clan named Kerder. The similarity in tamgas on coins supports the hypothesis that early medieval Kharezmian kings were part of the Hephthalite dynasty.

In 1937, around 150 coins from the 3rd–8th centuries were discovered by the Khorezm Archaeological and Ethnographic Expedition (KAEE) on the right bank of Kharezm. Most of these coins were made of copper and were minted locally for use within Kharezm.

Researchers drew the following conclusions based on their study of these coins:

1. The tamgas on Kharezmian coins confirm Abu Rayhan al-Biruni's assertion that the rule of a single dynasty continued uninterrupted in Kharezm, as supported by both numismatic and Arab sources. However, for a brief period, part of Kharezm was ruled by another dynasty that minted its own coins. During the Afrighid period, they ruled the entire Kharezm region.
2. The governance system in Kharezm differed from that of the Sogdian state. Kharezm functioned as a confederation of city-states but was always referred to as a unified state in historical sources, including Chinese records.
3. The style and tamgas on the coins indicate that the ruling dynasty in Kharezm was connected to the Yuezhi. The Afrighid tamgas resemble those of the Kushans from the 1st century BCE and early centuries CE.
4. Decorative elements on bowls suggest strong ties between Khwarezm and Bactria.
5. The discovery of Kharezmian coins and silver bowls from the 3rd–8th centuries in Prikamye indicates that Kharezm maintained economic relations with Eastern Europe.
6. The preservation of ancient imagery on Kharezmian coins up until the 8th century highlights the region's adherence to its traditional customs and practices during the early medieval period. Despite the influence of the Sassanian Empire, Kharezm remained loyal to its ancient traditions. Ancient Kharezmian script survived until the 8th century CE. The Kharezmians played a key role in transmitting Aramaic script to the nomadic tribes of Central Asia. The chronology of Teshik Qala was determined using numismatic sources. It was active during the reigns of two rulers during its second phase of construction. Coins from two rulers were found there. On one coin, the ruler is depicted wearing a stepped-tooth crown. The reverse bears the name "Shaushafar" and shows a horseman, with a simple Afrighid tamga on the left. Shaushafar ruled in the first half of the 8th century. Another coin, with similar imagery, shows the ruler in the same type of crown but with a different appearance. The reverse features the same tamga but includes illegible inscriptions due to poor preservation. S.P. Tolstov proposed that this coin might belong to Abdullah, who ruled at the end of the 8th century.

Conclusion. Information about Khwarezm in the 10th century is found in the works of Arab and Persian geographers such as Ibn Rusta, Al-Istakhri, Ibn Hawqal, al-Maqdisi, and Hudud al-Alam. These sources provide geographical details about the tributaries of the Amu Darya, the canals drawn from it, the cities and roads surrounding the canals, as well as the lifestyle and culture of the people.

Arab sources from the 9th–10th centuries mention the presence of numerous fortresses during the Arab conquest. These fortresses are referred to in the texts as *hishn* and *qasr*. They were scattered around the cities, located about 200 meters apart, and covered an area of 34 square kilometers. Each fortress was surrounded by a wall. According to the Arab historian Al-Maqdisi, there were 12,000 fortresses around Mirdakhkan during the early medieval period.

Similar large numbers of castles and fortifications are mentioned in other regions in historical sources. For example, Istakhri states that there were nearly 4,000 fortresses along the canals surrounding Bukhara. Narshakhi wrote that 700 fortresses were built by Kushan merchants who had been resettled by the Arabs around Bukhara. Yaqubi mentioned that there were

approximately 400 fortresses in Ustrushana. Detailed information about such fortifications is also found in Narshakhi's History of Bukhara.

Most of the written records about the early medieval history of Kharezm were destroyed during the Arab conquest. Abu Rayhan al-Biruni wrote in his works about this destruction. The obliteration of historical records in this way led to the complete disappearance of many events without a trace.

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