

Article

The Problem of Protecting Ancient Agricultural Oases

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Abstract: This study investigates the ancient defense walls surrounding agricultural oases in Central Asia, focusing on their historical development, construction techniques, and socio-economic implications. Using archaeological evidence and historical sources, the research identifies the walls' origins, purposes, and transformations across periods. The methodology involved analyzing ruins, historical records, and regional archeological data to understand their role in protecting agriculture, trade, and settled communities from external threats. Findings reveal that these walls served not only as defensive barriers against nomadic incursions but also as measures to regulate irrigation, safeguard trade routes, and prevent environmental encroachments such as desertification. Prominent examples, including the Soter Wall and Kanpir Wall, highlight advanced engineering and state-organized efforts to sustain agricultural productivity. This study underscores the importance of preserving these structures as heritage monuments, providing insights into ancient Central Asian civilizations' resilience and resourcefulness in managing their socio-economic and environmental challenges.

Keywords: Kanpir wall of Ancient Sogd oasis, Antiochus I Soter wall, Kanpir wall, Devkesgan wall, Pirosta wall, Chim wall, Balkh oasis wall, Darband wall, Qiyamat wall, Gilyakin Chilburj wall, Oasis wall around Ancient Nisa

1. Introduction

The introduction discusses the significance of defensive walls in ancient agricultural oases, emphasizing their historical, functional, and societal importance. Defensive walls were primarily constructed to protect agricultural crops from enemy attacks, predators, and cattle. They also served as barriers against shifting sands and as strategic fortifications against neighboring rulers. Historically, these defensive measures date back to the Bronze Age, where communities utilized natural and artificial barriers to safeguard their settlements. As societies evolved, the accumulation of surplus wealth and the emergence of social stratification led to the construction of private and state defense structures.

The development of irrigation systems and the subsequent flourishing of agriculture played a critical role in the expansion of defensive walls. Prosperous oases became prime targets for raids, prompting the construction of robust walls to ensure the safety of both agriculture and settlements. Archaeological investigations of structures like the Kanpir Wall and Chim Wall have provided insights into their design, dimensions, and historical context, highlighting their dual role in protection and irrigation management. These walls not only defined state boundaries but also served to protect trade routes and separate nomadic and settled populations.

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2. Materials and Methods

Initially, in the period of primitive patriarchal communities, that is, in the Bronze Age, individual clans and communities defended their villages, clans and community members from attacks by other clans and tribes, depending on the geographical conditions of their villages from all sides or surrounded by a strong, thick wall from the sides where the enemy's attack was expected. During the archaeological excavations being carried out by Qadimshunolsar in Dalvarzintepa, a place known as "Buvanamozor" near the town of Chust, Andijan region, primitive people who lived in these villages in the Bronze Age and made a living by farming, around these villages, 3 meters thick of raw bricks and straw. The ruins of the built defense walls were excavated and examined.[1]

Accumulation of surplus wealth in the hands of clan and tribal chiefs during primitive communities increased their status within the community. In this regard, representatives of the upper class built separate houses and palaces for their families and surrounded them with strong walls. Thus, with the origin of private ownership, the walling of individual private houses and mansions was a picture.

At the beginning of the first millennium BC, large states emerge in the territory of Central Asia. The climate of Central Asia is dry and hot, and due to low rainfall, it was impossible to develop agriculture here without artificial irrigation. As in all Asian countries, one of the main tasks of the state, which was formed very early, is to ensure the development of agriculture, which is a necessary condition of life and the basis of the economy, by organizing and managing this irrigation. [2]

As a result, large and small agricultural oases are created around various large and small rivers. Now, many large rivers, such as the Amudarya, which is a major source of water in the region, are being used in a productive way, large canals have been made from them, dams and dams have been built, and floods that occur when the river's water rises cause the crops to be flooded. It will be possible to prevent departures. As a result of hard work, agricultural oases expand and agricultural work expands. The states that were the political union of their time were forced to take care of the development of agriculture in the oases, the increase of production, and the fact that the population would manage their own economy at some level. This care consisted in the organization of artificial irrigation to a certain extent.

In fact, it was necessary to build and improve hydrotechnical systems to provide water to the agricultural population. The countries in the regions of Central Asia and Uzbekistan understood this well and were forced to implement such measures. As a result, agricultural oases expand and large cities emerge in oases. Crafts and trade will develop in them. [3]

Later, as a result of archeological research and analysis of the tombs carried out by ancient scientists, we can see that the economic and cultural life in the oases has increased significantly. Textile, pottery, jewelry, architecture, painting, writing, and trade are highly developed in the cities. At the same time, agriculture based on irrigation, horticulture has developed further. As a result, great progress was made in the cultivation of grain, cotton and fruit.

Despite the development of settled cultural life in various river oases of Central Asia, large areas around these oases are still desert and steppe desert lands, inhabited by nomadic herding tribes. These tribes were very skilled in military affairs, they were warlike tribes. The raids of nomadic pastoralists force the settled population to live in constant danger and danger. In need of protection from raids and raids by warlike nomadic-pastoral tribes, the settled population looks for measures to protect themselves and their agricultural oases from these attacks. For this reason, the settled inhabitants of the oases devised measures to surround the cities and farming districts of the oases where they lived with strong defensive walls, such as the Great Wall of China. Such walls, built at different times, served as a border-defense line between prosperous agricultural oases,

where the population lived in a sedentary manner, and prosperous desert lands inhabited by nomadic tribes. [4]

Sometimes scientists say that such walls were built not only to protect agricultural oases from external enemies, but also to create a barrier against shifting sands. For, i.e. for one ruler to defend himself against another ruler, some say that it was built to keep the settled population living inside the oasis from constant obedience they explain.

Building high, thick and strong walls over long distances, several hundreds of kilometers long, required a lot of effort, money and time. Due to the low level of development of production techniques at that time, the construction work took a long time and was carried out by the manual labor of a large number of people. [5]

It goes without saying that both the central government and the settled farmers in the oases are interested in the development of agriculture by building irrigation facilities, flourishing agricultural oases, irrigation facilities in them, crop and fruit-bearing lands, state borders and there was also a common interest in the security of caravan trade routes. Therefore, it was necessary for them to organize and manage public works not only for canals, dams and water reservoirs, but also for building defensive walls around oases. Without them, such large-scale work would not have been possible. [6]

Some information about the ancient walls is preserved in the works of some ancient Greek and Chinese authors and medieval historians and geographers.

In several works of Academician V.V. Barthold, brief information was given about the defensive walls around the oases. [7]

It is only through archaeological investigation of the ruins of the walls together with the written information for the ancient walls that one can fully study and form an idea about them. [8]

Walls similar to the long regional or oasis walls of Central Asia can be found in a number of historical and cultural regions of ancient Central Asia. One such wall is described as the "Soter Wall of Antioch". The wall surrounded the city of Marv (ancient Margyona) and the prosperous farming areas around it, located in the oasis of the Murgob (ancient Marv) river, which flows through the territory of present-day Turkmenistan. The wall was the first to be built in Central Asia. It is considered Antioch I Soter mil. avv. Based on the fact that he ruled in 280-261 years, the construction time of the wall is mil. avv. It can be defined as the first half of the III century. [9]

So ancient from the walls one This is a grass wall is considered Information preserved in written sources and archeology of scientists According to archaeological investigations, ancient Shakhrisabz and Kesh (Kitab) were surrounded by a strong defensive wall together with villages containing agricultural lands and orchards. This wall is known in history as Chim Wall, and according to the locals, its length was 88 versts. It was called Chim because it was hammered out of grass so that it was extremely thick. The turf wall was inspected in 1870 and was found to be in relatively good condition at that time and the gates along the wall were still in place. One of the gates is on the north side and is called "Rovotak". The Rovotak gate is located on the left bank of the Kashkadarya, and it also had a strong tower (bashnya). It was also discovered that trenches were dug along the wall. Usually, water was poured into such trenches and a swamp was formed, which served as an obstacle for the invading cavalry enemy. [10]

M.E. Masson and G.A. Pugachenkova say that Hafizi Abru's Shah Risabz is surrounded by a strong wall with a diameter of about 20 kilometers, and its length corresponds to the Chim wall, and they express the opinion that this wall was built long before the Arab conquest.

According to local legends, the Chim wall was renewed in the second half of the 18th century by order of Nazarbek. After Shakhrisabz was annexed to Bukhara Khanate in 1856, the Chim wall was not repaired and restored, and since then it has been in ruins. [11]

3. Results and Discussion

In the autumn season of 1959, the archeology group headed by Academician Ya.G 'Gulomov conducted investigations in Kashkadarya region and studied the monuments of material culture in the city of Shahrasabz. In particular, the underground part of the temple built in honor of Timur during his lifetime was examined. In addition, in Yakkabogh district, a part of the tomb of one of Timur's generals, Amir Muhammad bin Ayub, was discovered. As a result, wonderful and valuable scientific materials were collected. Simultaneously with these works, the team of the group investigated and studied the ruins of the Chim wall. The archaeologists found that the wall ruins were preserved in a long rise with a width of 8 m and a height of 3-4 m, the cities of Shahrisabz and Kitab and the ancient prosperous villages around them. was found to contain

Another example of such an ancient structure is the so-called Balkh Oasis Wall. Researchers were able to track it at a distance of up to 60 km. On the wall there are groups of three, arranged spear-shaped turrets. One of the shinaks in this group is straight in the center of the group, and two are slanted on either side of it. The wall is reinforced from the outside with protruding towers in the form of a single monolithic, they do not have shooting rooms. The length of the part of the wall between the constellations is 19-25 m. The wall was raised from the straw and in some places it was preserved up to 4 m. The tiles are made of raw bricks with dimensions of 41-42 x 41-42 x 11-12 cm. The thickness of the base of the wall reaches 4 m. The wall is believed to belong to the Greco-Bactrian and Kushon period. The ancient Balkh oasis, which was the largest and most prosperous among Bactrian oases and was formed around its ancient capital - the city of Bactra, was surrounded by this wall. [12]

The Darband wall was located 3 km west of Darband city, Boysun district, Surkhandarya region. The wall was built in the southern Hissar mountain range, on high rocky ridges that enclose the area between the Saramas and Susiz mountains. The total length of the wall is 1.5 km, thickness is 4 m, height is 5-6 m. As a result of the reconnaissance work, it was possible to determine the composition and chronology of the wall. Based on the width of the wall, it was determined that it was close to 6.5 m, and the preserved height was 2.7 m. The outer side of the wall is made of square (32 x 32 x 11; 33 x 33 x 11 cm) raw bricks stamped with alpha and pi. The brick is 2-2.5 m wide, and the inner cavity is filled with stone and soil. The structure consists of two parallel raised walls with a passageway (1.20 m wide) inside. On the wall there are right-angled sloping turrets. The entrance is covered with constellations. The wall dates back to the Kushon period. [13]

Written in sources given ancient from the walls again one This is the Wall of Doomsday. This is a wall in addition to the Kanpirdevor built around the ancient Sogdian oasis, there is a separate wall that includes the ancient city of Marokand (Samarkand) and its surrounding villages, which is known in history as the Doomsday Wall. The ruins of the Doomsday Wall were investigated by VL Vyatkin in 1903. In the same year, under his leadership, the plan of the wall was also taken. As a result of the inspection, it was observed that in some places, the ruins of the wall were destroyed and fell on the cultivated land. According to VL Vyatkin, the Wall of Doom went through the western slope of Cho'ponota Hill to the village of Varsin, then turned west and passed to the village of Shahidonkhana. Based on the fact that the gates called Forum were built on this wall, VL Vyatkin came to the conclusion that there were such gates in other parts of the wall as well. According to him, as early as 1466, the southern part of this wall was called the Transverse Wall. The Wall of Qiyamat was about 40 versts long and contained an area of 10,000 decitas. [14]

The outermost points of the wall are located in the west near the village of Kheshrav, in the east on the slope of the Cho'ponota hill, in the south near the Dargom stream, in the north in the village of Kunduz Sufi. It is not known when and by whom the wall of Qiyamat was built.

According to M.E.Masson, although the lands around Samarkand did not go beyond the outer wall (Wall of Doom) which was large in terms of territory in the 11th-12th centuries, it was densely populated compared to the 10th century. During the reign of Genghis Khan, all walls were demolished and he forbade the construction of such walls.

Based on the investigations, M.E.Masson concludes that during the time of Timur, new walls were not built around his capital Samarkand, but the old walls destroyed during the conquests of Genghis Khan were renovated. [15]

Kanpir wall of ancient Sogd oasis. Ancient Sogd (now Samarkand) oasis is one of the oldest agricultural oases in Uzbekistan. Narshahi's work "History of Bukhara" shows that there was a defensive wall around the Sogd oasis even before the wall was built around the Bukhara oasis, that is, the Kanpirdevor around the Sogd oasis is older than the Kanpirak wall around the Bukhara oasis 'looks.

Long walls in Central Asia can be divided into three categories according to their function. The first category includes the Wall of Soter of Antioch, the Wall of Balchus, and possibly the Wall of Doomsday. To the second category - Darband wall with fortress and Devkesgan cave; the third category includes the wall of Gilyakin Chilburj. [16]

The first type of walls was not only a means of defining the boundaries of large estates, of defending agricultural oases from the attacks of settlers. They blocked the way of cavalry warriors and protected the borders of the states from all neighbors and external enemies. The second type of walls was apparently intended to protect only certain areas of the state, as well as to control the road through them and to conduct customs inspections of passing trade caravans. seems intended. The third type of walls probably served to protect a specific area or suburbs. The long walls that passed through the steppe blocked the path of the cavalry and prevented the sand from entering. [17]

The function of the long walls standing on the borders of the states was fulfilled by a series of border forts. Mil. A chain of fortresses was built in the Marv oasis in the 1st-3rd centuries. These are: Chichanlikkala, Elimingtepa, Kishmantepa, Durnali, Chilburj and others. In the III-IV centuries, in the northern and northeastern borders of the Bukhara oasis, a number of state fortresses, including Shahrivairan, were built to protect agricultural lands from the attacks of settlers. Kiziltepa, Qorovultepa and others were built. [18]

All the above examples show that the long walls were undoubtedly a defensive structure that served to protect a certain area. Such separation of regions and the presence of ancient large cities in their centers indicate that these regions had a very special importance. They were either capital regions, as in Bactria, or regions with large urban centers.

4. Conclusion

it can be said that our ancestors who lived in the region have an ancient and rich history. Today, as a result of archeological excavations and analysis of written sources conducted by paleontologists, a lot of information about such ancient walls has been gathered, while new researches are also being conducted. Historically one in the region live our ancestors laborious work as a result surface came such old monuments , many archeological monuments located in long-developed areas have been found, and the history of our ancestors is being objectively studied by our scientists and specialists, Central Asia , that's it with At the same time , historical monuments in the territory of Vanatim are recognized by the world community. It is the task of today's generation to preserve these historical monuments, to pass them on to the next generation without losing their historical status.

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