

## About the localization of the village (rustak) of Sanzharfagn.

Aslanov Abduvali Polatovich

Senior researcher of the Samarkand Archaeological Institute, Ph.D.

**Annotation:** The article explores issues related to the localization of Sanjarfagh's fortress in Central Sogdiana, specifically in the regions of Central Sogdiana or Samarkand Sogdiana. It draws on the analysis of ancient sources related to Samarkand Sogdiana and the latest archaeological findings to identify the exact location of Sanjarfagh's fortress.

The article also presents the delineation of the fortress's boundaries and the identification of its central position, incorporating the most recent research results.

**Key words:** Sanjarfagh, Sogd, Urgut, localization, fortress, ancient sources, and archaeological research.

**Introduction:** In the writings from the Middle Ages (10th-12th centuries), there are records of 20 fortresses in the vicinity of Samarkand. These fortresses emerged as distinct local entities due to specific socio-economic and political developments, shaped during the late antique and early medieval periods. Particularly during the Samanid and Karakhanid eras, certain cities expanded to become the central hubs of small administrative units (fortresses). Additionally, these cities, such as those of the Sogdian Confederation, organized specific trade routes passing through their territories.

Based on ancient sources and archaeological findings, it is possible to trace several routes that passed through Central Sogd. These routes primarily served trade purposes initially. The first task was to fulfill the trade route function. During the Samanid and Karakhanid periods, the remarkable stability in political life greatly influenced international and internal trade, positively affecting the economic growth and development of both international and domestic trade markets.

Samarkand Sogdiana's entire network of fortresses and cities was strategically positioned along key trade routes connecting Central and Near East as well as European states with China. Unlike the Silk Road, no other routes from the Transoxiana region contained the distinctive urban centers of Samarkand Sogdiana.

**Discovery:** Archaeological research was initiated from the centers of the eras that Sanjarfagh's fortress and its adjacent regions belonged to. Through these excavations, numerous artifacts and historical traces from the Middle Ages in Central or Samarkand Sogdiana were unearthed and analyzed in detail. The materials unearthed through these archaeological investigations, especially findings related to craftsmanship, provided insights into the specificities of urban, fortress, and rural life. Notably, the excavated artifacts, including coins and pottery, helped in determining their historical context.

Archaeological excavations in the territory of the ancient Maimurg region (modern-day Panjikent, Urgut, Tayloq districts, and the southeastern part of Samarkand district) were carried out in the 1930s and 1940s of the 20th century.

The archaeological excavations at the sites of Talli Barzu and Kofir Kala were conducted by A. Yu. Yakubovskiy (Yakubovskiy, 1940, pp. 68-69), G. V. Grigoriev, and I. A. Sukharev. As a result, G. V. Grigoriev dated the Talli Barzu site to six construction periods, ranging from the pre-Milodian VI-V centuries to the Milodian VIII century. He also mentioned in the written sources that the center of Rivdad, extracted from written historical sources, was located in this archaeological site (Grigoriev, 1946b, pp. 151-152). Despite some difficulties in correlating the construction periods, G. V. Grigoriev initiated the study of the chronological sequence of the Central Sogdian cult complex and started the recent explorations based on this foundation.

Subsequently, A. I. Terenozhkin revised this chronological sequence using new materials and divided it into five stages, referring to the Early Middle Ages (TB IV, V-VI centuries) and the Middle Middle Ages (TB V, VI-VIII centuries) (Terenozhkin, 1950, p153).

In the 1950s, B. Ya. Staviskiy and M. K. Urmanov conducted extensive archaeological excavations at the site of Qul'deri Tepa, including the defensive walls of the city, resulting in the discovery of architectural and

stratigraphic evidence dating back to the III-IV centuries. The findings indicated that the city walls of Qul'deri Tepa were established during the late antique period, and the city itself had its origins from that time (Staviskiy, 1958, p. 231; Staviskiy, 1959, p. 92; Staviskiy, 1960, pp. 119-221).

Additionally, further archaeological excavations were carried out by O. G. Obelchenko in the vicinity of Kofir Kala, and G. V. Shishkina continued excavations at the hill near Kofir Kala (Shishkina, 1961, pp. 192-222).

During the 1970s and 1980s, archaeological excavations in the Urgut district revealed rural settlements and religious worship places dating back to the early Middle Ages. Notably, the Christian worship site of Qoshtepa was thoroughly explored by M. M. Iskhakov, Sh. S. Toshkhojaev, and T. Q. Khodjaev (Iskhakov, Toshkhojaev, Khodjaev, 1977, pp. 88-97). Additionally, A. E. Berdimurodov and M. K. Samiboyev completely excavated the Zardushtiy religious worship site in Zhartepe (Berdimurodov, Samiboyev, 1992, pp. 77-91; Berdimurodov, Samiboyev, 1996, pp. 91-99; Berdimurodov, Samiboyev, 1999, pp. 7-63). Archaeological excavations in Yonchashma also indicated the presence of rural fortifications from the early Middle Ages (Berdimurodov, 1990, pp. 134-137). However, the results of archaeological investigations conducted in Shaidtepa I and Ishchan-tepa, reported by Berdimurodov and Samiboyev, have not been adequately integrated into scholarly discourse (Berdimurodov, Samiboyev, 1987, pp. 49-58; Berdimurodov, Samiboyev, 1988, pp. 30-44), and remain to be fully addressed. Additionally, A. E. Berdimurodov, E. Yu. Buryakova, and T. I. Lebedeva compiled a catalogue of archaeological sites in the Urgut and Samarkand districts (Berdimurodov, 1987, pp. 4-178; Buryakova, Lebedeva, 1987, pp. 243).

During the years of our republic's independence, under the leadership of A. E. Berdimurodov, systematic archaeological excavations were conducted in the vicinity of Kofir Kala (Berdimurodov, Samiboyev, 1995, pp. 4-24). Notably, extensive international archaeological expeditions, such as Uzbekistan-Italy (2001-2014) (Berdimurodov, Dzhorzhetti, Mantellini, 2009, pp. 65-75; Mantellini, Berdimurodov, 2005, pp. 124-128; Gariboldi, 2011, pp. 171-186), and Uzbekistan-Japan (from 2013 to the present) (Begmatov, Murakami, Berdimurov, Bogomolov, Hirofumi, Tomoyuki, 2016, p. 117; Tomoyuki, Begmatov, Takao, Berdimurodov, Bogomolov, 2017, pp. 785-796; Berdimurodov, Takao, Bogomolov, Aslanov, Begmatov, 2018, p. 36) have significantly contributed to the comprehensive research of the city's historical topography, bringing new valuable insights to light.

In recent years, rapid progress has been made in the documentation of archaeological findings in the Vohani area, employing modern technological methods (Berdimurodov, Rondelli, 2004, pp. 6-58; Berdimurodov, Mantellini, 2019, pp. 3-12). Ongoing excavation work in sites such as Istakhar-tepa, Qul'dor-tepa, Rabot-tepa I, and Qorachekmontepa I has resulted in the acquisition of rich material sources related to the early Middle Ages of the Maimurg region. Consequently, the comprehensive analysis of these archaeological materials, in comparison with written sources, holds significant scholarly importance. This comparison allows for a holistic understanding of the historical topography, localization of villages within the territory, architectural features, craftsmanship history, as well as social, economic, and spiritual aspects of life within the Maimurg territory.

**The research in this article** utilized various methods, including chronological, typological, comparative-typological, and historical-comparative approaches. The sources were analyzed comparatively, and the results of the comparison were strengthened with scholarly findings from historical research.

**Results:** The Sanjarfagh fortress is located in the southern part of Samarkand, estimated to be in a smaller area near the Dargom Canal in the central part of Samarkand city. Due to its relatively small size, this fortress was sometimes associated with the Maimurg territory in certain periods. According to our understanding, the Taliborzu site could possibly be the center of this fortress, and the damages that have reached us over the centuries might indeed be related to this fortress. In recent years, based on the research conducted by A. N. Sandiboyev, it is suggested that Sanjarfagh could be localized with the Qorqontepa site, which is situated in the Eshonrabort village of the Urgut district, covering an area of 6 hectares, including a citadel, a city, and a suburb. Moreover, the area of this site corresponds to the cemetery named Zanzhirbog Ota. (Sandiboyev, 2020, p. 13)

According to the opinion of V. L. Vyatkin, the toponym Zanzhirbog might represent the changed part of the Sanjarfagh toponym (Vyatkin, 1902, p. 38). Based on the information provided by Al-Istakhri and Ibn Hawqal, Sanjarfagh was relatively a small fortress with several villages around it (Istakhri, 2019, p. 162; Ibn Hawqal, 2011, p.

61). Al-Muqaddasi described the residents of Sanjarfagh as living in a delightful climate, with sweet fruits and fertile lands (El-Makdisi'nin, 2018, p. 236). In the documents related to endowments from the 16th century, the toponym of this fortress appears as Sanjar Fighon (Mukminova, 1966, pp. 254-255, 275, 281). In the recent sources from the Middle Ages, this toponym is recorded as Zanzhirbog and mentioned to be located between Abbas and Karaunas settlements.

The etymology of the name Sanjarfagh suggests meanings related to Sanskrit "sangharama," meaning "Buddhist monastery," or Sogdian "βγν-," meaning "monastery" (Bartold, 1963, p. 215). Additionally, the first part of the name, "sangar-," may also mean "fortress" or "castle" (Lurie, 2004, p. 213). This fortress is located between the canals of Bormish (Abbosaarik, Yangiariq) and Bashmin (Karaunas, Qozonariq).

**Discussion and Conclusions:** Based on archaeological and written sources, the geographical locations of the developed urban centers and fortresses of Central Sogdiana during the flourishing period of the Middle Ages have been identified. Regarding the geographical distribution of fortresses, particular attention was paid to the nature of agricultural production: irrigated farming, dry farming, horticulture, and the complex nature of production. Utilizing archaeological and written sources, a map illustrating the urban layout and the boundaries of fortresses of the developed urban centers in Central Sogdiana during the prosperous Middle Ages was created.

It is known that until the advent of Islam in Central Asia, various religious beliefs such as fire worship, Zoroastrianism, Manichaeism, Buddhism, Christianity, and Mithraism were actively practiced in the region. Local populations adhered to several different faiths simultaneously. However, it is noteworthy that amidst this diversity, none of these religions were dominant, and no single religion was elevated to the status of a state religion according to historical records. In contemporary terms, this indicates religious freedom and tolerance prevailing in the region. The people of Central Asia, with their diverse religious beliefs including fire worship, Zoroastrianism, Manichaeism, Buddhism, Christianity, Mithraism, and Mazdakism, had numerous temples and places of worship, regardless of their social status. As a result of the Arab invasions that took place in the 7th and 8th centuries, the ancient religious traditions, other than Islam, were completely eradicated in the kingdoms where Islamic rule was established. This process was primarily based on the teachings of Islam, and all ancient religious structures, including those of Christianity, were destroyed. The places of worship of these religions were either converted into Muslim mosques or demolished to make way for the construction of new mosques. Historical sources provide abundant information about this period. The Arabs, in the initial stages, targeted the large populations and their places of worship in major central cities, demolishing places of worship that were significant to the local population (Raimkulov, Aslanov, 2012, p. 154).

However, in material culture, especially in wall paintings (such as those found in Panjakent), clay sculptures and seals, depictions related to Buddhism have been found. Terracotta sculptures and seals made of wood or bronze depict images related to Buddha (Bogomolov, 2019, pp. 334-343). Therefore, it is emphasized that in the Maimurg region as well, artifacts dating back to the early centuries with connections to the Buddhist religion have been discovered. Particularly, the etymology of the name Sanjarfagh is believed to be derived from Sanskrit "sangharama" meaning "Buddhist monastery" or in Sogdian, it signifies βγν- which also means "monastery" (Bartold, 1963b, p. 215).

In summary, the results of archaeological research and analysis of written sources indicate that during the early and prosperous centuries, the region surrounding Sanjarfagh constituted one of the significant economic, political, religious, and cultural centers of Sogdiana. From the Islamic period onwards, Sanjarfagh's importance continued, and it remained a focal point in the socio-economic and political landscape. Various dynasties such as the Samanids, the Karakhanids, the Chaghataids, and the Timurids, among others, regarded this region as a vital hub. The primary reason for this significance was the abundant resources, strategic trade routes, and diverse crafts that the urban and rural areas, inhabited by skilled artisans, offered to the prosperous population.

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