



## ANCIENT MIZDAKHKAN

Farkhad Utepbergenov

Assistant Teacher, Department of Archeology,  
Karakalpak State University, Nukus, Uzbekistan.

e-mail : Farxat73@mail.ru

### Annotation

The article is devoted to the result of excavation II, laid in 2015-2018 on the Mizdakhkan settlement. Mizdakhkan is a huge complex of antiquities of different ages, extremely complex in topographical terms

**Keywords:** Gyaur Kala, Mizdakkan, complex, defensive wall, cultural layer, tower, proteykhizma, Aibuyir Kala, Khiva, Koi-krylgan Kala.

### Introduction

The Gyaurkala settlement is compared with the medieval Mizdakhkan-the center of the Mizdakhkan rustak of the same name, located in northern Khorezm to the southwest on the road from Khodjeyli to Kunya-Urgench, 5-6 km from the first and 26-29 km from the second, these ruins are located on two hills and are known today as Gyaurkala (western hill) and Mazlumkhan-sulu (eastern hill).

The first information about the topography and chronology of ancient Mizdakhkan appeared in the scientific literature in 1930, after two (in 1928-1929) short-term surveys of the monument made by A.Y.Yakubovsky.

A.Y.Yakubovsky made a general description of the topography, based on the analysis of the lifting material, an attempt was made to construct a chronology [Yakubovsky, 1930, p.250]. The most important result of the work of A.Y.Yakubovsky was also the proof of the position put forward by V.V.Bartold about the possibility of localization in this area of the ancient city of Mizdakhkan and the eponymous rustak, repeatedly mentioned in medieval Arabic-language geographical literature [Bartold, 1963, p.204].

In 1946, the monument was examined by the Khorezm Archaeological and Ethnographic Expedition of the USSR Academy of Sciences, led by S.P.Tolstov [Yagodin, 1968, p. 189]

In 1962, 1964-1966, the monument was subjected to stationary study by the archaeological expedition team of the Institute of History, Language and Literature of the Karakalpak branch of the Academy of Sciences of the Uzbek SSR (now the Institute of History, Archeology and Ethnography of the Karakalpak Department of the





Academy of Sciences of the Republic of Uzbekistan). During these works, new data were obtained on the topography of ancient Mizdakhkan, in particular, the city necropolis was opened, excavations were carried out, instrumental survey of individual parts of the monument [Yagodin, Khodzhayov, 1970, p.6 fig]

Mizdakhkan is a huge complex of antiquities of different ages, extremely complex in topographical terms. Under prolonged exposure to various reagents of a natural and anthropogenic nature, the complex has largely lost its original macro-relief, which is often impossible to trace with ground-based methods of shooting. The difficulty of deciphering the topography of Mizdakhkan was also that the topographical features of the monument located within the modern cultural zone were hidden by various layers so much that their existence was not supposed.

In 1966, the engineer geodesist N.I.Igonin and the archaeologist V.N.Yagodin made a planned aerial survey of the entire complex of ancient Mizdakhkan (Yagodin, Khodzhayov, 1970, p.7) On the basis of the materials of this survey, the topography of the monument was fully disclosed, some of its objects were decrypted for the first time and a general plan of the complex was drawn up. All these works allowed us to establish that the complex of antiquities of Mizdakhkan includes: 1) the ruins of the ancient city, known to the local population as Gyaurkala; 2) the ruins of the city of the XIII-XIV centuries; 3) suburban and urban irrigation systems and field layouts; 4) The ruins of individual buildings; 5) the city cemetery, apparently used by the population of Rustak as a whole.

The entire complex of ancient Mizdakhkan is located on three small hills and a considerable space between them.

The ruins of the ancient city are located on the western hill and also on the plain to the west of the hills. The flat top of the western hill is crowned with the majestic ruins of an ancient fortress, known locally as Giaurkala.

Gyaurkala occupies the entire flat top of the western hill. The walls encircle the top along its edge at the level of 18-20 m from the surrounding plain. The walls are made of square raw bricks and pakhsa by the method of so-called combined masonry, and are severely destroyed.

Judging by the double line of walls preserved in a number of places, the fortress had a bypass corridor. Along the perimeter of the fortress walls, the remains of ten defensive towers have been preserved, standing apart from each other at a distance of about 45-60 m. The towers are placed outside the wall line at 9-11m. The plan of the tower is rectangular, the facade is slightly rounded. Each of the two side and front walls of the towers may have had several loopholes. The towers are built using the same method as the fortress walls.





In a number of places, behind the steep slope running from the base of the fortress walls, a berm step has been preserved, on the edge of which another additional wall has been placed. The distance between the fortress and the barrier wall is 12-13 m. The thickness of the barrier wall is 1.8-2 m. The preserved height is 0.35-0.5 m.

In the military engineering literature, such walls are considered as anti-storm [Ogorodnikov, 1950, p.47] V.L.Voronina suggests that the berms and additional walls served for garrison sorties during an enemy attack [Voronina, 1959, p.95]

Vitruvius, in his treatise on architecture, advises: "So that the approach to the wall during an attack is not easy ....., to trace the edge of the steep along its edge" [Vitruvius, 1936, p.32]

Barrier walls are known in the fortification of such cities of the Near and Middle East as Susa, Babylon and Ecbatany [Shperk, 1949, c140.142]

Outside of Khorezm, proteichism was known in the city of Merv (Erkkala), a very narrow space was left between the main wall and the proteichism. The enemy who broke through the proteichism found himself in a very narrow space where he would easily be struck by blows from the main wall. It was much more important that if the enemy managed to overcome the first line of defense, then his detachments would find themselves in a very narrow space between two walls and would become easy prey for the siege. In addition, proteichism often reduced the ability to bring siege engines to the fortress wall.

The earliest use of barrier (proteichism) walls in Khorezm was noted in the settlements of Khazarasp, Aybuyir kala, Khiva, Toprak kala (about g, Khiva) Kazakly Yatkan (Akshakan kala) and Koi-krylgan kala [Koi-krylgan kala, 1967, p.72]

In medieval cities of Central Asia, additional walls also surround many fortifications. In Khorezm, this element of fortification survives until the XII-XIII centuries AD and is known in the settlements of Bolshoy Guldursun and Kavut Kala [Tolstov, 1948, p.170]. The entrance to the fortress was on its eastern side. It had a ramp and was flanked by two towers. The walls of the entrance, deeply stretched into the fortress, formed a long narrow corridor that was well shot from all sides.

In more southern areas in ancient times, the approach to the gate is usually complicated by a long, sometimes two-marching ramp. The attackers were forced to move along the fortress wall to substitute the unprotected right side. Side passages in the gate connected between the wall corridors, probably allowed to better organize the protection of the gate in case of serious danger.

Similar "retracted entrances" are known in ancient Khorezm on the monuments of Kalaly-gyr II, the early complex of Tokkala, Maly Kryk-kyz, Koi-krylgan kale, [Gudkova, 1964, p.10.11 fig., 2; Tolstov, 1948, p. 100, fig.35]. This technique was



characteristic of the Khorezm school of military architecture, as it has not yet been witnessed in other areas.

The whole area of Giaurkala is divided by mounds of ancient buildings. The ruins of two different-time citadels - the eastern and western - have been preserved on the territory of the settlement. The western citadel is located inside the walls of Gyaurkala, in its southern part, it has been preserved quite well. Its walls rise above the surface of the settlement to a height of 10 m .

In terms of the citadel is rectangular, its dimensions are 59x59 m, the sides are oriented to the cardinal directions. The entrance to it is located in the middle of the northern wall. The facade part of the citadel walls, starting from a height of 5-6 m from the base, is divided by vertical semi-columns - corrugations. In the center of the western citadel there is a vast rectangular courtyard surrounded by buildings in the form of a "square".

In the eastern part of Gyaurkala there is an eastern, more ancient, western, citadel. It has been preserved in the form of a rectangular flat elevation, higher in the southern part and gradually decreasing to the north. The sides of this citadel are also roughly oriented by the countries of the world and are close in area to the western citadel.

Numerous shapeless elevations and fragments of mud walls are scattered along the eastern slope of the hill, outside the Gyaurkala. At elevations in a number of places there are outcrops of multi-meter thicknesses of the cultural layer.

On a flat saline plain to the west of the hills are the ruins of a medieval city of the XIII-XIV centuries AD. The latter occupies an area of about 80 hectares. No walls that would limit it are traceable.

On the eastern edge of the city at the foot of the eastern hill there is a large group of pottery kilns, preserved in the form of wide swollen mounds, completely strewn with pottery slags and fragments of defective slagged vessels. The city necropolis is located on the eastern hill of the Mizdakhkan complex.

In 1995, 2015-2018, the most significant excavation by area II (120 sq.m.) was divided into the eastern part of the monument. A complex of rooms laid out of pakhsa and raw bricks of antique standard (39-40x40-41x9-10cm) has been opened here

It was found that the total thickness of cultural deposits in the excavation reaches more than 8 m. A total of 10 floors were recorded in the excavation (numbering from bottom to top)

Directly on the mainland, which is an alternation of loose yellow sand with layers of clay deposits (tuyun), there is a sandy layer (0.93 m) of buried soil, on top of which there is a powerful, densely packed clay layer in a thickness of 0.36 m.



The lower floor was found between the XIX-XX tiers. The cultural layer on the floor is a gray fine-grained sand compacted with layers of ash of a dark greenish color. In the layer there are fragments of strong bones and bones of animals, fish.

Floor No. 2 is located between the XVIII-XIX tiers, it is covered with pieces of raw bricks and clods of clay. This layer is overlaid with zabutovkami.

Floor No. 3 (XVII tier) is 22 cm above the level of the second floor. On the floor, the cultural layer is dense, clay, yellowish in color, contains a significant quality of finds: the vast majority of them are fragments of ceramics, somewhat smaller bones of animals and fish.

Floor No. 4 was found between tiers XV-XVI. The cultural layer is 0.26-0.30 m thick, consists of loose sandy loam, greenish in color with woody corners, angry.

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