



INFORMATION ABOUT ANCIENT CITIES IN THE OHANGARON VALLEY ACCORDING TO WRITTEN SOURCES

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Article history:	Abstract:
Received: 20 th March 2024 Accepted: 10 th April 2024	This article analyzes information about ancient cities in the Ohangaron Valley according to written sources. Based on 10th-century written records, it provides essential information about the cities in the Shosh and Iloq regions, particularly Tunkat, the capital of the Iloq state. New archaeological research presents diverse opinions among scholars regarding the location of Tunkat and the identification of other cities in Iloq. The article introduces new data on the location of Tunkat, the significance of the Suyurlitepa site, and the ancient Jewish community in this area.
Keywords: Ohangaron Valley, Iloq, Shosh, Tunkat, Suyurlitepa, ancient cities, archaeology, 10th century, Namudliq, Ibn Havqal.	

10th-century written sources provide information about Shosh and Iloq comprising nearly 50 cities¹. Of these, 17 are mentioned as Iloq cities, while the rest are referred to as Shosh cities. Within the territory of the Iloq region, today we find districts and cities such as Ohangaron (known as the "city of blacksmiths"), O'rta Chirchiq, Bo'ka, Angren, Nurafshon, Piskent, and Olmaliq in the Tashkent region. The historical significance of several Iloq cities remains unresolved. Numerous studies have been conducted over time, but they have not sufficiently addressed this issue².

The 10th-century written sources record that the capital city of the Iloq state was Tunkat. Based on information provided by Mashkovsev in the 1920s and 1930s³, archaeologist M.E. Masson studied the Ohangaron regions and proposed that the ruins of Tunkat city were located near the village of Obiz⁴. Subsequently, in the early 1970s, academician Y. F. Buryakov, who extensively studied the Tashkent oasis regions, confirmed his views⁵.

However, in recent years, several scholars have proposed new conclusions suggesting that the capital city of Iloq might be located at the Suyurlitepa site. This idea was first mentioned by archaeologist S. Ashirov⁶. In recent years, scholars such as academician Ahmadali Asqarov and Behzod Isabekov, who have been conducting archaeological research in the Ohangaron regions with their students, have also identified the capital of Iloq as the Suyurlitepa site, located in Sanam MFY, Qorabuloq QFY of the Ohangaron district⁷. Historians such as Munira Khatamova and G'aybulla Boboyorov have also addressed the issue of the capital of Iloq in their research. Specifically, M. Khatamova suggests that the ruins of Tunkat might be located at the Suyurlitepa site based on medieval written sources indicating that Tunkat was situated on a rocky mountain. She argues that this information aligns closely with the possibility

¹ Ибн Хавқал. Китоб Суратал-ард. Араб тилидан таржима ва изоҳлар муаллифи т.ф.д. Ш.С. Камолиддин. Тошкент. 2011. 400 б.

² З.И. Алимов. Араб тилидаги манбаларда Тошкент воҳаси тарихий географияси (IX-XIII асрлар). Тарих фанлари бўйича фалсафа доктори (PhD) диссертацияси. бет.

³ Буряков Ю.Ф. Историческая топография Ташкентского оазиса. – Ташкент: Фан, 1975. 110 – 111 с.

⁴ М.Е. Массон. Ахангеран. Археолого-топографический очерк. // Ташкент: 1953. 73-бет. 73 с.

⁵ Тошкент воҳаси археологияси. – Тошкент-Самарқанд, МИЦАИ. 2008. 30-бет.

⁶ С. Аширов. Потерянная столица государства Илак // "Правда Востока" gazetasi, 20. VII. 2007, – №140; Аширов С.А. К локализации Тунката – столицы Илака // Проблемы древней и средневековой истории Чача. Шамсиддин Камолиддин (ред.). Lambert Academic Publishing. – Saarbrücken 2013. – С. 355-362.

⁷ Аскарлов А.А., Исабеков Б.К. Вопросы о локализации столицы средневекового владения Илак // Проблемы древней и средневековой истории Чача / Ред. Ш.Камолиддин. – Saarbrücken, 2013. – С. 345-353.



that its ruins are at the Suyurlitepa site⁸. G'aybulla Boboyorov, on the other hand, suggests that Dunsze or Tunsze mentioned in Chinese sources is none other than Tunkat, the central city of Iloq⁹.

Local historian, Doctor of Philological Sciences, Professor Isomiddin Yormatov, who has studied regional history, also expressed his opinion on this matter. He stated that, according to the Arab historian Ibn Havqal, the distance in farsakhs between Banokat and Tunket, Binkat and Tunket, or Abrlig' and Tunket corresponds more accurately to the distance to Suyurlitepa rather than Obiz¹⁰.

It should be noted that the total area of city-type sites discovered in the Tashkent oasis generally ranges from 10 to 20 hectares. According to the research findings, the site can be conditionally divided into two parts: the fully developed city area and the village area where the population lived before the city was established. The northern part of the site, which appears to have been a city in the developed medieval period, covers an estimated area of approximately 40 hectares based on Google Earth measurements. The components of the city are clearly visible in its topography. Thus, according to 10th-century Arabic written sources, the city at the site of Suyurlitepa falls into the category of small cities. Medieval historian-travelers wrote that Tunkat was the largest among the cities of Iloq. The area of Tunkat was smaller than half the size of the central city of Choch, Binkat¹¹.

However, the main elements of the city are not clearly visible at the site referred to as Tunkat. Academician Buryakov attempts to explain this by suggesting that the ark and other parts of the city were destroyed¹². B. Isabekov does not accept these reasons as a basis and argues that Suyurlitepa is precisely the capital of Iloq¹³. In 2012, an archaeological expedition led by academician A. Asqarov conducted excavations at the

site referred to as Tunkat and, together with his students, uncovered and studied one of the metal smelting furnaces¹⁴. Before A. Asqarov, Y. Buryakov had also identified numerous metal smelting furnaces and tons of metal ingots at this site¹⁵. Based on these findings, A. Asqarov referred to this city as a metallurgists' settlement and compared it to the city of Olmaliq, which is considered one of the hearts of modern metallurgy in Uzbekistan.

Additionally, sources mention that the central city of Shosh, Binkat, was located 8 farsakhs away from Tunkat, and that Tunkat was situated on a rocky mountain¹⁶. According to calculations from Google Earth, the distance from the Mingo'rik site in Tashkent city to the Tunkat site near the village of Obiz is 68.025 km. In medieval Central Asian measurements, 1 farsakh is approximately 8,534.25 meters, so 8 farsakhs equal 68,272 meters. However, considering that medieval travelers measured distances in steps, discrepancies in these figures are possible. Another point is that Tunkat is located in a relatively flat area, whereas Suyurlitepa matches the description in the sources of being situated on a rocky outcrop.

However, based on recent observations, the author agrees with Y. F. Buryakov's views that the capital of Iloq, Tunkat, was located at the ruins near the village of Obiz. Firstly, the area of the city remains at Obiz corresponds to the size of ancient Tunkat. It is the largest city-type site in the Ohangaron region. Additionally, Arab geographers' sources emphasize that Tunkat was the largest among the cities of Iloq, while the others were nearly equal in size¹⁷.

Iloq was located on the border with the Turks, and its main city was 10 farsakhs away from Binkat. The route to Fargona passed through its border via Navbaxt. It was a very beautiful and clean city, with irrigated fields stretching 2 farsakhs in width. Moreover, the site

⁸ Мунира Хатамова. Узбекистон шаҳарлари VI - VIII асрларда (Чоч воҳаси мисолида). - Тошкент: Yangi nashr, 2017. 173 б.

⁹ Babayarov G. Chach tarixidan lavhalar. Tashkent, 2010. 98-bet.

¹⁰ И. Ёрматов. Оҳангарон водийси жой номларининг изоҳли луғати. Тошкент. "Наврўз" нашриёти. 2016. 112-бет.

¹¹ Ибн Хавқал. Китоб Суратал-ард. Араб тилидан таржима ва изоҳлар муаллифи т.ф.д. Ш.С. Камолиддин. Тошкент. 2011. 74-б.

¹² Б. Исабеков. Юқори ва ўрта Оҳангарон водийсининг қадимги ва ўрта асрлар даври маданияти. Тарих фанлари бўйича фалсафа доктори (PhD) илмий даражасини олиш учун тайёрланган Диссертация. 2022. 65-бет.

¹³ Б. Исабеков. Юқори ва ўрта Оҳангарон водийсининг қадимги ва ўрта асрлар даври маданияти. Тарих фанлари бўйича фалсафа доктори (PhD) илмий даражасини олиш учун тайёрланган Диссертация. 2022. 99-бет.

¹⁴ Б. Исабеков. Стольный город илака – Суирилтепа. Theoretical & applied science. № 12 (56), Т 2017 С: 72-79.

¹⁵ Буряков Ю. Ф. Археологические материалы к истории Тункета и Абрлыга. Т., 1975. с. 76.

¹⁶ Ибн Хавқал. Китоб Суратал-ард. Араб тилидан таржима ва изоҳлар муаллифи т.ф.д. Ш.С. Камолиддин. Тошкент. 2011. 400 б.

¹⁷ Ибн Хавқал. Китоб Суратал-ард. Араб тилидан таржима ва изоҳлар муаллифи т.ф.д. Ш.С. Камолиддин. Тошкент. 2011. 400 б.

currently presumed to be Tunkat is rich in archaeological materials, unlike other city sites where such abundant artifacts are not found. The estimated area of the site, determined through Google Earth, is approximately 200 hectares. However, many houses

have been built around Tunkat, and a significant part of it has been destroyed or used for business purposes by modern entrepreneurial farmers, damaging the site. This suggests that the actual size of Tunkat might be larger than current estimates.



Figure 1. Photograph of Tunkat by UzGashKliti

In our opinion, the city at the site of Suyurlitepa might have been known by the names Namudliq or Yahudliq according to sources. In "Hudud al-'Alam," Yahudliq is described as being located on the border between Iloq and Fargona. Our investigations in this border area confirmed that Suyurlitepa was the first border city on the route from Fargona to Iloq. During our search, we studied traces of a pass that allows for the most direct route through the mountains to the Fergana Valley from Kandirsoy, located about 3 km from Suyurlitepa, passing through the territory of present-day Tajikistan (which can shorten the route through the Qamchiq pass by approximately 137 km).

According to surveys conducted among the residents of the village of Qo'shrabot, locals reported finding vessels and baked brick fragments in their homes dating back to the Qarakhanid and Samanid periods, and we were

able to see these items ourselves. Additionally, the name of the village within Kandir Pass itself indicates that these areas were once part of a caravan route. The name Qo'shrabot combines "qo'sh" (meaning "two") and "rabot" (meaning "caravanserai" or "a place where merchants and travelers rest"). This implies that there were once two or multiple caravanserais in Qo'shrabot. Zahiriddin Muhammad Babur, one of the famous figures of the Timurid dynasty, used the Kandir Pass on his travels to and from Tashkent to visit his uncle¹⁸. Because, from the Kandir Pass, it is possible to easily travel to the Fergana Valley with horses, carts, and other vehicles. One of the cities located east of Tunkat, mentioned in written sources, is called Namudliq. Scholars associate the emergence of Namudliq with the settlement of nomadic Turks. Y. Buryakov equated the location of this city with the Nomsiztepa site on the

¹⁸ Z.M. Bobur. Boburnoma. Toshkent: O'qituvchi, 2008, 47-6et.

northern outskirts of the city of Angren¹⁹. However, this location contradicts 10th-century Arabic sources. These sources state that Namudliq was situated between the rivers ash-Shosh (the old name for the Syr Darya) and

Iloq (the Ohangaron River). Angren is located between the Chirchiq (Turk) and Ohangaron rivers. This information indicates that academician Y. Buryakov made an error in this regard.



Figure 2. Map of Shosh and Iloq

The same sources also contain information that refutes the idea that the Suyurlitepa site is Namudliq: "Namudliq is located 5 farsakhs west of Tunkat"²⁰. However, another city that has retained its medieval name, Obliq (referred to as Abrliq in the sources), is located east of Tunkat, but the sources also describe it as being to the west. In reality, Abrliq (Obliq) is situated east of Tunkat. This suggests that either Y. Buryakov was mistaken about the location of Tunkat, or medieval travelers were confused about the east-west orientation. These discrepancies have long puzzled researchers studying the historical locations of these cities²¹.

Comparing the territorial extent of Iloq cities based on Y. Buryakov's works, the largest city mentioned in the sources corresponds to the ruins of the city at Obiz

fortress. Other than Tunkat, all the other cities are described as being nearly equal in size. The area of Suyurlitepa is also 40 hectares, which is almost equal to the other cities. If we assume Suyurlitepa is Tunkat, as B. Isabekov suggests, then what was the medieval name of the city ruins at Obiz fortress?

In the matter of Iloq's capital, academician Y. F. Buryakov might not have been mistaken, and Tunkat's location could indeed be near the village of Obiz. The reasons for reaching this conclusion are as follows:

Firstly, sources record that the distance from Tunkat to Yahudliq was 5 farsakhs. Suyurlitepa, which we refer to as Yahudliq, is 20 km away from Tunkat. Considering that one farsakh is 5,544 meters, 20 km equates to 4 farsakhs by medieval measurements. Given that medieval Arab travelers measured distances

¹⁹ Буряков Ю.Ф. Историческая топография древних городов Ташкентского оазиса. –Т.: "Фан". 1975. С. 127.

²⁰ Ибн Хавкал. Китоб Суратал-ард. Араб тилидан таржима ва изохлар муаллифи т.ф.д. Ш.С. Камолиддин. Тошкент. 2011. 254-б.

²¹ М.Е. Массон. Ахангеран. Археолого-топографический очерк. // Ташкент: 1953. 39 с.



approximately in steps, this distance could correspond to 5 farsakhs when measured in steps today.

Secondly, sources such as "Hudud al-'Alam" and "Ahsan attaqosim fi ma'rifat alaqolim" ("The Best Divisions for Knowledge of the Regions") mention a city called Yahudliq on the border between Fergana and Iloq, and Suyurlitepa is located precisely on the border between present-day Fergana and Ohangaron (Iloq).

Thirdly, the 10th-century travelogues of visitors to our region record that Yahudliq was located between the rivers ash-Shosh (Syr Darya) and Iloq (Ohangaron). Considering that these travelers entered our region from the southwest, they would need to move northeast to reach Yahudliq. After encountering the Syr Darya, they would travel further northeast to reach the middle course of the Ohangaron River. Cities such as Tunkat and Yahudliq, which we have mentioned, were located in the middle course. The name Yahudliq might have been given because a Jewish community lived there²².

Fourthly, in the book "The Bukharian and Mountain Jews in the Whirlpool of History"²³, as well as in the Jewish Encyclopedia, it is mentioned that historically, Jews lived in vast territories and that between the 10th and 12th centuries, they resided on the border between the Fergana and Tashkent oases. The area where they lived was named Yahudliq after them²⁴.

To clarify this further, it is necessary to refer to Chinese sources. The Fergana Valley was under the influence of the Tang dynasty for some time, during which Tunkat was the central city. Therefore, Chinese travelers must have visited the cities of Iloq and described them. Future research requires studying Chinese sources on this matter.

Let us assume that Y. Buryakov was not mistaken in the localization of Namudliq and Tunkat. In that case, which city existed at the site of Suyurlitepa? Sources mention cities such as Yahudliq (described as a small city on the border between Fergana and Iloq), Itlig', Abirlig', and Alaxjas located 5 farsakhs west of Tunkat.

Traces of a stream, once known as Ovjaz, have been preserved in the area where Suyurlitepa is located. Around 40-50 ears ago, the area where Suyurlitepa is situated was part of Ovjaz village and was generally referred to as Ovjaz.

One of the cities located east of Tunkat, mentioned in written sources, is called Namudliq. Scholars associate

the emergence of Namudliq with the settlement of nomadic Turks. Y. Buryakov equated the location of this city with the Nomsiztepa site on the northern outskirts of the city of Angren²⁵. However, this location contradicts 10th-century Arabic sources. These sources state that Namudliq was situated between the rivers ash-Shosh (the old name for the Syr Darya) and Iloq (the Ohangaron River). Angren is located between the Chirchik (Turk) and Ohangaron rivers. This information indicates that academician Y. Buryakov made an error in this regard.

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Just as the city of Abrliq has retained its name as the fortress of Obliq, the name of Alaxjas might have survived with minor phonetic changes as Avjas or Ovjaz. Additionally, sources describe this city as being located on the border of Fergana and Iloq.

In conclusion, it is possible that the city at the site of Suyurlitepa was known by names such as Alaxjas, Alxajas, or Alxanjos. Other sources (the anonymous "Hudud al-'Alam," Ibn Hawqal's "Kitab surat al-ard," and Al-Bakri's "Kitab al-masalik wal-mamalik") also provide indications that Suyurlitepa might have been referred to as Alaxjas. Therefore, Suyurlitepa might have been the ancient city of Alaxjas or Avjas.

Just as the city of Abrliq has retained its name as the fortress of Obliq, the name of Alaxjas might have survived with minor phonetic changes as Avjas or Ovjaz. The name of the stream that flowed through this area might have also been called Avjazsoy or Ovjazsoy, named after the city. Additionally, sources describe this city as being located on the border of Fergana and Iloq.

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²³ R. Pinkhasov, S. Danilova. The bukharian and mountain jews in the whirlpool of history. New York, 2018. P 16 .

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