

METHODS OF PROTECTION OF DEFENSE STRUCTURES OF ANCIENT BC LOCATED IN THE LOWER REACHES OF AMUDARYA FROM NATURAL AND MAN-MADE DISASTERS

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Abstract: Ancient defense structures in the lower reaches of the Amudarya River, particularly those in the Khorezm region, were subjected to various natural and man-made disasters throughout their history. This paper examines the methods employed by these structures to mitigate such disasters. Through archaeological evidence and historical records, it is evident that strategic location, advanced engineering, and adaptive reuse played pivotal roles in the resilience of these fortifications. The study highlights the interplay between environmental challenges and human ingenuity in preserving these ancient structures.

Keywords: Khorezm, Amudarya, ancient fortifications, natural disasters, man-made disasters, archaeological resilience, historical engineering.

The Khorezm region, situated along the lower reaches of the Amudarya River, is home to a remarkable array of ancient defense structures. These fortifications, dating back to the 1st millennium BC, were strategically positioned to protect the inhabitants from both natural and man-made disasters. The Amudarya River, with its unpredictable flooding patterns, posed a significant threat to the settlements. Additionally, invasions and raids from neighboring civilizations added to the challenges faced by these communities.

Archaeological sites such as Ayaz Kala, Topraq Kala, and Guldursun-Kala provide insight into the architectural ingenuity and adaptive strategies employed to safeguard these structures. [1] The construction techniques, materials used, and the strategic placement of these fortifications reflect a deep understanding of the local environment and the threats posed by it. For instance, the use of mud bricks and the incorporation of defensive features like thick walls and narrow entry points were common practices aimed at enhancing the durability and security of these structures. This paper delves into the methods adopted by the ancient Khorezmian fortifications to protect against natural and man-made disasters. By examining archaeological findings and historical accounts, we aim to understand the resilience of these ancient structures and the lessons they offer for contemporary preservation efforts.

The Amudarya River's propensity to change its course and flood surrounding areas posed a significant threat to settlements. To mitigate this, fortresses were often

constructed on elevated platforms or artificial mounds, ensuring they remained above potential floodwaters. Additionally, the use of rammed earth (pakhsa) in construction provided a solid foundation resistant to water erosion. Some sites incorporated drainage systems to channel excess water away from the structures, further safeguarding them from water damage.[2]

The encroaching sands of the Kyzylkum and Karakum deserts threatened to bury these fortifications. To combat this, defensive walls were constructed with compacted earth and clay, materials that resisted the infiltration of sand. The strategic placement of these structures in areas with natural windbreaks, such as clusters of tamarisk trees, helped reduce the impact of sandstorms. Moreover, the orientation of the walls was often aligned with prevailing wind directions to minimize sand accumulation.

While the region is not highly seismically active, occasional tremors could compromise the integrity of structures. The use of flexible construction techniques, such as the incorporation of wooden reinforcements within mudbrick walls, allowed for some movement during seismic events, reducing the risk of collapse. Additionally, the design of these fortifications often included buttresses and thick walls that distributed seismic forces more evenly.[3]

The Khorezm region faced numerous invasions throughout its history. To defend against these threats, fortresses were designed with features that hindered enemy access. Thick walls, narrow entry points, and multiple gates created chokepoints that could be easily defended. Watchtowers provided elevated positions for surveillance, allowing defenders to spot approaching enemies from a distance. Additionally, the layout of these fortifications often included internal courtyards and labyrinthine pathways, confusing intruders and slowing their advance.[4] After the decline of these civilizations, many fortifications were abandoned and left vulnerable to looting and vandalism. To deter such activities, some sites were intentionally buried under sand or debris, concealing their existence. In other cases, the fortifications were repurposed for agricultural use, integrating them into the landscape and reducing their visibility to potential looters.

In modern times, efforts have been made to preserve these ancient structures. Archaeological excavations and studies have provided valuable information on construction techniques and materials used. Conservation strategies include reinforcing existing structures, stabilizing foundations, and implementing protective measures against environmental threats. Collaborations between local authorities, international organizations, and communities have been instrumental in ensuring the longevity of these heritage sites.

The ancient defense structures of the Khorezm region stand as a testament to the ingenuity and resilience of their builders. Through strategic planning, advanced engineering, and adaptive reuse, these fortifications successfully mitigated the challenges posed by natural and man-made disasters. The lessons learned from these

ancient practices offer valuable insights for contemporary preservation efforts, emphasizing the importance of understanding and adapting to environmental conditions. As we continue to face similar challenges in the modern world, the ancient fortifications of Khorezm remind us of the enduring human spirit and the capacity to innovate in the face of adversity.

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