

STRUCTURAL AND ADMINISTRATIVE FEATURES OF SETTLEMENTS IN GUZOR DISTRICT IN THE LATE 19TH – EARLY 20TH CENTURY

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Annotation: This study analyzes the formation, administrative, and structural features of settlements within the Guzor district in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. The focus is placed on the network of amlaks, villages, and towns that existed during this period, as well as on the settlement patterns and administrative systems. Drawing on historical sources and archival documents, the research highlights the role of settlements in the district's socio-economic life and their strategic and administrative importance. This analysis contributes to a better understanding of local governance, the function of amindars (amlak governors), and the historical development of population centers.

According to various historical sources in multiple languages from the late medieval period, the population of Guzor beklik primarily consisted of local residents and several groups who had settled in the area, particularly in Guzor city, due to various circumstances. The majority of the population spoke Uzbek, with a significant portion speaking Tajik. The Uzbek-speaking population largely did not belong to any specific tribal organization but identified themselves with various Uzbek clans, while the Tajik-speaking population was composed of urban and mountain-dwelling groups. Among these population groups, those who played a distinctive role in the history of the beklik—such as the Uzbek tribes "Saroy," "Qovchin," and "Batosh," and the Tajik-speaking group known as "Harduri"—deserve special attention in this study.

Although the large Uzbek group known as the "Qongirot" is mentioned in several sections, it is not discussed in a separate chapter due to previous specific research focused on them. It is noteworthy that in the southern and southwestern parts of the Guzor beklik, residents of numerous villages considered themselves to belong to various branches of the Qongirot tribe. In the early 20th century, members of the Qongirot tribe lived in villages such as Taham, Kengsoy, Eshonquduq, Tog'ay-Temur, and others.

As one of the key administrative-territorial units of the Bukhara Emirate, the Guzor beklik encompassed dozens of settlements—primarily villages (qishloq in Uzbek and deh in Persian-Tajik). Many of these were named based on their geographical location, the occupation or origin of their inhabitants, and thus include both Turkic and Persian toponyms. However, for some settlement names, the origins and meanings are not clearly established.

This phenomenon is especially evident in the names of villages such as Eskibog', Gurshak, Tangiharom, Urayi Kalon, Qamay, Qayirma, Qora Ayri, Yortitepa, and others. Some of these were ancient settlements, while others emerged in the late medieval period due to the rapid sedentarization of nomadic populations. A few of them are described below.

According to documents compiled by the Kushbegi office of the Bukhara Emirate in the early 20th century, the amlak (administrative unit) named Eskibog' included 26 villages

located near Guzor city, which served as the beklik's administrative center. These villages included: Abu Vays, Oqtosh, Ghulcha, Jamaa-i Harduri, Jarariq, Jarqurovul, Echkiqirildi, Qayirma, Qora Ayri, Quduqi Qoraboy, Qongirot, Panj Kamar, Tavakkal, Tozguzar, Toshguzar, Harduri, Khoja Chahordah, Chovgar, Chirroqq, Chunagar, Chor Tamah, Chuchuk, Shakar Buloq, Sho'rarna, Sho'rquduq, and Sho'rcha¹.

At present, some of the villages in this area have been incorporated into the city of Guzor. Various interpretations have been proposed regarding the toponym "Eskibog'." Many, particularly local residents, interpret it as being formed from the words "eski" (old) and "bog'" (garden), explaining it as "an old garden" that was established earlier than other nearby orchards or settlements. According to T. Nafasov, the renowned orientalist V.V. Bartold noted that references to a village named Askifaghan or Iskifaghan in the Kesh region can be found in the works of Arab travelers, and he emphasized that this name is likely connected to the modern-day "Eskibog'" in the center of Guzor city. In particular, the Arab-Persian geographer Istakhri, in his work "Kitab al-Masalik wa-l-Mamalik" ("The Book of Roads and Kingdoms"), wrote: "Sunaj (Subakh) and Iskifaghan are located in the district of Khuzar," which supports the view that the current toponym "Eskibog'" is derived from the older names Askifaghan or Iskifaghan².

The Sogdian language specialist A.L. Khromov wrote that the name Askifaghan in the region of Mawarannahr means "high temple," and that the element "faghan" is related to the ancient Iranian word "bagina" (meaning deity or temple). It is likely that the word "bog'" in the modern name Eskibog' is a transformed form of the Sogdian word "faghan." According to T. Nafasov, the first part of this toponym—"eski" (old)—may be a modified version of the ancient elements "iski" or "aski," or a local name that was altered when transcribed into Arabic³.

In several ancient place names in Central Asia, the Sogdian-based element "ask" appears. This can also be seen in the epics of Uzbek, Kazakh, and other Turkic peoples, such as the names "Askartog'" or "Asqartov." In fact, the root of this word comes from the Sogdian "ask" (meaning "high" or "elevated"), combined with "ghar" (meaning "mountain" in Persian) and the Turkic word "tog'" or "tov" (also meaning "mountain"). That is why legends associated with this mythological mountain often describe it as "Asqartov was the highest mountain located at the very center of the world."⁴

¹ Населенные пункты Бухарского эмирата (конец XIX – начало XX вв.) Материалы к исторической географии Средней Азии. Под. Ред. А.П. Мухаммеджанова. – Ташкент: Университет, 2001. – С. 297-304.

² Истахрий. «Китаб ал-масалик вал-мамалик». Йўллар ва ўлкалар китоби. Хуросон ва Мовароуннахр. Тадқиқот, араб тилидан таржима, изоҳ ва кўрсаткичлар муаллифи Р. Т. Худайберганов. – Тошкент: Фан, 2019. – Б. 166.

³ Нафасов Т. Қашқадарё қишлоқномаси. – Б. 232.

⁴ Эшонова З., Қозоқова Ф. Аскартоғ образининг мифологик талқинига доир. Андижон давлат университети илмий хабарномаси. 2014. №2. – Андижон, 2014. – Б. 67-69.

The very meaning of the word Asqartov suggests that it is based on the ancient mountain cult. The mythology of the Sogdians, which included a strong belief in sacred mountains, later blended with the mythological ideas of Turkic peoples. As a result, stories and legends about Asqartov became widespread. The fact that in Arabic and Persian geographical sources from the 9th to 12th centuries, the settlement associated with the Kesh region appears under the names Eskifaghan or Askifaghan, supports the idea that the place now called Eskibog‘ in Guzor did not originally mean “old garden.” Instead, it may have meant “high temple.” The word “faghan” in this case means “temple” or “a place where Zoroastrians perform worship.” This same root appears to be present in the nearby Yakkabog‘ district name as well. Although locals today explain Yakkabog‘ to mean “a single garden” or “the only garden,” it is possible that the original word is not the Persian “yakka bog” but rather the Sogdian “faghan”—meaning temple⁵.

Thus, the name Eskibog‘ is derived from the word Askifaghan, which originally meant “High Temple.” The Sogdian word “ask” (meaning “high” or “elevated”) and “faghan” (meaning “temple” or “place of worship”) appear to have undergone phonetic changes over time. Among Turkic-speaking peoples, “ask” was transformed into “eski” (old), and “faghan” into “bog” (garden, orchard), which led to differing interpretations of the name.

This shift occurred, first, because over thousands of years the original meaning of Askifaghan was forgotten due to the Sogdian population gradually becoming Turkicized or Persianized. Second, the phonetic similarity between the words Askifaghan and Eskibog‘ likely contributed to the reinterpretation of the name.

The village of Eskibog‘ is located right next to the city of Guzor. According to Sogdian tradition, structures associated with Zoroastrian beliefs—such as temples—were often built within cities or in their immediate vicinity. Considering that Guzor was historically part of the ancient Sogdian region, and that Sogdian-speaking populations lived here for a long period—from around the 2nd millennium BCE to the early 1st millennium CE (nearly 2,500 to 3,000 years)—the identification of Eskibog‘ with the original Sogdian Askifaghan becomes even more plausible.

Like Nakhshab and Kesh, Guzor was a part of the historical Sogd region, more specifically the southern administrative unit known as Southern Sogd (Janubiy Sughd). This area represented the southernmost part of Sogdiana and lay near the border of the ancient regions of Sogd and Bactria–Tokharistan.

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