



MILITARY STRATEGIC SIGNIFICANCE OF WATER ROUTS OF THE AMUDARYA

KarimovYashinAbdusharibovich, Urgench State University

Abstract: *In the article there is analyzed military strategic significance of the waterway of Amu Darya in ancient and Middle Ages on the basis of sources.*

Keywords: *Central Asia, the Amu Darya, the Sirdarya, trans-continental rivers, transition, "Ox civilization", Jayhun, Chardjuy, the Kulzum (Caspian) sea.*

Introduction

Amu-Darya and Sir-Darya played an important role as trans-boundary rivers in the formation and development of Central Asian civilizations. The use of trans-boundary rivers was one of the most pressing issues that had emerged since the beginning of the first state shrubs in the region. This issue was usually solved by the use of force, usually by powerful states of the ancient and medieval times. This approach has changed in shape, has practically preserved its essence and has reached our era. Only recently in the use of trans-boundary rivers the issue of taking into consideration the interests of all the states in the region has been put on the agenda and works on its solution. The solution to these issues has thousands of years of historical experience and lessons learned from it. Therefore, applying to the accumulated historical experience on the use of the Amu-Darya River and its waterways should be considered as an urgent scientific task.

Statement of the Problem

In the history of humanity, the navy goes back to the end of the Mesolithic and Neolithic era. In the Neolithic era, tangible findings and illustrations from different regions prove the usage of light boats of different shapes and sizes, controlled by oars¹.

The Amu Darya, as the largest river in the region, occupies a leading position in the emergence and development of sailing. During the Bronze Age, where the foundations of statehood began to emerge in Central Asia, control of the major transitions and the development of sailing in the river were considered a priority and the military strategic significance of the ships in the river increased. During this period, competition for the right to use waterways that constitutes an essential part of the regional communications system developed in line with society's development, needs and interests. The aspiration for the

¹Alekseev V.P., Pershits.A.I. The History of First Society. – M.1990. – P. 224.



control of the Amu Darya River and its transit was of particular importance for the development of historic and cultural lands on both sides of the great river. The study of these processes, first of all, allows us to clarify many aspects of the ancient Bactria and its ancient Khorezmian history, which appeared in the upper stream of the Amu Darya. Many historical facts and archeological findings confirm that the Amu Darya waterway and its trans-boundary processes are associated with the formation and development of the Ox civilization.

Historical and archaeological studies have shown that the formation and gradual development of sailing in the region had been linked to the life conditions of the tribes lived near large rivers, first and foremost in the middle and lower streams of the Amu Darya River². The first period of the Amu Darya river access was associated with the Neolithic period when small boats were built and used and the Kaltaminor culture, living in the downstream of the Amu Darya River, could be regarded as one of the nation's sailing ships.

By the time of the Bronze Age, large ships were put into operation in the Amu Darya basin. The finding of a ship painting, considered to belong to the Bronze Age and found in Beshtepa rock pictures 20 km to the south of Nukus, was of great importance in the clarification of this issue, under the leadership of the archaeologist S.P. Tolstov³. The boat like Egyptian, East Mediterranean, Mesopotamian and Balkan vessels, with a flat bottom, a mast, a saddle, a high-angle front and a lower tail-made ship attracted the attention of specialists. Therefore, it has been concluded that there had been influence of civilization centers of the East in the development of ancient ships⁴. According to the historian U.Mavlonov, this picture shows, first of all, that the development of sailing in the Ancient East and Central Asia was based on common features, legitimacy, mutual exchange of information and cultural influence. Secondly, the local foundations should not be denied in the process of sailing in the lower line of the Amu Darya and the Aral Sea⁵. In the subsequent historical period, we see that the development of sailing in the Amu Darya basin corresponds to the development of the Khorezm civilization. In particular, in the first and developed Middle Ages, commercial and military naval vessels of Khorezmians dominated

²High speed of water flow in the upper parts of the rivers in the continent, roughness of waterways hindered the development of navigation.

³Tolstov.S.P.Ancient Khorezm. Experience of historical and archeological investigations.– M. 1948. – P. 75.

⁴Rtveladze E. Civilisations, States, Cultures of the Central Asia. – Tashkent, 2005. – P. 245-247.

⁵Mavlonov U. Ancient Ways of Central Asia. – Tashkent. 2008. – P. 231.



the northern part of the Caspian Sea⁶. This proves that ships of Khorezm oasis had ancient foundations and local traditions.

There is a description of an ancient ship on the bulla⁷ found in Karatepa Memorial, near the ancient city of Northern Bactria – Old Termez at the result of archeological investigations. This finding has played an important role in clarifying our understanding of the shape and structure of ships used in the Amu Darya in ancient times. Experts believe that a flat-bottomed, leather-covered, high-rise front-end dragonfly and a rugged, horizontally shaped ship, similar to Assyrian ships and Babylonian ship-boats. At the tail of the ship there is a rider on the bottom of the board, 18 riders (which means 36 crew members and one managing crew). The siege of 5 ships on the ship shows that it was used for military purposes⁸.

In the Middle Ages, ships were further developed in our region. Islamic sources say that navigation was organized in 12 rivers in the khalifat, including Jayhun (Amu Darya) and Sayhun (Sir Darya)⁹. In addition to the Amu Darya and Sir Darya, ships were put on the way in other large rivers with their streams. Boat remains were found by archaeologists in the city of Shavkat, which is located on the right bank of the Angren river (Akhangan), near the Uvaitepa or the ancient Khonobod memorial¹⁰. This is an important source of evidence of the development of sailing along the Angren river flow in the medieval era. The ships were also settled in the other rivers – in the tributary streams of the Sir Darya River. Ibn Hurdodbeh Hashart reports that freights were carried by boats in the middle streams of the Sir Darya River – the Angren, Chirchik, and Talas rivers¹¹. In the work “Hudud al-alam” there was given information that boaters lived in the city Nudjakat located one kilometer far from Binkat (Tashkent), and they boated in Parak (Chirchik) river and in the water ways of Sir Darya¹².

In the Middle Ages, major rivers in the region used ships and boats mainly to carry passengers and goods in economic and commercial relations. At the same time, although there are no specially-equipped warships in our area, it can be seen in many sources that

⁶Tolstov.S.P. Ancient Khorezm. Experience of historical and archeological investigations.– M. 1948. – P. 15.

⁷Bulla – a thing made of wood or clay stamped on one side in three places.

⁸Rtveladze E. Civilisations, States, Cultures of the Central Asia.. – P. 247-248.

⁹Mets A. The Muslim Renaissance / the Translation from German, the foreword and index of D.E. Bertels. – M.: 1996.– P. 479.

¹⁰Masson.M.E. Akhangan. Archeological-topographical sketch ... – P. 58.

¹¹Ibn Khordabek. The Book of Ways and Countries.... – P. 178.

¹²Hudud al-‘Alam (The regions of the world) a Persian geography / Translated and explained from the Persian by V. Minorsky. – London, 1970.–P. 118.



commercial vessels and large boats were used for military purposes. The Khujand governor, Timur Malik, turned the Sir Darya boats into a “floating castle” impervious to bullets, rebuilding them on the demand of a military condition in order to escape the persecution of Mongols besieging Khujand and that can be interpreted as an example of the centuries-old experience accumulated in this area¹³.

Navigation in the Amu Darya and Sir Darya also developed during the period Amir Timur and Timurids and there is a lot of information about the use of ships not only in transportation, but also in economic relations and for military purposes. The following information in Sharofuddin Ali Yezdi’s work is remarkable among them. According to him, by the order of Amir Timur, ships and shooters (i.e. shooters of combustible and explosive bomb weapons) in Jayhun (Amu Darya) reached the Kulzum (Caspian) Sea along the water way from Chardjuyand captured the ships belonging to enemy groups of Amir Timur and took part in the conquest of Mahan fortress¹⁴. There are a number of important peculiarities of this information. It is being approved that firstly, during the rule of Amir Timur, river fleeing developed considerably for his time and, secondly, navigation was well-established on the Amu Darya water ways and finally, the fact that the Amu Darya River reached the Caspian Sea through the Sarykamish and Uzbay ridges.

The use of ships for military purposes did not stop during the period of Shaibaniys, especially during the reign of shaibaniangovernor Abdullakhan the II. Particularly, it is well-known that the ships were used for military purposes during the time of Abdullaxan II sieged Termez (in 1572), which is located on the Amudarya River and had a solid defense system. In the sources it was reflected that during the siege of the city Termez, which was great as “Madinatar-Rajjol (The City of Men)”, besides attacking from land all ships were gathered from the border of Khorezm till the outlying districts of Termez and 50 riflemen and 50 bowers were located in each ship and an attack was also carried out on ships to Termez from Amu Darya according to the order of Abdullakhan II¹⁵. This information, on the other hand, shows that a large number of cargo ships were moving along the Amu Darya during that

¹³Mirzo Ulughbek. *Tarixi Arba Ulus (History of Four Nation)*.– Tashkent. 1994.– P. 144-146; Bartold.V.V. *Turkestan during an Epoch of the Mongolian Invasion // 9 volumes.* – M. 1963. V. 1. – P. 362 .

¹⁴NizamiddinShamiy. *Zafarnama / translator from Persian Y. Hakimdjanov.*– Tashkent: 1996.– P. 58, 78, 88; Sharofuddin Ali YAzdiy. *Zafarnama / Translation by Muhammad Ali ibn Darvish Ali al-Bukhri.* Authors of foreword, interpretations and indicators are A. Akhmad and H. Bababekov. – Tashkent: 1997. – P. 145.

¹⁵Hofiz Tanish Bukhari. *Abdullanoma. Sharafnamei Shakhi / Translated by S. Mirzaev from Persian.* Author of foreword and interpretations is B. Akhmedov. – T. 1999. Book 1.– P. 230-232.



period, and on the other hand, it allows us to have a clear idea of the size and capacity of the ships.

Information confirming the use of navigation and ships in the Amu Darya for military purposes is also cited in the book "TarikhNodiri (The Rarity of History)". The Iranian ruler Nadirshah built many ships to carry his troops from the Amu Darya before the military occupation of Bukharan Khanate. Under his command, the Governor of Balkh built 1,100 ships in the Amu Darya each of which could carry 1,000 man¹⁶. A part of the Nodirshah army entered the Bukhara Khanate on the ships by Kelif transition in August 1740 and in September of that year, the Iranian army attacked to Khorezm with a large number of guns and food supplies in ships¹⁷.

Other information also approves that the use of ships across the Amu Darya River was well settled in the last Middle Ages in Bukhara and Khiva khanates. In particular, there was reflected information related with waterways of the Amu Darya, transitions navigation in local sources as the famous "Sharafnamei Shakhi"¹⁸ by Hofiz Tanish Bukhari and Khiva's Khan Abulghazi Bahadirkhan's "Shajarai Turk"¹⁹. We also find such information in the works of the Turkish admiral Saydi Ali Rais, who was in the continent in the middle of the 16th century²⁰.

The struggle for the control over the Amu Darya river waterways and transitions played an important role in Bukhara-Khiva political relations. During the period of next conflicts, in the mid-1920s, the ship, in which Khiva's khan Eltuzarkhan and his relatives settled, sank in the Amu Darya River and that indicates that the ships were used in military situations²¹.

Conclusion

Thus, consistent use of waterways in the region has a history of 3 millennia. Navigation developed in the Amu Darya and Sir Darya basins and the cities and castles appeared which control coastlines, collect taxes and serve boats to stop. The waterways along the Amu Darya and Sir Darya rivers were important branches of the region's communications system,

¹⁶One man was equal to from 2-3 kg till 13,8 kg in the Middle Ages.

¹⁷Extraction from "History of the Nadir-shah" (TarikhNodiri) of Mirza Mahdi-khan of Astrabad / Transfer under the editorship of A.A. Romaskevich // МИТТ. Works of the Institute of Oriental Studies. The Iranian, Bukhara and Khivan sources. – M.: Publishing house of AN USSR, 1938. Volume 2. – P. 140-141.

¹⁸Hofiz Tanish Bukhari. Abdullanoma. Sharafnamei Shakhi / Translated by S. Mirzaev from Persian. Author of foreword and interpretations is B. Akhmedov. – T. 1999. Book 1. – P. 280-281.

¹⁹Abulghazi Bahadirkhan. Shajarai Turk. – Tashkent: 1992. – P. 158.

²⁰Saidi Ali Rais. Mirat ul Mamolik (Mirror of Countries) / Translation and Interpretation by I. Zunnunov, foreword by Azimjonova. – Tashkent: 1963. – 138 p.

²¹See: Said Homid Tura Kamyab. Tavorih ul-havonin / Preparing for publishing: N. Norkulov and others. – Tashkent: Akademiya, 2002. – P. 33-34.



not only in regional economic and cultural ties, but also in controlling the military and political environment in the region.

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