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“WATCHTOWERS” OF ISPIDZHAB

Abstract: The purpose of this work is to study monuments like Karaultobe of Ispidzhab historical and cultural district. The paper presents preliminary results of exploration and excavation archaeological works. Methods of ground and aerial reconnaissance of monuments, as well as overture of some Karaultobe were used for the survey of monuments. During the excavation, stratigraphic shafts and excavations were used. The works were carried out in the middle reaches of the Arys River valley and in the foothills of Karatau of Turkestan region of the Republic of Kazakhstan. The research objects were monuments in the form of complexes of defensive structures of Ispidzhab historical and cultural district. Stratigraphic data obtained from the study of all objects showed that they are artificially built embankments with different sizes. It was found that in some cases, the mound embankment was re-used as a signal point by reinforcing the embankment.

Key words: Karaultobe, stratigraphy, layers, exploration works, excavation works, the Middle Ages, archaeology, typology.

Introduction

In 2018, an archaeological study of monuments like Karaultobe began in Ispidzhab historical and cultural district. The field studies of Karaultobe in the south of Kazakhstan were carried out earlier. But until recently, the field works were limited to fixation of the monument and collection of single artifacts.

Researchers of historical topography of South Kazakhstan have always paid attention to the high single hills, which are called “Karaultobe” by the people. Such structures are associated with nearby cities and were part of urban planning and, of course, fortifications.

The first milestone in the study of Karaultobe was the activity of Turkestan circle of archaeology amateurs. One of the Karaultobe mounds, located 2 km east of Koltogan village, on the edge of the left above floodplain terrace of the Arys River, not far from the group of mounds of Borizhary burial mound, was first examined by N.P. Ostroumov. Here in 1893, during installation of a topographical mark, an earthen vessel covered with a metal cap was discovered, in which there was a hoard of coins and ornaments [1, p. 118-137]. The coins had the coinage of Otrar, as well as the coinage of other cities – Taraz, Almalyk, Kenzhid, Samarkand, Khodzhen, Bukhara, Shash and others [2, p. 53-54]. This monument is listed in the code of historical and cultural monuments of South Kazakhstan like the Karaultobe mound, and it is noted that the hill dominating the valley of the Arys River served as a signal point in the late medieval period [3, p. 103, No. 143].

Some of the currently known Karaultobe in the territory of the south of Kazakhstan were recorded during compilation of the code of monuments. One of the potential Karaultobe was described in the compilation of the code of monuments of South Kazakhstan region in the complex with the Ordabasy burial mound, located on the edge of one of the hilly-like remnants of the left above flood-plain terrace of the Badam River. This mound was the largest among the chain of mounds, which dominated over the surrounding area, and it is noted that in the XVIII-XIX centuries it was used as an assembly point and a signal hill [3, p. 97, No. 117]. The next monument in the code of monuments of South Kazakhstan region is interpreted as a “mound”, located 2.5 km south-west of Chubarovka village, not far from the plain flood of the Arys River, along Shymkent-Temirlanovka road. Moreover, the monument is dated by the Saka

time and it is possible that at a later time the embankment with impressive sizes could be used as a signal place [3, p. 114, No. 173].

In 2007, in the study of a mound, located in Shymkent city at the intersection of Ryskulov-Kunayev streets, it was assumed that a burial structure was located under the embankment of this object. However, stratigraphic studies on the monument showed that in the Middle Ages it was used as a defensive watchtower. On pre-revolutionary maps, this object is designated as “Karaultobe”. The embankment of the hill consisted of layers with packed soil and coat. A massive clay platform was built in the upper part. From the top of this hill all the districts were clearly visible, especially Shymkent hillfort. It can be assumed that a tower-like structure was erected on the top of Karaultobe; it was for this purpose that such a powerful platform was required at the base [4, p. 174-176].

In summer of 2008, an archaeological expedition carried out stratigraphic studies of Karaultobe, located 4 km north-east of Sairam village, on the high bluff shore of the Tassay. The monument was a very swollen conic hillock of a regular shape. The diameter of the monument at the foot is about 70 m and its height is about 6 m. According to the data obtained, the time of its operation dates back to the Middle Ages – X-XI centuries. The hill served as an observation tower and together with other Karaultobe defended the oasis from external enemies [5, p. 124-128].

In 2011, a monument like Karaultobe was studied 40 km north-east of Shymkent. It is an artificial embankment with a height of 8 m and a diameter of 100 m at the base, erected at a dominant height, from which adjacent territories are well visible. In addition to traces of burning, underground labyrinths inside Karaultobe were found on the upper surface of the monument. Due to the absence of finds, the monument is tentatively dated to the time of the rise of urban culture under the auspices of the Samanid and Karakhanid dynasties [6, p. 94-98].

Historically it is known that during the penetration of Islam and the conquest of these lands, some urban centers were surrounded by long walls. Al-Belazuri claimed that Nuh ibn Asad surrounded Ispidzhab with suburbs with a long wall in the IX century [7, p. 176]. In the text of Al-Belazuri, the emphasis was placed on the fact that Nuh ibn Asad built a wall around the city, surrounded crops and vineyards. After the punitive campaign against the Turks, Nuh ibn Asad was forced to build a border fortress, which was the city of Ispidzhab. According to the Arab geographers, Ispidzhab becomes a great border fortress and a place of war for the faith [7, p. 187]. Later authors emphasize the power and inaccessibility of Sairam in their writings. During the internal struggle of the Sheibanids between Abdallah Khan II and Baba Sultan, Hafiz Tynysh, who accompanied Abdallah Khan on a campaign on Sairam, writes: “Sairam, which is written in historical essays Ispidzhab, was a fortress, fortified to such an extent that the idea was powerless to afford to conquer it ...” [8, p. 252-257].

To begin with, it is necessary to refer to the meaning of this term. The word “Karaultobe” has a complex composition – “karaul” and “tobe”. The word “karaul” has Turkic roots and is often used in everyday life. In the modern sense, the word “karaul” has a broad meaning. “Karaul is an armed unit assigned to protect and defend military and government facilities or to give military honors” [9, p. 544]. The literal translation of the word “karaul” is “guard”. The word “tobe” is used in modern Kazakh language both in everyday and in scientific speech and means “peak” or “hill”. Hence the name “Karaultobe” – guard hill.

Structures like Karaultobe were assigned the role of guard structures, which were located along the oasis within sight of the city and neighboring elevations. Along with long embankments, high walls, as is observed in a number of monuments of South Kazakhstan, these objects were an integral part of the defense. The appearance of such defense systems is traditionally associated with the Arab conquests. It was during this period that a new type of city was formed with new elements of fortification, which existed all stages of the Middle Ages [10, p. 143-162].

To protect cities outside a city in the medieval period, according to V.A. Lavrov, three types of defensive structures were used: ribats with a small garrison from local population, which were strengthened by walls, caravanserais with buildings along the walls, and hisnah that protected approaches to a city [11, p. 79]. A.N. Bernshtam, based on the data of the Arab geographers, gives definition of hisnah, as structures that differ little from tepe – castles, only having large sizes and adjoining fortified platforms [12, p. 39]. In the works of medieval Arab geographers and in the fundamental works of the last century there is no definition of a detached guard structure. There are some mentions to the early medieval

Karaultobe (Karaultepa) by V.A. Nielsen, but he does not provide a description of the structure, says only about the purpose of the settlement – the guard character [13, p. 111]. From this, it is possible to conclude that the name Karaultobe has a local meaning for Turkestan region, since there are no similar names for medieval monuments in other places.

Methods

One of the most important tasks of the Karaultobe study in the field season of 2018 was search and fixation of archaeological objects of this type in the foothills of Karatau and the valley of the Arys River. The archaeological exploration was carried out by visual inspection of the area, preliminary study of cartographic material, in some cases based on the survey data, as some of them are called “Karaultobe” by the people. The method of natural identification of similar hills was used by inspecting the horizon from the top of one of Karaultobe, since the next hill was to be viewed from this position. Thus, in the process of the archaeological exploration, potential Karaultobe hills were identified with subsequent fixation of the exact location relative to the terrain.

Main part

The archaeological exploration was carried out on the left and right banks of the Arys River, in the foothills of Karatau, covering its eastern and western slopes. The areas of medieval and early medieval hillforts, such as hillfort Khankurgan, Bala-Bugun, Babaata, Syrgesaldytobe, Zhuantobe, Karaspantobe, etc., were investigated. A total of 29 objects were identified (Figure 1). The guard patrol points concentrated around Babaata hillfort, which had an individual defense system, were separated into a separate complex.

To determine the structure and typology of Karaultobe, exploratory excavations were made. The field works were concentrated on Karaultobe Akkoily-1 and 2, on Karaultobe Kumyshbulak, located on the left bank of the Arys River, in the area of Burgendy stow along the small river Kumyshbulak of spring supply, on Karaultobe Madani-1 and 2, located on the right bank of the Arys River. The stratigraphic studies were carried out at all objects. At Karaultobe Akkoily-1 and 2, the upper site was studied by laying the excavation with fixing the horizon by sectors.

Karaultobe Akkoily-1 with its parameters rises above the terrain. This object is the base Karaultobe. Its diameter at the base, as noted above, is 60-70 m, at the surface is about 15 m, and its height reaches 6 m. The steepest slope is the northeastern, the southwestern and southeastern parts are smooth. The embankment of the hill is disturbed in some places by late holes. The study of the profiles of the stratigraphic shaft-1, arranged on Karaultobe Akkoily-1, showed that the hill has an artificially created structure of simultaneously constructed layers, which is typical of this kind of monuments (Figure 2). The comparative analysis of the results of works with the studied hills, such as Karaultobe Sairam and Shymkent, shows that when these hills were erected, a foundation was prepared, representing separate layers, between which there was a rather dense, packed layer. Alternating these layers, a certain height was achieved.

The guard Karaultobe Akkoily-2 is located 4.5 km south of the base Karaultobe Akkoily-1. As mentioned above, the diameter at the base is 50 m, at the surface is about 10 m. The height is 3.5 m. The steepest slope is the northeast. As the profiles of the shaft-2 have shown, under the loose creeps with a thickness of up to 70 cm there is a filled soil with a corresponding tamper down to the level of the IV tier. The filled soil was a separate layers of dark brown color, between which there is a layer of tamped clay.

By the lower layers it can be judged that the surface was previously leveled. From the ceramic fragments of the early period, it is clear that a burial was located under the hill. Later in the medieval period, the hill was rebuilt by strengthening the embankments of the mound and it was used as a guard point. Judging by the height and relatively small diameter of the object, these hills could be used as intermediate guard points, which were located between the main base patrol towers. At the base of this object there is a burial mound, as is observed in some Karaultobe of Ispidzhab.

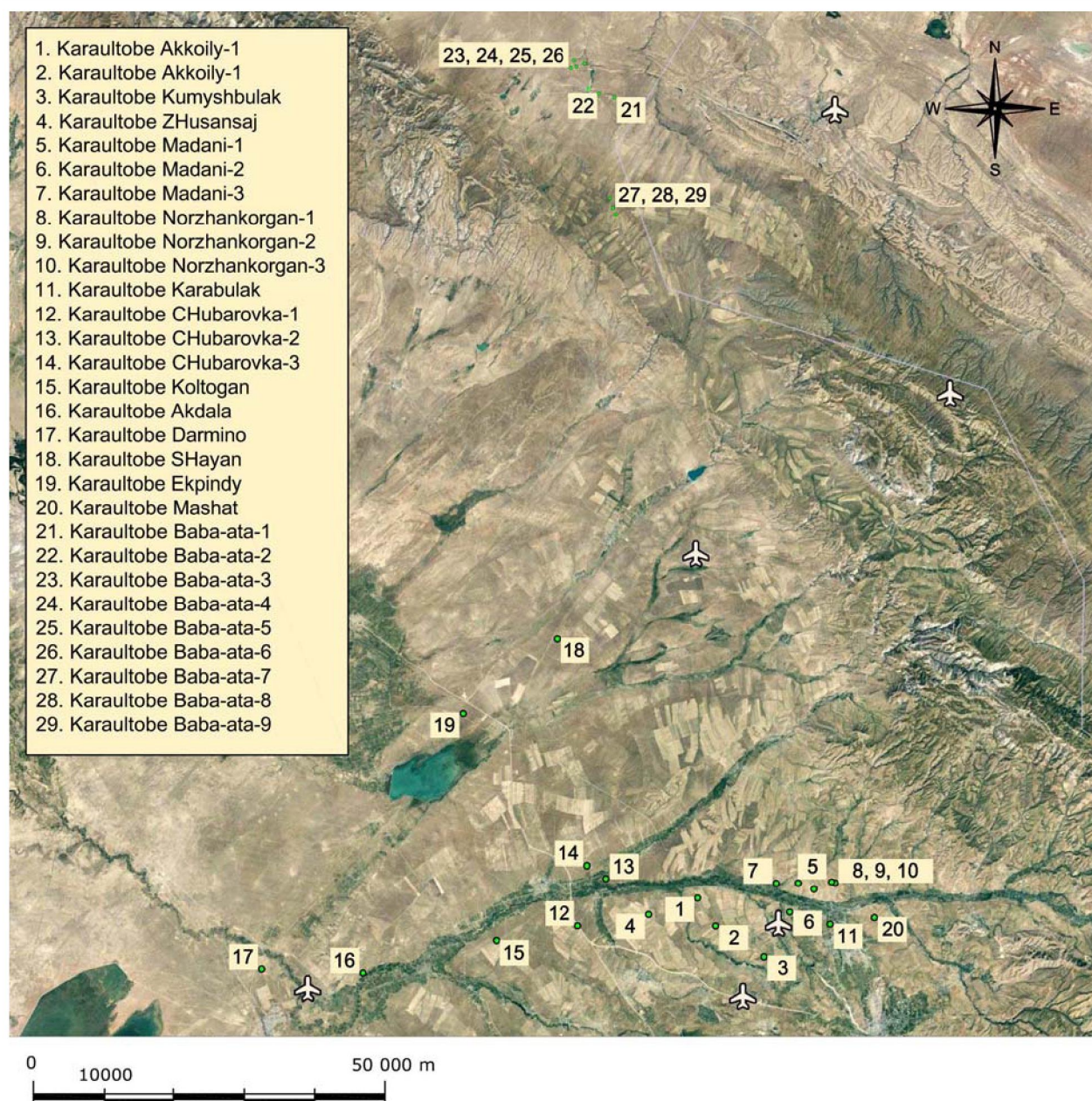


Figure 1 – Map and a list of Karaultobe

The materials found during the excavations at Karaultobe Akkoily-1 and 2, at Karaultobe Kumyshbulak and Karaultobe Madani-1, gave reason to believe that the time of construction of these monuments is the medieval period.

The materials of Karaultobe Akkoily-1 are represented by a small amount of ceramics and metal goods from the shaft and excavation on the surface. The following was found: a fragment of a vessel sidewall – a water-bearing jug made on a potter's wheel. The vessel's paste is dense, the firing is even, at the break it is of light brown color. Judging by the characteristics, this vessel belongs to the late Middle Ages and is not associated with the construction time of this hill. There is a fragment of a water-bearing vessel sidewall, and also a copper ring found in loose sediments of 60-70 cm, among the excavation finds. Two fragments of copper coins were also found. Both fragments are 1-1.5 cm in size, their integrity is poor. On the obverse, there is a square bezel – an imitation of a square through hole, typical of the early Middle Ages. The third copper product with sizes of 8 cm is made in the form of a ring.



Figure 2 – Layers in stratigraphy of Karaultobe Akkoily-1

The materials of Karaultobe Akkoily-2 are represented by fragments of ceramic vessels identified at the level of up to 1.5 meters. The ceramics comes from loose creeps and previously dated to the medieval period. A narrow-necked jug with a straight collar with a slightly bent out edge, to which a vertical handle was attached with a small channel along the surface, was found. The paste quality is good, most likely this vessel belongs to the developed Middle Ages. There were also fragments of jugs, jars and pots with poor integrity.

From the level of the II tier there is a piece of a copper turgesh coin with a square hole in the center. There was also found the upper part of a ring with incrustation, the stone is not preserved.

During the visual inspection, raised materials were obtained in the protective zone of this object: these are finial handles of a lamp-chirag of triangular shape with several edges. The handle is covered with turquoise glaze and there is a drawn ornament on the surface. The second fragment is a bottom of a jug made on a potter's wheel. The vessel was covered with a brown engobe and glossed. The raised materials are tentatively dated to the X-XII centuries, which confirms the temporary residence of this section during this period, when, most likely, the construction or operation of this hill was carried out.

The materials of Karaultobe Kumyshbulak are few. The sidewalls of a hand-made jug were found from the level of the V tier. One small fragment of the sidewall of a thin-walled vessel with a dense paste, with gray color at the break, was also found. On the surface there is an ornament drawn on the raw paste. A fragment of a copper bell was fixed from the level of the VII tier. In the northwestern part of the embankment, under the sod layer, a fragment of a copper coin was found, its integrity is very poor.

When cleaning a predatory manhole, a fragment of a silver coin of 2.5 cm in the diameter was found on the surface of the hill. The coin depicts the imitation to the Sassanian king. The motto next to the face is almost invisible. The altar of fire is depicted on the reverse side of the coin, with the king's face above it, two priests are seen to the right and left of the altar. A coin of the Bukharkhudat type [14, p. 156-157]. The coins of the Bukharkhudats were minted during the period of the Arab caliphate and later were in the market circulation up to the XII century. Kochnev B.D. refers such coins to the second type [15, Table. 11].

The materials of Karaultobe Madani-1 are presented with the raised material. Fragments of a single copper coin, the radius of which is about 7 cm, were found. The dating is the era of Karakhanids. Another fragment of a copper product, most likely a necklace, or a belt lining, was also found.

When inspecting the surface of Karaultobe Karabulak hill, raised materials were obtained, represented by two fragments of coins. Both fragments of the coins are dated to the second half of the X – the beginning of the XI century. The silver fragment of the coin seemed to belong to the time of the rule of the Buyid dynasty, the most powerful among the dynasties of the Abbasid caliphate before the Seljuq dynasty came to the power, which existed from 932/5 to 1055/62 years [16, p. 137-140; 17, p. 72-75].

Based on the archaeological materials obtained, most of Karaultobe functioned after the Arab conquest, with the approval of the first Muslim dynasties in Central Asia. The question of the erection of some Karaultobe in the early Middle Ages remains open.

Summarizing the data obtained in the course of research, the foundations of the typological classification were created. According to external signs of the studied Karaultobe type objects, today, two types have been identified, conventionally referred to as base and guard Karaultobe.

The base Karaultobe, as a rule, are distinguished by impressive sizes, clear trapezoidal shape, which give the hill excellent visibility on the horizon. Their diameter reaches 130 m, the height is from 8 to 18 m. These are Karaultobe Akkoily-1, Karabulak, Chubarovka-1 and 2, Akdala, Darmino, Mashat, Shayan. From the parameters of the above objects, the average size can be calculated: these are guard points with the diameter of 80-100 m at the base, 8-10 m in the height. One of such monuments is Karaultobe Koltogan, which is located on the high terrace above the floodplain of the Arys River, on its right bank, 4.5 km east of Koltogan village of Turkestan region (Figure 3). The hill, rounded in plan, has 130 m diameter at the base, the height of almost 18 m. On the surface there is an area with the diameter of 30-35 m, which gives the hill a trapezoidal shape characteristic of this type of monument. Judging by the topography, the construction of this object was carried out in two stages: first, a flat platform 3.5 m high was prepared, on the surface of which the main hill with the diameter of about 100 m was raised (Figure 4). In the terrain around the object, especially in the northeastern part, there are areas from which the soil was taken for the construction of the structure. These are hollows of amorphous shape 1.2-2.2 m deep.

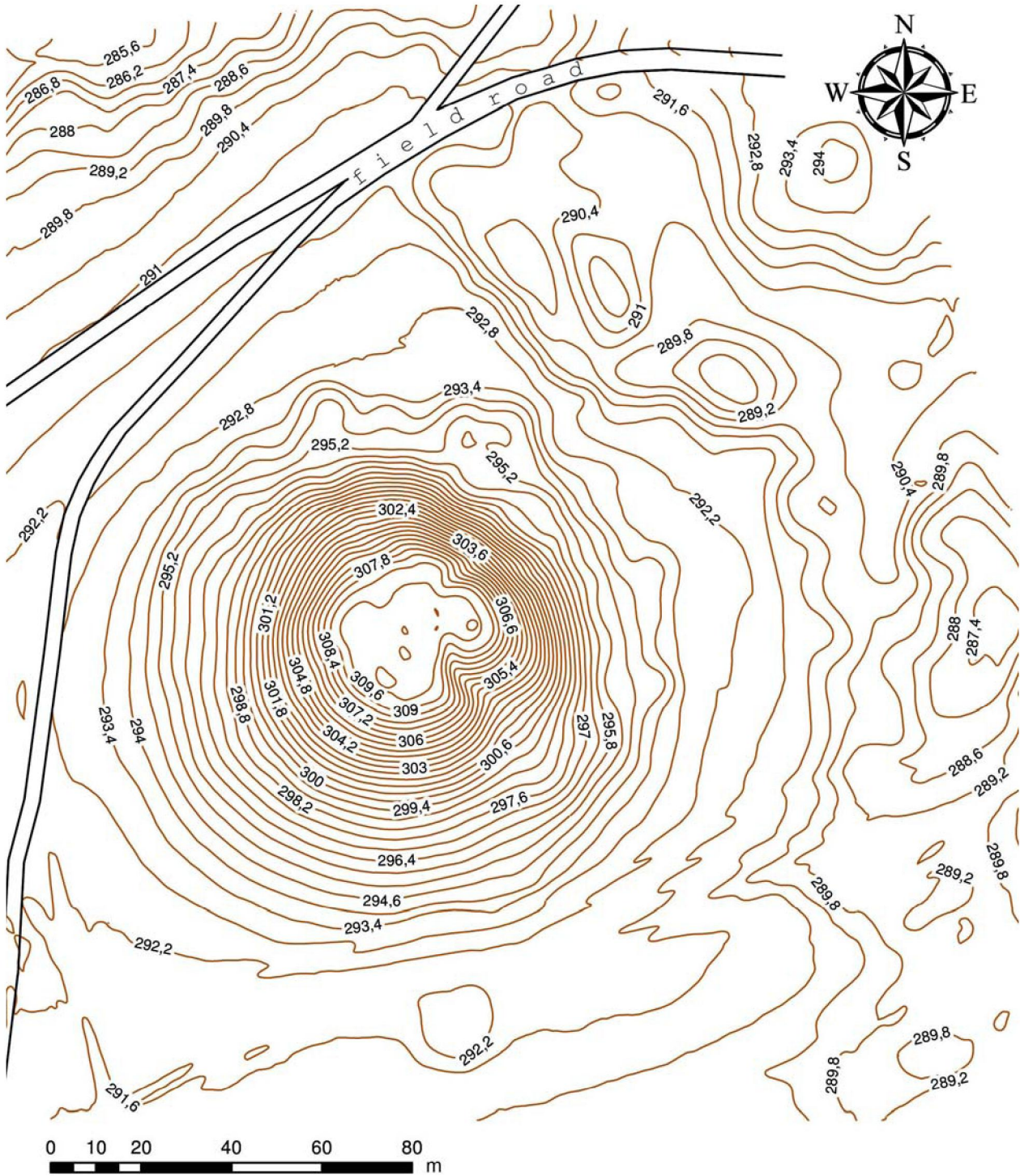


Figure 3 – Topography plan of Karaultobe Koltogan

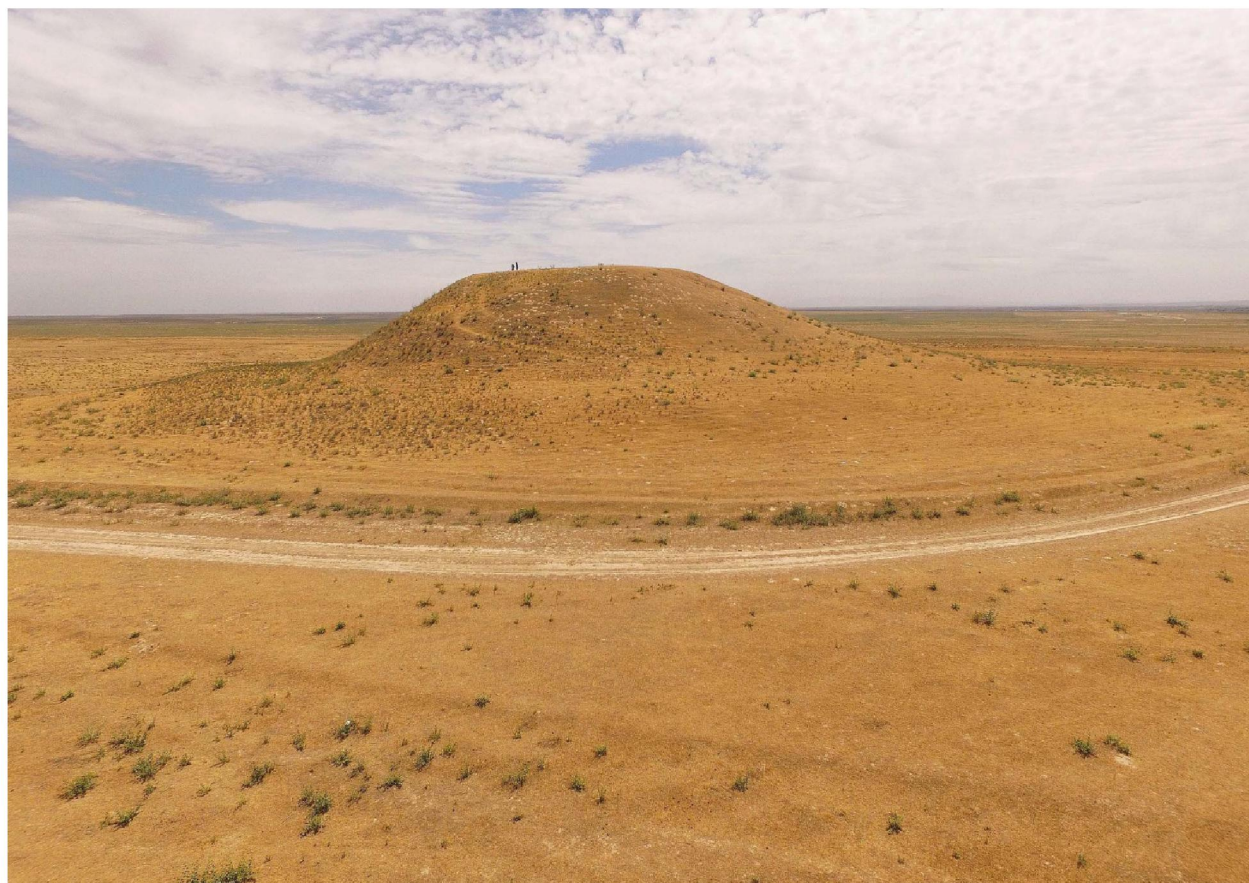


Figure 4 – Aerophoto of Karaultobe Koltogan

The second type is the guard Karaultobe have relatively small sizes, their diameter at the base is about 50 m, the height usually does not exceed 4.5-5 m. However, these parameters were enough for them to function around certain centers, since as a place for guard points natural elevations were selected. Sometimes, as the studies showed, mound embankments were used as the guard points by strengthening them. I.e., there was no need to build a new object in certain areas, where early burial sites were located at the keynote point, this in turn saved time and manpower. Some guard Karaultobe, such as Karaultobe Akkoily-2, Madani-3, Kumyshbulak and Norzhankorgan, were fixed in the complex of mound groups and, quite possibly, they were used for the second time as a signal point because of their location relative to the terrain. In addition, the embankment of these objects was slightly different from the mound embankment, where the contours of additional strengthening of the hill are visually observed by forming on the surface of the site, with the exception of Karaultobe Madani-3. Due to its location at the key high point, there was no need to strengthen the hill, as confirmed by the stratigraphic studies. In addition, the construction of such an embankment would be too time consuming due to the predominance of stones in the soil.

The studies showed that from the peaks of the base Karaultobe there is an excellent overview of the entire adjacent territory and there is good visibility of the next similar hill, on this basis, it is possible to assume that they worked together for the whole oasis. The guard Karaultobe more concentrated around cities.

During the archaeological exploration on the right bank of the Arys River, the Karaultobe series, concentrated around Khankurgan hillfort, was recorded. All of them were guard points, differing in relatively small sizes than the base ones. The fixation of these objects clarified the picture of this micro-oasis, where the guard points, located at rather high elevations, flanked the city located in the lowest valley – this is Khankurgan hillfort on the left bank of the Arys River. At the same time, these points were included in a single complex of guard towers of the entire oasis, since from these positions neighboring points are clearly visible, such as, for example, Karaultobe Akkoily-1.

Karaultobe near Babaata hillfort were conventionally interpreted as a complex of guard towers. According to the data obtained, it should be assumed that the city had an individual defense system, represented by monuments like Karaultobe. Perhaps this is due to its geographical position, being located in the lowlands of the Kapshigay stow with zero visibility of the adjacent territory, it was at the same time a border post.

Next was the question of the chronology of these objects. Inspection of objects like Karaultobe showed that the early medieval monuments are located in the territories adjacent to them, such as, for example, in the guard points Chubarovka-1, 2, 3 medieval cities were not recorded. The monuments located in this area – Chubarovskoye hillfort, Uzyntobe settlement are early medieval, which suggests their appearance during this period.

The stratigraphic studies on a number of monuments such as Karaultobe showed that the objects studied represent an artificially created embankment. The comparative analysis of the results of works with the studied hills, such as Karaultobe of Sairam and Shymkent, shows that the foundation was prepared in advance for the construction of these hills. It was separate layers, between which there was a dense packed layer-horizon [5, p. 124-128]. Alternating these layers, a certain height was achieved. It is important to note that construction stages stand out in the embankments of hills. This is a fairly dense laying in (packed layer), on top of which is filled soil, formed the general contours of the future monument hill.

Conclusions

As a result of the Karaultobe studies of Ispidzhab historical and cultural district, two types of monuments were identified: base and guard, having a different structure. Karaultobe were the most important elements of the city warning system. The most of the archaeological materials found on the monuments Karaultobe of Ispidzhab historical and cultural district date back to the X-XII centuries. A small number of early finds were discovered in Karaultobe, located in close proximity to the early medieval hillforts and settlements. Recently located findings near monuments like Karaultobe (on average watercourse of Arys, several kilometers far from Karaultobe Chubarovka-2 and 3) in Ispidzhab district suggest about early medieval roots of these monuments [18, p. 87-95]. The excavations of some of the monuments gave results on the basis of which it is possible to speak with confidence about the large labor costs and continued use of Karaultobe for the intended purpose. Further studies of Karaultobe in Ispidzhab historical and cultural district will undoubtedly show the availability of new data on the construction and use of monuments of this type. The objectives of future research will be compilation of a complete list of monuments of this type. Also very important is the comprehensive study of Karaultobe in the future and identification of various links with the medieval monuments of the district.

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ИСПИДЖАБТЫҢ «ҚАРАУЫЛ МҰНАРАЛАРЫ»

Аннотация: Аталмыш жұмыстың мақсаты Испиджаб тарихи-мәдени аймағындағы Қарауылтөбе ескерткіштерін зерттеу болып табылады. Жұмыста барлау және археологиялық қазба жұмыстарының алғашқы нәтижелері баяндалған. Зерттеу жұмыстарында жерден және әуеден барлау әдістемесі пайдаланылған. Археологиялық жұмыстар барысында стратиграфиялық қазбалар жасалынды. Жұмыстар Қазақстан Республикасы Түркістан облысы бойынша Қаратау тау бөктері мен Арыс өзені алқабының орта ағысында жүргізілді. Зерттеу нысаны Испиджаб тарихи-мәдени аймағындағы қорғаныс жүйе кешендері ретіндегі ескерткіштер болып табылды. Нысандарға жүргізілген зерттеу жұмыстары барысында алынған стратиграфиялық деректер бойынша олар әртүрлі өлшемді және жасанды түрде көтерілген төбешіктер екені айқындалды. Кейбір жағдайларда қорғандағы үйінділерді қайта нығайтып, көтеру арқылы белгі беру бекеті ретінде пайдаланғаны анықталды.

Түйін сөздер: Қарауылтөбе, стратиграфия, қабаттар, барлау жұмыстары, қазба жұмыстары, ортағасыр, археология, типология.

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«СТОРОЖЕВЫЕ БАШНИ» ИСПИДЖАБА

Аннотация: Целью данной работы является изучение памятников Караултобе Испиджабского историко-культурного округа. В работе приведены предварительные результаты разведочных и раскопочных археологических работ. Методы осуществления данных археологических исследований соответствуют современным стандартам. Для обследования памятников использовались методы наземной и воздушной разведки памятников, а также зондаж некоторых Караултобе. В ходе раскопок использовались стратиграфические шурфы и раскопы. Работы проводились в среднем течении долины реки Арысь и в предгорьях Каратау Туркестанской области Республики Казахстан. Объектами исследования являлись памятники в виде комплексов сооружений оборонительного характера Испиджабского историко-культурного округа. Стратиграфические данные, полученные при изучении всех объектов, показали, что они представляют собой искусственно возведенные насыпи с различными размерами. Выяснилось, что в некоторых случаях курганная насыпь вторично использована в качестве сигнального пункта путем усиления насыпи. В дальнейшем результаты, полученные во время исследования Караултобе Испиджабского округа, могут быть использованы в научных публикациях, учебниках и при создании сводов памятников.

Ключевые слова: Караултобе, стратиграфия, наслоения, разведочные работы, раскопочные работы, средневековые, археология, типология.

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