

# THE INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF HUMANITIES & SOCIAL STUDIES

## Sogdian Confederation: The Kingdoms Position and Peculiarity

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### **Abstract:**

*Historical Sogd confederation united the territory of Samarkand, Kashkadarya regions of Uzbekistan and modern land attached to Panjakent in Tajikistan. Administrative center of Sogd confederation was Samarkand. Property located in the valley of Zarafshan Panch, Maymurgh, Ishtikhan, Kabudhan, Kushaniyya and possession located in the valley of Kashkadarya and Keshu, Nakhshab, ruled from Samarkand. In this article, based on written sources and numismatic materials analyzed the history of Sogd confederation and the status of ownership as part of confederation. In addition to cover political events of the time. Substantiate the role of the researcher as part of a confederation of kingdoms.*

**Keywords:** Sogd, historical comparison, chronological sequence of events and the main factors, sogdolgy, peculiarity

### **1. Introduction**

Sogd confederation along the river Zarafshan in Samarkand united the sovereignties of Kesh, Nakhshab, Panch, Maymurgh, Ishtikhan, Kabudhan, Kushaniyya, Fai and their unity even more intensified in the early middle ages. These domains with their confederative relationship held their own independent internal control. Each of them had their own control centre (capital), the ruling dynasty, government symbols, military circles and other ideological commitments of statehood. The basis for their integration into a single political union was maintaining relationship among between their dynasties and carrying out political, military, ideological actions in collaboration where necessary (Goyibov, 2015).

Sogd confederation holds an important place in the state forming processes which have taken place on the lands of Uzbekistan. Favorable natural and geographic location of Sogd on the valley, in the midst of Zarafshan and Kashka Darya, its rich natural resources and economic potential were the main incentives which caused this land to play the role of mediator in international, commercial and cultural relationship of different countries. Because of these reasons different kingdoms of different eras attempted to take the lead of this place seeing it as the source of great revenue. However, despite being the part of different states, it continually preserved its relative autonomy. The reason being was dominating countries benefited from its autonomy. This in turn created opportunities for the formation and development of internal confederation of Sogd state. Particularly, in the period of Graeco-Bactrian kingdom and Kang (Kanguy) the process of unification into a confederation increasingly intensified.

Absence of relevant studies and research works related to the formation, the kingdoms position and peculiarity of Sogd confederation provides the complicity of the theme under confederation.

#### *1.1. Samarkand*

Particularly speaking, Samarkand was the central part of Sogd confederation, it had the leading role in the history of Sogd confederation. The temple situated in this area has retained a kind of constitution which was used by the government for dealing with administrative issues and legal matters which arose in the controlling process of the country (SDGM II).

Historian rulers of Middle Ages state that the center of Sogd Samarkand had its own twelve subordinate countries. On the Southern part of Zarafshan river situated *Bunjikat, Varagsar, Maymurgh, Sanjarfahgn, Dargam, Abgar* and on the northern side are *Yorket, Burnamud, Buzmadjan, Kabudhanjaket, Vedar* and *Marzban* (Bartol'd, 1963a, p. 144). For example, Maymurgh is a separate sovereignty, which covered the areas of Varagsar and Sanjarfagn. Probably Panjikent was also the part of Maymurgh. This assumption comes from the fact that because despite its political position the city of Maymurgh is never mentioned as an independent country.

“Bei shi”, “Sui shu”, “Tang shu” chronicles cover almost all the periods of Sogd confederation (Xo’jaev, 2014). According to “Bei shi” and “Sui shu” chronicles, “*there is the code in a church in Kan (Samarkand). Any kind of punishment or detention was carried out in accordance with that code*” (Bichurin, 1950a, pp. 271, 281). Sogdologist V. Livšic assumes that, this church is the place where the marriage contract between Uttegin and Dugduncha was drawn up (SDGM II. p. 38). If these law houses were considered as an office, there are whispers about its former use as Kofirkala in the juxtapose of Samarkand city (Berdimurodov, Mantellini & Matbooev, 2007). The proof for this assumption can be the research works carried out as a result of research works carried out in Kofirkala. The analysis of these seals in Kofirkala caused the drawing up of these conclusions.

If we pay attention to the information acquired from the Chinese chronicles, we will be aware of the fact that Samarkand was ruled by Shifubi from the last quarter of the VI century to the third quarter of the VII century (Tayshebi, ruling period was the last quarter of the VI century), Kyuimuchji (600-200), Tunga (642) (Bichurin, 1950a, p. 311). After that the throne of confederation was taken

byšyšpyr (šžšpēr) – Shishpir (650-655), βrxwm'n (βrxwm'n) – Varkhuman (655-675), wrk wrtr'mk – Urk Vartramuk (675-695) (Smirnova, 1981, pp. 213-216), twk'sp'δ'k (Chinese way of pronouncing is as *Dusaboti*)– Tukaspadak (695-698), m'stc 'wnc – Mastich-Unash (?) On-ok (698-700), trywn – Tarkhun (700-710), 'wyrk – Ghūrak (710-738), twry'r – Turgar (738-759) and other *ikhshids* (rulers) (Livshis, 2008, p. 198). Having said this, we do not have profound information about the rulers who lived before the above mentioned rulers, that is from the middle of the VI to the 40s of the VII century.



Figure 1

“Tangshu” is the chronicle which gives evidence about the swap of the ruling dynasty and the arrival of a new ruling family in Samarkand in the second half of the VII century. In 650s Fukhuman (in sogd. βrxwm'n – Avarkhuman) the general took over the lead of the country (Bichurin, 1950a) creating a favorable condition for the Turkic generation of rulers to take the power in the country. The events and details were reflected in numismatic materials, as we can find traditional brand in the form of a loop (𐰽) along with other tamghas reflecting the evidences and historical details within themselves (Smirnova, 1981, pp. 92-93).



Figure 2

The sign 𐰽 which was in form and two faced coins with the picture of a ruler on one side and a princess on the other *x'ttwn* – *khatun* and the coins with titles came which dated back to the end of the VII and the beginning of the VIII centuries, gives incentive to assume that these kinds of “women and princess” depicted coins were released as a sign of marriage relations between the family of the Qaghanate and confederation, which were minted by the rulers from Samarkand (Babayarov & Kubatin, 2013). During the reign of Turkic Qaghanate vassals minted the coins in honour of the qaghan depicting their pictures on them their obedience and reverence towards the ruling country. These coins were replaced by the ones with square shaped holes in the middle instead of the faces of the rulers (Smirnova, 1981). When the rule of the Qaghanate over its subordinates weakened the rulers of Samarkand started to mint their own coins under the influence of the Chinese government.

To sum up, Samarkand confederation which put into operation its own form of coin minting had its own head office where *ikhshids* took control of all the areas of the country.

### 1.2. Kesh


Kesh is a country which was a temporary (650-655) center of Sogd confederation.

Kesh is the province which was situated on the Southern part of the country, arab sources inform that the provinces which belonged to this country were Argan (ارغان), Aru (ارو), Balandarin (بالندارين), Buzmajan (بزمجان), Kashk (كشك), Maymurgh (مايمرغ), Kashkrud (كشكروود), Internal Sangarda(k) (سنكرده الداخلى), Outer Sangarda(k) (سنكرده الخارجى), Miyon Kish (ميان كش), Rasmayn (رسمائين), Rud (رود), Siyam (سيام), Surruda (سوروده), Jajruvd (جاجرود), Khuzar (خزار), Khuzarrud (خزارود) (Kamaliddinov, 1996).



Figure 3

In Chinese chronicles Kesh is described as – “there is a temple in Kesh where every sacrificing ceremony involves slaughtering thousands of sheep”(Bichurin, 1950a, pp. 271-276; 280-287; 311-318). This fuels the idea of that Kesh was a capital city for a short period of time. Because one of the conditions of joining union was fulfilling the religious rituals together.

In some coins of Samarkand of the VII century we can find the patterns in the form of *treskelles* stamp which looks the same with the patterns in the coins of Kesh. That is, in the coins of Samarkand the stamp in the form  is depicted on the coins of Samarkand (Smirnova, 1981).

The researchers relying on Chinese chronicles and the information from the arab and Persian sources emphasize that Kesh was ruled by Dichje (600-640), Shashebi (Shishpir; 650-655), Shi-Akhe (655s), Vek (720s), Khubido (727s), Yandun (730-738), Siginti (Ishkand; 738-741), Ikhrid (751s), Taran (752s) (Boboyorov, 2002, p. 66).

Arabs inflicted great injury to Chinese people in 751 in the war of Talas. From that time on China seemed to slow down the relations with Central Asian countries and accordingly Kesh also started to release the money units which were assigned by the Arab (Smirnova, 1981).

Hence it is necessary to emphasize the role of Kesh and Nakhshab leaders. In VII–VIII centuries a myriad of coins was released in Kesh (Shakhrisabz) with the sign of *kšy'n'k xwβ 'xwrp't*—the ruler of Kesh Akhurpatand in Chinese chronicles, in 727, the signs were replaced by the name of Kesh leader Khubido (Akhurpat in Sogdian) who used to send his ambassador to China (Smirnova, 1981). The title of *akhvirpathad* both local and central importance in the country.

The name of al-Ashkand is mentioned in Arab sources as the leader –*ispakhbad* of Nasaf in the 730s. Al-Ashkand reigned Nasaf between 734 and (Istoriya at-Tabari,1987).Tabari informed that Al-Ashkand was committed to Turkic Qaghanate, he was the *ispakhbad* in Nasaf. Persian words “sipakh”, “sipakhbad” mean “the leader”, “military leader”.

### 1.3. Nakhshab

Nakhshab also had its own place and share like all other provinces in the confederation.

Nakhshab sovereignty of the confederation united a myriad of its obedient countries of different sizes, and they are mentioned in sources as rustaks. They are the followings: Kasbi–كسبیه, Bazda–بزدہ, Kasan–کاسن (Kasantepa), Guvbdin–غوبدین, Batkhudon–بتخدین, Sirakas–سیرکٹ, Maymurgh–مایمرغ (Maymanaktepa), Fiyjakas–فیجکٹ, Shirakas–شیرکٹ, Sakabadyaz–ساکیدیاز, Afuran–آفران, Kadjar–کاجر, Bashtan–بشتان, Badyana–بدیانہ, Naukad–نوقد, Karmujin–کرمجین, Varazan–ورازان, Vanakat–وناکت (Kamaliddinov, 1996).

According to “Tang shu” chronicle, Nakhshab was half independent country in VI-VII centuries, and was called “Small Shi” in the area of Shi (Kesh). In Chinese sources Nashebo (Nakhshab) is described in the following way: “Nashebo (Nakhshab) has another name *Syao Shi*” (Shi was used for Kesh, small Shiy for Nahshab), because it is dependent on Shi (Bichurin, 1950a. pp. 271-276; 280-287; 311-318).

In 712 when Arabs conquered Samarkand Kutayba ibn Muslim and the ikshhid of Sogd Ghūraksigned the contract which was called “contract of Samarkand”. The contract confirmed that Kesh and Nakhshab with its towns and defensive fortresses belonged to the center of confederation, that is to Samarkand (Kurat, 1948). This proves one more time the fact that it was a part of the confederation. Arab historians and travellers who travelled to Central Asia also emphasize that Nakhshab was in the area of Samarkand Sogd (Bartol'd, 1965).



Figure 4


The coins of the sovereignty of Nakhshab has also been scrutinized. The coins of Nakhshab have not been studied sufficiently. The coins found in the area of Kashka-Darya with the picture of “a ruler defeating a lion” is connected with the history of this country (Kabanov, 1961).

Researchers try to explain whose picture was depicted in the coins. If the coins were minted until the conquest of Turkic people over Hephtalits (563-567) then the ruler in the picture was of an Hephtalit origin (Allot, 1926), otherwise the person in the coin may be one of the vassals of the Qaghanate in Nakhshab (Kabanov, 1961).



Figure 5

We can also be aware of the fact some coins of Nakhshab in the VII-VIII centuries of our era consisted mostly of the coins with Turkic ruler's face on one side and the horses on the other, and some sogdian legends ("gracious ruler") surrounding the pictures (Smirnova, 1981).

Other coins of Nakhshab had the horse with the inscription of (*βγγ γωβ*—"gracious ruler"), and on the other side was , a sign with an inscription on top. The researchers deciphered that inscription as *'škndk* – "Aškandak" (Smirnova, 1970). According to some scientists, the name of al-Ashkand (734-737) which is mentioned in Arab sources as of Nasaf ispakhbad 730s is depicted in that coin (Istoriya at-Tabari, 1987).

#### 1.4. Maymurgh

Maymurgh was the closest province to the center of the confederation Samarkand, and relying on the information in Chinese chronicles we can assume that Maymurgh and Panch which was situated in the East were the only one country with one ruling system (Vaissière, 2005).

Some researchers tried to develop this idea by the geographical position of Panch and Maymurgh and the coins which were minted by Panch rulers (Babayarov & Kubatin, 2013). If the idea of that Maymurgh and Panch were one countries finds its proof, it would be clarified that the country which once played important role in the history of the confederation released its own coins in the country. There is difference between the information derived from the coins of "khatun" and the information delivered by the monks who arrived on land.

In 640 western Turkic ruler Dulu set out to Kan (Samarkand) and on the way decided to conquer the areas of Tukharistan, and started attacks on a number of areas of Sogd, such as Maymurgh (Bichurin, 1950), and this is explained by the change of the kingdoms which came in power (Al'baum, 1975).

Maymurgh was directly belonged to Samarkand, and it was ruled by the members of a ruling family. Between 720-740 Maymurgh was reigned by Ghūrak's smallest son Mochjo (Manguchur, Banichur).

#### 1.5. Panch

Arab sources are not of the same idea about the territories of Sogdian country (Bartol'd, 1965a). Some remainings propose Sogd as the country capturing Middle Zarafshan and Samarkand. However, others believe Sogd territory stretches from Panjikent in the East and Karmana in the west of Sogdian country (Smirnova, 1950). The areas in the east and north-eastern part of Panch are not considered inclusively as Sogdian belonging. They are the towns of *Abtmaut, Pahut, Ahsikand, Anzob, Iskodar, Yevshisht, iZrāvadv, Varz, Vishak, Krut, K(u)shut, Madm, Martushkat, Pakhut, Partan* and *Farmitan* (Smirnova, 1961).

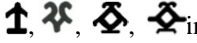
Panch was the country with a strong political position, which claimed for occupying Samarkand during the reign of Dēvaštič (SDGM II).

Panjikent, the city which prospered in V-VIII centuries and in 780s was devastated by Arabs by putting on fire (at the start of Mukhanna strike) and after that nobody settled down for living there (G'oyibov, 2012).



Figure 6

In VII-VIII centuries the names of Panch rulers were depicted in Sogdian documents and coins as *č'm'wky'n* – Chamukyon (VII the first half of (?)), *čk'yn cwr βylk'* – Čakin Čur Bilga (693-708), *δyw'štyč* – Dēvaštič (708-722). We have records about a woman ruler who ruled the city of Panch. The Sogdian words on the coins she ordered to mint *pncy nnδβ'mpnh* – has been deciphered as "Nanabampan is the princess of Panch" (Smirnova, 1981).

O.I. Smirnova tried to explain the family relations of Panch dynasties with the signs in coins. The shapes of tamgh  in coins (Smirnova, 1981, pp. 230-231; 233-240) expressed the family relations among the rulers, and these signs and seals had some additions and resemblance in their forms. Looking at the coins the scientists discovered that they might be related to the period of Hephthalits (Ilyasov, 2004).

#### 1.6. Ishtikhan

Sogd confederation mostly coincides with the territory of current Ishtikhan (Adilov & Mirzaaxmedov, 1996). According to sources the rulers of Samarkand had their second residence in Ishtikhan (Bartol'd, 1964). However, we do not have profound knowledge about whether the rulers of Ishtikhan released their own money units or not.

In written records about Ishtikhan, that is in Chinese chronicles it is stated that as the city of *Tsao*. In the chronicle the word *Tsao* is signed as "Tsao is written before putting the sign of water" which meant "without water", the process of drought, and desert.

According to the Chinese chronicle the 'Tsao' which situated in Sogd consisted of three parts: Western Tsao (Ishtikhan), Central Tsao – in the east of western Tsao (Kabudhan / Bulunghur), Eastern Tsao, eastern part of Mirzachul (Ustrushana). Likewise, Western Tsao was also written before the "water" sign (Bichurin, 1950a). This talked from the fact that most part of Tsao was deserts. Those places, probably, covered eastern parts of the Qarnab desert.

In Chinese chronicles, the Western Tsao ruler, whose other names were four – *Shuaydushana*, *Suyduyishana*, *Kiputana* (Kabudhan) and *Suduchjini*, and heruled his regions from Sidixin (Ishtikhan), another governor Gelo-Pulo (Khara bughra) sent him his diplomat in order to present him some gifts from his local resources (Bichurin, 1950a). In Chinese chronicles Khara-bughra – Gelo-Pulo was originally the head of Ustrushana. It is also assumed that probably, Ishtikhan and Kabudhan were temporarily subordinate to Ustrushana, and this way he became superior to. Ishtikhan situated in the center of Sogd confederation and there was a residence of all the union, and this contradicts the fact that the ruler of Ustrushana settled in the center of Sogd.

The ruler of Ishtikhan took active part in all the events and ceremonies which took place in Samarkand. For example, it was tradition for the rulers to participate in sacrificial ceremonies. Unlike Panch and Kesh these kingdoms were mainly subordinate to Samarkand which was the center. However, there is not any sufficient information about its possession of state property.

Tabari gives an account of one peasant Sabit Ishtikhanich from Ishtikhan, who retreated in Arab invasion in 720, and took part in Khujand events uniting with the army of Sogdian Karzanch who was from the royal family. After that, ownership passed Ishtikhan available to arabs (Istoriya at-Tabari, 1987).

### 1.7. Kabudhan

Kabudhan was one of the states during the period of Sogd confederation.

Kabudhan was inferior and the property of Samarkand (Bartol'd, 1963), this was a proven fact with the data presented in Chinese chronicles (Bichurin, 1950a). Kabudhan confederation was reigned by the representatives of Samarkand rulers.

O.I. Smirnova introduced Khara Bughra who was originally was from the generation of Khaydar Afšin (Istoriya at-Tabari, 1987), the ruler of Ustrushana, as mentioned in Arab sources, as the head of Kabudhan (Smirnova, 1981).

A. Otakhadjaev relying on the Chinese chronicles stated the fact that until 731-738 Mosyen was the ruler of Kabudhan, and after his death, that is from 740 the head of Kabudhan and Ishtikhan became Khara Bughra. And also he assumed that he was from "On ok" (Otaxo'jaye, 2010). The fact that Khara Bughra is originally a Turkic name intensifies the closeness of this assumption to reality. However, the fact that during this period Ishtikhan and Kabudhan were one state is beyond recognition, as this idea has not found its proof so far.

### 1.8. Kushaniyya

Another Sogdian state which was in the area of current Kata-kurgan was Kushaniyya, a part of Sogd confederation.



In Chinese sources, the royal family of Kushaniyya is called *Zhaowu*. This family also was originally from Kan (Samarkand) (Bichurin, 1950a). We can conclude from this information that, Kushaniyya was a separate unit with its ruler whose origin was from a royal family in Samarkand.

In the beginning of VI century and the first half of the VII century Kushaniyya was controlled by the representative of Sogd confederation. In addition, Kushaniyya was one of the most prosperous cities of Sogd, and it was used as the cultural center of Zarafshan, and the population of that area lived in affluence (Otaxo'jaye, 2010).



Figure 7

Dunhuang, Gansu and sogdian letters found in Eastern Turkestan contain the records in which used the term "people from Kushaniyya" (which means from Kushaniyya). In "Ancient letters" (II-III centuries) one can find information about sogdians, Samarkand, people from Kushaniyya, Maymurgh, Kesh and other foreign merchants of China (Rtveladze, 1999). The term 'people from Kushaniyya' is explained as Sogdian citizen.

O.I. Smirnova (Smirnova, 1967) left records about the fact that the ruler who lived in IV-V centuries united all the minor states around Kushaniyya and put into operation his own bronze coins on his own behalf, with the signs of , .

### 1.9. Fai

Another neighbor of Kushaniya in the Sogd confederation was Fai, and coincides with the current areas of Nahrpay (Adilov & Mirzaaxmedov, 1996).

Fai was situated in the distance of two days the center of the confederation Samarkand according to some sources (Bartol'd, 1963a), in some cases this country is mentioned as the sovereignty with its own ruling and political system.

During the Arab dominance of the confederation, the relations Fai had with the confederation changed. During the period of the ruler from Khurasan Said ibn Abdulaziz (719-720), the control of Arabs weakened, and Turkic and local people started frequent strikes for overturning the existing system. One of these movements was in 720, with the initiative of Kürsül. During this period, Kürsül, having taken the palace of al-Bokhili near Dabusiya, went to fight against Usmon ibn Abdulloh, who was resided in Samarkand. Usmon ibn Abdulloh sent four thousand soldiers composed of different tribes with the leader Musayyib ibn Bashir ar-Riyokh. When it was only two farsakh (6-7 km) from Bokhili, two thousand soldiers abandoned the war area. On that moment, the leader of Fai, the army with the lead of Turk-kaghan joined them (Istoriya at-Tabari, 1987, p. 178). This way the army of Fai assisted arabs in capturing Bokhili and they also helped with their food resources (Istoriya at-Tabari, 1987).

O.I. Smirnova also emphasized depending on the records of Tabari, many other people from Fai joined the group movement organized by Karzanch, the head of Ishtikhan (Smirnova, 1970). However, it is still unknown who were the names of members exactly. Therefore, as a result of split, Turk-kaghan joined Arabs, after becoming aware of Korzanch's success in joining most people to his army and leading them to Ferghana.

## 2. Conclusion

Sogd confederation started to developing into cities and towns in the last thousand years between VII-VI centuries B.C. In the middle of that millennium this change intensified and resulted in the formation of a number of sovereignties which eventually joined under one name "Sogd" or "Sogdiana", it was the political union which consisted of several kingdoms. Even though, in the of the V-VI centuries the names of Samarkand, Nakhshab, Kesh are encountered as the political unions, their roots go back to many more thousands of years.

The administrative and political division of Sogd confederation is connected with its natural possibilities. In fact, every minor kingdom situated on the riverside, or was surrounded by a mountain ranges which divided the country from other areas. Geographical factors – rivers, hills, mountains, etc. were of the major importance for the division of the kingdoms.

The dynasty which ruled Sogd confederation is called "Zhaowu", and its local form "Jamük" or "Chamük" is quite similar to *yabghu*. This means the ethnic background of Sogd people involves meddling the generation of Sogdians and Turkic people. Chinese 'Bei shi' and 'Sui shu' chronicles also state the facts that the rulers of He (Kushaniya) and Mi (Maymurgh) came from the dynasty of "Zhaowu" which means their basic generation was from the family of Kan (Samarkand).

One of the another feature of the Sogd confederation was the fact that the strongest kingdom in terms of economy and politics claimed for the control over the whole confederation. For example, Samarkand had kept its Central authoritative position, despite the claims from Kesh, Samarkand and Panch from time to time.

## 3. Abbreviations Used in the Article

SDGM – sogdian documents of the mount Mug

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