

The medieval town of Talkhir. Origination and development of urban culture in the northeast Zhetisu.

Saltanat Eder

University of Bern

Hall in Tirol AT

Abstract

Using the medieval Talkhir site as an example, the paper presents the main results of research investigating the process of formation and development of the urban culture in the northeastern part of Zhetisu, covering the territory of the Ili Valley and the Trans-Ili-Alatau mountains in modern-day Kazakhstan. Archaeological materials and historic sources provide evidence for existence of a specific urban landscape on the Tien Shan stretch of the Great Silk Road and significant role of Talkhir as one of the leading center of handcraft in Central Asia. But unlike the neighbouring Talass Valley, where the urbanisation was a successive, natural process, the region of Ili River is characterized by a sudden appearance of the developed form of urban living.

The present study focused on identifying and analysing of prerequisites of emergence and expansion of urban life in southeast Kazakhstan from the AD 5th to the 13th century. The author comes to conclusion, that the building of urban centers was effected by socioeconomic factors as well as changings in political constellation. In those circumstances the external cultural influences had been adapted to local needs and traditions.

Keywords: Central Asia, Zhetisu, settlement of Talkhir, medieval urbanisation, Silk Road.