

Kyzylzhar

History of the most northern city of Kazakhstan in Russian documents

Even today some people believe that St. Peter fortification in Northern Kazakhstan was constructed by Russian soldiers for protecting Kazakhs from Dzhungars. At the same time it is alleged that before colonizers' arrival no one had settled here. This is delusion which had been widely spread in the past. Daniyar Kassymov proves it with the help of following facts:

1. The fortress was put in operation in 1755, when Dzhungar state was on the verge of ruin and did not consider any campaigns against Kazakhstan;
2. In case of a great nomads' army attack, this wooden fortress would have been fired upon with arrows and would have burnt in a moment;
3. The fortress on Ishim carried out only frontier functions and rapidly (and officially) turned into a frontier market. Russian Senate issued a decree on a fortress, 33 redoubts and 42 beacon's construction on the border with Northern Kazakhstan on March 26, 1752.

It was one of the most tragic moments in the history of Kazakh nation. Our state was weakened by a continuous war with Dzhungars and had to face threat of war with China. Constant raids by old and new neighbors had to be repelled, so what was the reason of construction of new fortresses? The decree clearly stated that the fortress was necessary for protection from Kirghiz-Kaysak raids. The answer to a question why subjects of the Empire would attack its domains lies in the fact that due to death of Semeke khan, a decree on Middle zhuz citizenship, which had been signed by the Empress Anna Ioanovna in 1734, was not delivered to the zhuz. Actually before adaptation of "Regulation of Siberian Kirghiz" in 1822, Middle zhuz stayed independent.

There is another misconception concerning Dzhungars as it is used to believe that Dzhungars had reached northern part of Kazakh khanate. It is true that they crossed Ishim in the area of modern Atbassar, but it is 500 km further south than Kyzylzhar, that is why any allegation that Russia tried to save Northern Kazakhstan from invasions with the help of fortress should be considered as quite preposterous.

Construction was launched on June 22, 1752, an area called Kyzylzhar had been chosen for the new fortress. The name of the area emerged due to reddish hue of soil in deep gorges. It is a big eminence on the shore of the Ishim (Yessil) River. Such choice was not accidental as the area was ideal for establishing a military settlement. The construction was conducted by Russian Cossacks of the Ishim regiment it was completed in 3 years.

D. Kassymov believes that the main reason for the fortress construction was economic importance of Kyzylzhar. Y. Artykhabayev, a historian from Karaganda,

wrote, “For thousands of years trade caravans had passed through Kyzylzhar from Middle Asian states and China. For hundreds of years it was head for Siberia and its capital Isker, and later for Tobolsk. After Russian emergence in Siberia, importance of Kyzylzhar’s area considerably raised, merchants from Bukhara, Tashkent and Kuldja, who would reach Tyumen khanate in the past, now sold their goods right in Kyzylzhar. Mostly it was non-monetary exchange: cattle and skins of wild animals had been exchanged for tea, sugar, clothes and hardware. There are no historic documents which could have supported these speculations, as fortress’ archives burnt in 1849. Analysis of Chinese, Tajik and Uzbek sources will let us prove that Kyzylzhar was an important point of interregional commerce for a long time before arrival of Russian settlers.

An actual history of the bigger and modern part of Petropavlovsk started with construction of Abylay-khan house, chancellery, baths and guest-house. Russian Cossacks’ s settlement stayed low near Ishim River till the middle of the 19th century, no it is called Podgorye, while the biggest part of modern city is located in Nagomaya part. Local historians argue whether Abylay had lived here constantly or just to solve problems of frontier collaboration and commerce.

D. Kassymov’s findings “Commemorative book of Tobolsk Governorate” in 1864 to be quite significant as it has direct clues to St. Peter’s fortress predestination, i.e. control over commerce. There are following lines in that book “Petropavlovsk was founded as St. Peter fortress. According to the latest statistical information, there are 1185 households items, 36 of them were made of stone. There are 3 stone Orthodox Churches and 4 Mohammedan mosques, 2 of them are made of stone ad 2 are wooden”.

In the second half of the 19th century dozens of thousands former serfs arrived to Northern Kazakhstan. In a short period of time the amount of settlers increased several folds. Some of the new dwellers settled in the city, becoming craftsmen and petty traders. Due to the lapse time the amount of native inhabitants decreased, as a result, in 1897 Kazakhs were only 44, 5% of total population in Petropavlovsk district.

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