



ABSTRACT SUBMISSION

Defending the city of Otrar in southern Kazakhstan

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Abstract

The city of Otrar in southern Kazakhstan was occupied from approximately the 1st century BC to 18th century AD. In this period it was reportedly conquered by the Arabs, Qarakhanids, Khwarazmshah, Mongols, Dzhungars and others. To counteract this, the city's inhabitants built a series of concentric defences to protect different parts of the city to a greater or lesser degree. In some places they appear to be haphazard and quickly built, in others perhaps more symbolic than effective. There are also innovations over time to account for new modes of warfare and perhaps also the changing natural environment surrounding the city.

This paper will present initial results of a programme of topographic mapping, excavation and dating of the different defensive systems at Otrar. It aims to consider the changing defensive needs of the city's inhabitants over the 2000 years of its occupation, and understand how different defensive systems functioned together to defend the city. Finally it aims to understand when and why Otrar's monumental defences were constructed, to better understand the city's population and security situation in different periods.

Keywords

Central Asia, Urbanism, Defences, Landscape

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