

## NEW ARCHAEOLOGICAL RESEARCH IN THE CITY OF GARDEZ

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**Abstract.** Gardez city is the capital of Paktia province, which is located 122 km south of Kabul and southeast of Afghanistan and on the route of the main branch of the Silk Road from Ghazni to Sindh. The historical castle (Balahisar) and Mirzaka have a special place in this city.

In order to know the foundations of the city under study, it is inevitable to review written sources, field studies and environmental surveys. For this purpose, a systematic survey of the area of Gardez city has been carried out in order to collect surface data. In addition, in order to identify the settlement periods of the city, a borehole was dug near the city wall, whose data have been presented and analyzed in the current research. Also, the results of environmental studies were effective in identifying the factors affecting the formation and development of the city. From the ancient sites and the excavation of the square trench number 1 in the historical castle and the investigation of the Mahmoudiyeh hill (number one) and the Nadiryeh hill (number two), numerous pottery works were obtained, these potteries represent the era of the Achaemenids, Alexander the Great, Parthians, and Seleucids. They are Parthian, Sasanian and Islamic.

based on findings and ancient works; The historical heritage of this city is more than what was imagined, this city has been a suitable place for settlement and residence from the geographical and environmental point of view since prehistoric times until now. The location of this area in the four communication routes from west to east and north to south has been one of the other reasons for the establishment and expansion of Gardez city.

**Key words:** Gardez city, Urban Spaces, surface exploration, obtained Effects.

## НОВЫЕ АРХЕОЛОГИЧЕСКИЕ ИССЛЕДОВАНИЯ В ГОРОДЕ ГАРДЕЗ

**Аннотация.** Город Гардез является столицей провинции Пактия, которая расположена в 122 км к югу от Кабула и к юго-востоку от Афганистана и на маршруте главной ветви Шелкового пути от Газни до Синда. Исторический замок (Балахисар) и Мирзакан занимают особое место в этом городе.

Чтобы узнать основы изучаемого города, неизбежно необходимо изучить письменные источники, полевые исследования и экологические обследования. Для этой цели было проведено систематическое обследование района города Гардез с целью сбора поверхностных данных. Кроме того, для определения периодов заселения города была вырыта скважина возле городской стены, данные которой были представлены и проанализированы в текущем исследовании. Также результаты экологических исследований оказались эффективными в выявлении факторов, влияющих на формирование и развитие города. Из древних мест и раскопок квадратной траншеи номер 1 в историческом замке и исследования холма Махмудие (номер один) и холма Надирие (номер два) были получены многочисленные гончарные изделия, эти гончарные изделия представляют эпоху Ахеменидов, Александра Македонского, парфян и Селевкидов. Они парфянские, сасанидские и исламские.

*на основе находок и древних работ; Историческое наследие этого города больше, чем то, что представлялось, этот город был подходящим местом для поселения и проживания с географической и экологической точки зрения с доисторических времен и до наших дней. Расположение этой области на четырех путях сообщения с запада на восток и с севера на юг было одной из других причин создания и расширения города Гардез.*

**Ключевые слова:** *город Гардез, городские пространства, исследование поверхности, полученные эффекты.*

#### INTRODUCTION:

The city of Gardez is considered to be one of the historical settlements and the strategic area of southeastern Afghanistan. Gardez has sometimes been called the gate of Paktia province and the key to the conquest of Kabul in historical and political events. The date of the formation of this city is not exactly known, but it is mentioned in the geographical sources and Islamic texts in the early Islamic centuries. This city has also played a valuable and decisive role in the contemporary political history of Afghanistan.

Since the settlement in Gardez continues until now, its spaces can be divided into two parts: historical context and active urban context. They make up the historical areas and parts of the city, such as: old market areas, Sakhi Mosque, Sik Temple, Sarsang Castle, Hill No 1, No. 2, Snake Spring, Hazrat Khizr Spring and Historical Castle part are located in the old context of the city.

Areas that are located in the active urban context, such as: the building of the Security Command) military base Central Mosque, Khost Bridge, famous tombs despite their ancient tradition such as Shah Abul Hassan Kherqani, Shah Afzal Wali, Sayed Hasan Agha, Sayed Shah Akram Agha, part of the north and West historical castle are located in the active urban context.

Among the ancient sites of Paktia province and its center is the city of Gardez, there are the historical castles of historical castle Mirzaka, Hill Mahmoudiyeh, Hill Naderiyeh, Kafterkhaneh, Oudaki, Robat, Som Doldol, Ghogori, Kodilo, Zahaka, Chenwar, Sangineh Tepeh, Sepina Shigeh, Chamkani, Kolalgo, etc., which are more than sixty-eight unregistered ancient and historical sites related to this province.

One of the historical monuments of Gardez city is the historical fortified castle, which is located in the center of the city on top of a long hill and is built in the form of a fortified war castle. As recorded in historical sources, this historical castle has been used as a military base, a Buddhist temple, and a prison during Sultan Mahmud Ghaznavi's period. Unfortunately, no effective efforts have been made to preserve and protect it as a historical-cultural landmark of the country, and some of its towers are in ruins.

Another ancient and historical site of Paktia province is called "Mirzaka", where all kinds of cultural objects such as: gold, silver, copper, metal, etc., valuable ancient works were discovered illegally by irresponsible people and taken out of the country. The country has been smuggled and transferred. In terms of the volume of movable antiquities, the Mirzaka treasury is one of the largest treasures in terms of the quality of its artifacts.

The city of Gardez was subjected to archeological exploration in 2016, and as a result of this exploration, many pottery were found, which according to Dr. De Pahlavan and Dr. Garajian,

These ancient artifacts represent the era of rule and the presence of Alexander the Great and her descendants, the Achaemenids, Sassanids, Kushans, and Islamic dynasties in the city of Gardez.

**Research question:** Considering the written sources and geographical information and archaeological data, when was the city of Gardez formed and which geographical, political, economic and possibly religious factors caused the continuation of the city's life ?

**Research goal:** The aim of this scientific field of research is to identify cultural regions, their historical importance, and to inform future people and attract tourism. In addition, from this report, an attempt is made to study the economic, geographical and political influences on the continuation of the life of the city of Gardez in the historical period.

**Background research:** Scientific research and archeological excavations have not been carried out widely in Gardez city, except for a few superficial cases, a person named Vigen in 1840 AD and Riverti in 1878 AD mentioned the ancient site of Zahaka. In 1966 AD, the French archaeologist Fischer visited Chenvar and Kolalgo ancient sites and in 1967 AD he surveyed Godilo site. In 1969 AD, he visited Mahmoudiyeh and Nadriyeh hills of this city and provided the necessary explanations about it. In 1980 AD, Tow Person The names of Gordon and Leonine have provided information from the study of exposed pottery from the area of Sangineh Hill. French researchers and an Afghan archaeologist named Nazar Mohammad Azizi had researched some ancient sites in the city of Gardez, and the result of this research is the discovery of an ivory statue called Ganish, which was obtained from Foundation Historical castle, except for the above information. Unfortunately, extensive archaeological activity has not been carried out in this city (Hashimi, 2020: 36).

Recent archaeological excavations in the city of Gardez: Based on the author's master's thesis, a preliminary survey and excavations were conducted in 2016, and a borehole was dug along the northern wall of the Balahisar in Gardez city in Square Trench (No.1) (Figure 2). In order to identify the settlement periods of the city, whose data have been presented and analyzed in the current research. After removing the surface soil to a depth of 220 cm, pottery fabrics related to historical and Islamic era (Ghaznavi, Ghori, etc.) were obtained from this ancient site. These works have increased the value and historical and cultural importance of Gardez. From the ancient sites and the excavation of square trench number1 and the investigation of Mahmoudiyeh hill (number one) and Nadriyeh hill (number two), numerous pottery works have been obtained, this pottery represent the Parthian, Seleucid, Parthian, Sassanid and Islamic eras. (Karimian & Hashimi, 2017: 36-37).

It is also clear that the current wall on top of the earthen hill attracts attention. It has been built in three floors. The lower floor is completely made of stone (stonework), its thickness is about 250 cm. The second and third floors of the wall are made of raw and baked bricks, decorated with Mud-coated and plaster, and also have crossbars.

Its maximum height is estimated to be about 420 cm. A sample of the pottery from this site and its design and identification are presented in the tables as examples. Due to the abundance of materials and documents, we cannot present all of them in detail in this article. The excavated sites are each introduced below:

1. The historical castle of Gardez (Balahisar) and the artifacts found: Balahisar (Historical Fortress) Gardez is located at 33 degrees 35 minutes 52.2 seconds of north latitude and 69 degrees

13 minutes and 57.4 seconds of east longitude, its height is 2351 meters above sea level, it is rectangular in shape, its length is 350 meters, its width is 150 meters and its height is about 40 meters above the ground. However, the current building is 260 meters long and 115 meters wide on four sides, it has oval dome towers the presence of beams in the lower and upper walls, arched porticoes. Its building materials were raw bricks, baked bricks, some of these bricks were 40×40×10 cm in size, which were used in the porches and arches. Mud, sand, stone, wood, and cement were used in the construction of this building, in addition to other materials that have been observed in castles and fortresses in other regions of Afghanistan. We can say that the tower-building method of the Greek and Kushan periods was used. "Also, the walls of this building were built in the form of a congress with suitable beams, and the history of such architecture can be considered between the 2nd and 7th centuries AD, which was inherited from that time" (Azizi, 2008: 29). This castle has political, military and strategic importance. This castle has been used by various kings, sultans and rulers over the years. Although there is little information about the historical background of this great castle, the only documents available to scientists and researchers in this regard are the reports of Islamic historians from the 7th to 9th centuries AD (Yamin, 2009: 136).

However, scholars have different views and opinions about the historical background, stating that kings and sultans such as the dynasty of Alexander the Great, the Achaemenids, the Sassanids, the Yaftals, the Napki Shahs, the Tagin Shahs, the Ratbil Shahs, and the Kabuli Shahs used this castle, and it was built or renovated during their time (Habibi, 2007: 217). According to historians, it was a center of Shivaism because an ivory statue of Ganesha was discovered from the foundation of this historical castle (Ras, 2002: 46; Azizi, 2004: 124).

As a result of the attacks and invasions of the Arabs in Afghanistan, especially the attacks of Abdul Rahman, son of Samara and Abd al-Rahman ibn al-Ashath, the leaders of the armies of the Islamic conquests in Afghanistan, as well as Yaqub Layth Safari and his brother Amir Layth, who entered the Logar and Gardez regions from the north (Azizi, 2002: 20). There, they resisted and fought against the Arabs, but were eventually destroyed and fell into the hands of the Muslims (Habibi, 2007: 39).

During the Ghaznavid era, the Gardez citadel had the status of a strong military fortress for local emirs and was also used as a prison. Therefore, due to its proximity to the border between Ghazni and India, it was renovated and turned into a strong fortress (Abasin, 2009: 98).

After the Ghaznavid period until the reign of Amir Abdur Rahman Khan, not only was this great historical fortress used by local rulers, but also the Kabul citadel and other citadels were used, which in this respect is comparable to the city of Gholghola and the city of Zakhak (Azizi, 1980: 29-40).

Since the reign of Mohammad Zahir Shah, the Gardez citadel has been used as a military base, and many parts of it have been destroyed and damaged as a result of civil wars (Nariwal, 2004: 133-135). Many pottery artifacts were found near the eastern tower of this castle during the 2016 excavation, which are presented in Table 1 and Identification Document 2. Mahmoudiyeh Hill (No. 1)

The ancient site of Mahmoudiyeh (Hill No.1) has been located two kilometers southeast of Gardez city at the foot of a high hill, which is located at 33 degrees 35 minutes 03.8 seconds of

north latitude and 69 degrees 15 minutes and 12.1 seconds of east longitude. Its height is 2371 meters above sea level, in which there are remains of fortifications in 1969, a person named Fisher has provided the necessary explanations about it. This ancient site was a protective stone building with stone fortification towers. It is still visible on top of its masonry walls covered with Mud-coated.

Most of its parts have been destroyed by snowfall and monsoon rains and are in a state of destruction. The survey and investigation that was done in this area, in addition to the buildings that were observed, pottery fabrics of the Kushans, Parthians and Salukis period were also discovered and obtained from this area, which requires further research Front and back of the pottery of Mahmoudieh Hill, Gardez city.

### 3. Nadiryeh Hill (No. 2)

The ancient site of Naderiyeh hill (hill No.2) has been located 725 meters southwest of Cheshmeh Maran) snake fountain(, which is located at 33 degrees 35 minutes 03.7 seconds north latitude and 69 degrees 14 minutes 48.6 seconds east longitude, its height is from the surface River is 2402 meters, above this ancient site, there is a protective stone building with stone towers. Also, the stone walls are approximately 120 cm wide and in some parts up to 150 cm, the top of it is made of baked clay covered with plaster, which is due to the effect of natural effects (falling snow and monsoon rains) and partly from The side of the people who used its clay and stone has been vandalized and destroyed, and the signs of the walls of historical buildings can be seen under this building. On the other hand, from the results of the research conducted in this area, in addition to the observed buildings, pottery fabrics with stamps related to the Kushan, Parthian, and Seleucid periods were also obtained from this area which requires further research. It has also been compared with the pottery of Tell Bakun, Iran (Figure 3).

### 4. Ancient site connected to Snake spring

This area is located next to the public road of Mehlan village, 180 meters east of the Maran (Snake) spring, in the form of a small earthen hill, it contains approximately (2500) square meters of area, which is at 33 degrees 35 minutes 11.8 seconds latitude. North and 69 degrees 15 minutes and 11.8 seconds of eastern longitude, its height is 2355 meters above sea level. The mentioned area can be preserved and maintained because illegal excavations have not been done in the mentioned area. Near the mentioned area, there is a rectangular hole with plenty of water called Houz Mahian (Snake Fountain) and a public garden called Namuri Bagh has been built around it. In the northern part of it, a small stone building of about 9 square meters, called the Mosque of Hazrat Ali (AS). has been built. A stone tablet was also installed on the western wall of this mosque with a carved inscription during the reign of Mohammad Zahir Shah. In the old days, the government used to hold feasts and feasts in this place, and sometimes the king was also present.

### 5. Sakhi Mosque and Pilgrimage

This ancient site is located in Ahangaran Castle, 200 meters southeast of Balahesar, which is located at 33 degrees 35 minutes 48.4 seconds of north latitude and 69 degrees 13 minutes 00.6 seconds of east longitude. Its height is 2336 meters above sea level. It has been built in two floors with an area of approximately (14x14m), the first floor of which is used as the Sakhi Mosque and the second floor is used as the Sakhi Pilgrimage. The date of reconstruction of this historical place is between 1297 AH. But the repair of this ancient site can be compared with the historical

waterholes of Kharqah Mubarak and Ahmad Shah Abdali in Kandahar Province The interior of the mentioned mosque is completely decorated with wood, which includes porticoes, arches, wooden pillars, capitals, and miniatures with flower and leaf decorations, which represents its historical authenticity and can be preserved. View of porticoes and minarets in the entrance part of the View of the main column of the fireplace of the Sakhi Mosque, which was built in an old style, so it should be said that the Sakhi Mosque is one of the oldest historical places in Gardez.

#### 6. Sarsang historical castle

Sarsang Castle is located on top of a high hill, about 300 meters east of Balahisar, south of Sayed karam road. Its building materials are mud, stone and wood, which has a tower and long walls that are solidly built. In the old days, important Advice and consultations were held in this historic fort by the elders and families of Gardez. Now this castle has been converted into residential houses.

#### 7. The ancient site of Mirzaka:

In 2016, despite great efforts, the team of archaeologists were unfortunately unable to explore and investigate the very important archaeological site of Mirzaka due to lack of cooperation and security.

In 1947, a very important discovery in the history of Afghan numismatics was made in a place called Mirzaka by women from the Mangal tribe.

Mirzaka is a village whose inhabitants are the Mangal tribes and is located approximately thirty kilometers northeast of the center of Gardez, Paktia Province. The Mirzaka region is higher than other areas of Gardez, and near it the Ahmadzai and Mirzaka rivers diverge, and from the point where the water of the Khana River divides, three kilometers to the north, the water of the "Chenji Qol" flows from the east into the Mirzaka water.

Just opposite the mouth of Chenji Qol on the left bank of the Khana River, there is a hill known as Kafir Kot (Azizi, 2008: 89).

About three thousand kilograms of coins belonging to the Mirzaka treasure were secretly and secretly taken out of the Afghan border and transferred to Pakistan, then taken by plane to London, in the form of the Baal area, where it is believed that most of them are still located (Osmond, 2001: 19).

A preliminary study of the coins discovered from Mirzaka showed that the coins were mixed with metal, copper, and silver in terms of material and were divided into two categories in terms of type:

One is local coins that were mostly minted in the eastern and southern parts of ancient Afghanistan, in Taxila and Punjab, and were generally distributed in the Gandhara region, and the name of the king is not mentioned on them, and they do not have a regular and neat shape.

The second is coins that have regular shapes and are related to historical dynasties such as the Greek king's south of the Hindu Kush, the Scythians, the Parthians, and the Kushans.

The first type of coins is called bent bar (small curved bar) and five marks in English numismatic terminology. The first type was in the form of silver bars and had an external appearance, and the second type was thin sheets of silver pieces on which various shapes and symbols of up to three hundred types were seen. Such as images of humans, weapons, trees, birds, sun and stars, flowers, etc. were used.

Some scientists, during initial assessments, stated that the first type included in the treasure of ten thousand coins discovered from Mirzaka could be attributed to the sixth century BC, because it is clear that before the Greeks invaded Afghanistan, the minting of this type of irregular silver coins was common in the eastern lands of Afghanistan in Gandhara and the banks of the Indus River (Kohzad, 2008: 257).

The second part of the Mirzaka coinage consists of coins attributed to various dynasties, families, and kings who ruled south and east of the Hindu Kush mountain range from 230 BC to the second half of the third century AD.

According to observations in the collection of ten thousand coins obtained from the first hoard of the Mirzaka coinage, no traces of the Greco-Western kings north of the Hindu Kush have been observed, in this collection the coins of Hermaeus, the last Greek king of Kabul, and the coins of Menander were abundant.

The hoard also contained silver coins from the Scythian and Scythian-Parthian dynasties, as well as coins from the families of the Codephises and Kanishka, and the last coins of Vasudeva, the last king of the great Kushan dynasty, dated to the end of the first third of the third century AD (ibid. 258). According to a rough estimate, it was a huge hoard of four tons (4,000 kg) of coins and about 770 pounds (about 350 kg) of gold and silver objects - so extensive and irreplaceable that it seems like a legendary event! The Alexander coin, shown in (Figure 4), quickly found its way to London, where it is now in a private collection! [The owner of this coin has only allowed a drawing of this coin to be made to prevent it from being copied]. Other antiquities from Mirzaka are in the Miho Museum in Japan. The rest of this treasure has been scattered around the world and sold to collectors in all corners of the world (Bijan, 2011:349).

Most of the gold artifacts from the second warehouse of the Mirzaka treasure have recently entered the market and have been acquired by Japanese, American, and English collectors. Antique dealers in the London and New York markets have purchased more than five thousand coins discovered from the second warehouse of the Mirzaka.

During his last visit to the markets of Peshawar, Pakistan, in February 1994, Mr. Osmond Bouprachi was able to evaluate six boxes containing 300 kilograms of metal, which included 38,000 pieces of artefacts from the second warehouse of Mirzaka. According to this numismatist, who is the director of the National Center for Asian Research in France, the number of artefacts was so great that they were placed in a very disorderly manner inside plastic boxes used to store grain (Osmond, 2000-1999: 60).

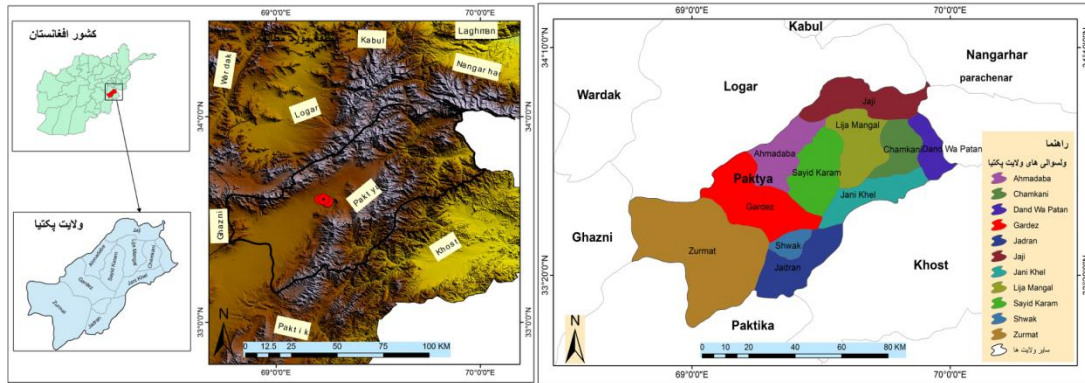
In the second hoard of Mirzaka coins, in proportion to the first hoard of Mirzaka coins, the oldest coins, similar to the first hoard, were present in abundance, such as Achaemenid darics (gold coins of ancient kings containing the image of Darius) (ibid. 61).

In the second hoard of Mirzaka, coins related to the Greco-Bactrian period and Indo-Bactrian coins numbered more than several hundred, but more than forty percent of the coins in the hoard included coins of King End- and Set-Azes II and included imitation coins minted after the death of Hermaeus (Azizi, 2002: 78).

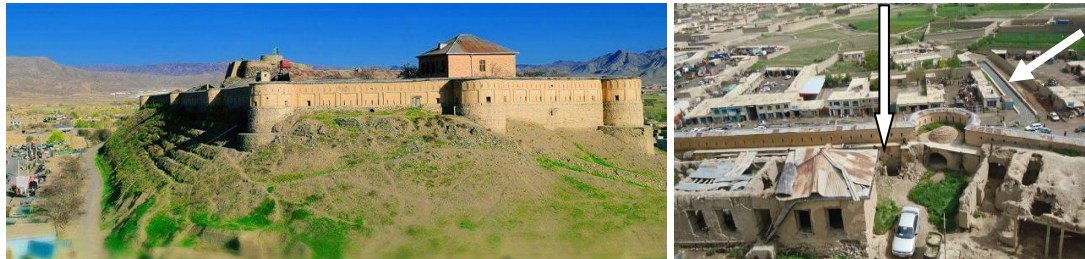
At the same time, the large number of these coins indicates that this method of minting coins was important and widely used after the death of Hermaeus (Clifford, 1989: 45).

There are also very old stone pots and exquisite artifacts in the Paktia Provincial Museum in Gardez.

**Attachment of pictures and tables:**



(map 1) Gardez city in Paktia province, red (map2) Paktia Province in Afghanistan



(Figure 1.,2) Exterior view of the historic castle. Surface excavation and sanding next to the East Tower



Figure 3) The right side of number nine is a part of pottery belonging to Tell Bakun, Fars, ( between the years (4050-4500 BC), stored in the National Museum of Ancient Iran - Tehran.

Image taken by the author dated 8-2-2020

An old picture of the Gardez tribes gathered in a ceremony at Begi Castle due to the defeat of the British (photo from Sulaimankhel).





(Figure 4) The image of Alexander the Great on a gold coin obtained from the Mirzaka treasure in 1993

#### CONCLUSION:

The city of Gardez has been important in terms of the location of strategic, the existence of high fences and in the field of fine arts and crafts and religious beliefs. One of the old cities with rich cultural and ancient civilizations, it is the center of Paktia province. Many religions, such as Zoroastrianism, Buddhism, Brahminism, Hinduism, Shaivism, etc., enjoyed further expansion and development until the arrival of Islam and continued until the 7th century AD. And from the economic and political point of view, there have been many visits to this ancient area, such as Alexander the Great, Achaemenids, Sassanids, Kushans, and Yaftalians, and from each Mojaveite dynasty, their works and culture represent their presence and power, especially from the work recent excavations have yielded many works from the mentioned periods.

Before the advent of Islam, historical castle Gardez was considered one of the most important centers of Shaivism, as the ivory statue of Ganesha obtained from the tomb of this historical fort had a special beauty. Ganesha is the son of Shiva in terms of iconography in Shaivism. It is considered decoration. This historical fort was the military center of the past rulers and sages of the Yaftali, Niki Shahs, Tegin Shahs, Ratbil Shahs, Rayan Kabuli and Ghaznavids, and it has been used by contemporary kings as well. Also, the discovery of precious coins of Mirzaka has added to the importance and historical value of Gardez. The image of Alexander the Great on a gold coin from the Mirzaka treasure was obtained in 1993, which is one of the only two coins in the world that were minted during Alexander's lifetime. The other coin was found in the tomb of his hometown in Vergina (a small town in northern Greece).

The city of Gardez was important in terms of commercial caravans. From Ghazni, a road through Gardez, Ogh, Lejan, and Vihand extended to the Indus. Likewise, another road from Ghazni through Maidan, Jalriz, Sarcheshme Defile Oni defile Gardan Diwan, Hajigak and Dareh Kalo entered the Bamyán valley and was next to the city. At the confluence of the Bamyán and Kalu rivers, Zahak joined the big southern branch of the Silk Road.

During the Ghaznavid era, the city of Gardez was of particular importance; the great historian Abdul Hai Gardezi was born in this city and wrote the exquisite book *Zain al-Akhbar* about a thousand years ago, and two copies of his book are available, one in Cambridge and the other in Oxford, England.

Considering the texture of the city of Gardez and the studies that have been conducted, it is possible to examine the texture of the city in a way that can be defined in terms of different religions and nationalities, taking into account the existence of different religions, including the

Hanafi school, Shiite and Sikh minorities, as well as the existence of different nationalities such as Pashtuns, Tajiks and Sadats, and the effects of ethnic and religious diversity on the social structure of this city can be observed.

**Suggestions:** We request the United Nations Cultural Organization (UNESCO) to pay serious attention to the registration and restoration of historical sites in Paktia province and Gardez city, especially its citadel, because these historical monuments and Mirzaka artifacts are the capital of all humanity;

Their destruction and smuggling are considered a harm to the body of the international community. UNESCO should also cooperate with our country in returning three tons of Mirzaka coins and thank them and keep these coins in a safe country as a trust.

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