

STATES IN NORTH-WESTERN CENTRAL ASIA*

N. N. Negmatov

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The transition to sedentary culture

The Aral and Syr Darya region of northern Central Asia has, in almost every period of its history, been the junction at which the advanced sedentary civilization of the south met the nomadic peoples of the boundless steppes to the north. It was the area where successive waves of sedentary farming people from the Indus valley, Bactria, Parthia, Margiana, Sogdiana and neighbouring lands met and intermingled with similar movements from the pastoral societies of the Eurasian steppes. This far-flung Iranian-speaking population gave rise to the civilizations of Central Asia's sedentary and nomadic peoples.

There were a number of social, economic, political, ethnic and cultural processes underway in the Aral and Syr Darya region at this time, the most important being the gradual

* See Map 8.

transition from a primeval tribal society to the formation of classes and early forms of statehood, which involved the introduction and intensification of a farming economy, urbanization, the consolidation of ethnic communities and the emergence of the historical regions with a sedentary culture.

Ethnic history

In all these processes an important role was played by the changes that followed the introduction of iron. In Central Asia this occurred during the first half of the first millennium B.C. The process of learning to produce iron was facilitated by previous experience of working bronze, but the new technology was assimilated slowly and the obvious advantages of the new metal were not immediately recognized. At the start of the Early Iron Age tools and weapons made partly of bronze and partly of iron – daggers with an iron blade and a bronze handle – were quite widespread. When, however, iron came into full use, it provided great opportunities for socio-economic progress.

This transitional phase, in which Central Asia advanced from its primeval condition to the formation of classes and early states on the basis of an agricultural and pastoral economy, is reflected in the oldest texts of the *Avesta*. It lists among ‘the best of regions and countries’ *airyanam vaējō* the Iranian territory probably lying to the north of Gava (Sogdiana), Mouru (Margiana or Mesrv) and Bāxδi (Bactria). This was the first country in which Zoroaster’s teachings spread. It lay around the River Daitya and its winter lasted for ten months. Many scholars have long equated it with Khwārizm (Chorasmia) and the River Dāityā with the Amu Darya, while some have sought to identify Chorasmia as the Avestan *dahyu* or confederation of lands and link it with the work of Vištāspa, in whom they see the chief of the confederation.¹ It may, however, be suggested that the lands of the *Avesta* most probably correspond to the ethnogeological connotations of its name – the Aryan territory. Its socio-cultural character includes the entire Aral and Syr Darya belt of northern Central Asia, which was then a zone of sedentary farming and nomadic pastoral people, stretching from Chorasmia through Čāč (Chach) and Usrushana to Ferghana in the east. In this context we can refer to a ‘Greater Chorasmia’ as the supposed equivalent to *airyanam vaējō*.² The Chorasmians are incidentally mentioned by Herodotus and Hecataeus of Miletus. This suggestion is also borne out by the written and archaeological evidence for Chorasmia and the Syr Darya basin, which were closely linked in many aspects of social, cultural

¹ For a summary of information on *airyanam vaējō* and its location in Chorasmia, see *Istoriya Tadzhikskogo naroda*, 1963, pp. 151–4, 509–10; *Istoriya Uzbekskoy SSR*, 1967, pp. 84–5; Gafurov, 1972, pp. 37–8, 50, 52.

² Gafurov, 1972 pp. 58–9; Vorob’eva, 1979, pp. 38–42. See Chapter 2 above.

and economic life. They are located on the northern periphery of the sedentary farming cultures and have many common elements of material culture – far more than the elements that Chorasmia may have in common with regions of Merv and Herat.

The Early Iron Age in Central Asia was marked by the establishment, between the seventh and fifth centuries B.C., of a federation uniting the Iranian-speaking sedentary and semi-nomadic tribes of the region under the political hegemony of the Chorasmians. In Chorasmia, Ustrushana and Ferghana there was rapid urbanization – a rapid growth of towns and their fortification, the construction of city citadels and the development of agriculture by artificial irrigation works. These mark the transition to a class society and the emergence of a strong central authority which undertook public works, and eventually developed new forms of economy based on sedentary farming and urban culture. At the height of its power under Darius I, the Achaemenid Empire included Chorasmia, the Sakā Tigraxaudā (or Massagetae), Sogdiana and the ‘Sakas who are beyond Sogdiana’. The first three are recorded in the list of countries subordinate to the next king, Xerxes (486–465 B.C.), and in the inscriptions (DNa, DSe, XPh) and reliefs at Persepolis, Susa and Naqsh-e Rostam. As a result, a significant proportion of the sedentary zone of northern Central Asia was included in the Achaemenid Empire at the height of its prosperity. Only Ferghana lay beyond its borders. Chorasmia, with Sogdiana, Parthia and Aria, made up the sixteenth satrapy, which paid 300 silver talents in tribute to the imperial treasury. The fifth satrapy of the Sakas paid 250 silver talents (1 silver talent in this case amounted to 34 kg).

Chorasmia, Sogdiana and the Sakas played a considerable role in the economy and politics of the Achaemenid Empire. Sources record their presence in the capital, and the presence of Chorasmians on Elephantine Island (on the Nubian border) and at Memphis, and both Chorasmians and Sakas in Nippur and other Babylonian cities. Chorasmian and Saka names are known from Sippar in Babylonia.³ A Saka detachment fought in Darius’ army at the battle of Marathon (490 B.C.); Saka cavalry and Chorasmian and Sogdian warriors were included in Xerxes’ élite units during his campaign against Greece. Saka infantry took part in the battles of Thermopylae (480 B.C.) and Plataea (479 B.C.). Terra-cotta figurines of Saka warriors in pointed caps have been found in excavations at various places in the empire, ranging from Egypt to Central Asia. By the second half of the fourth century B.C., however, Chorasmia and the Sakas had become independent states – rather earlier than the other, more southerly, parts of Central Asia. ethnic history developed from the tribal distribution of the Late Bronze Age. The Iranian-speaking population in the valleys and oases of northern Central Asia became more localized and stable. The Chorasmian people emerged on the southern Aral coast and in the Amu Darya delta; a Saka

³ Further details will be found in *Istoriya Tadzhikskogo naroda*, 1963, pp. 208–9; Gafurov, 1972, p. 83.

community arose between the lower Amu Darya and the Syr Darya and in the hill country of the upper Syr Darya; and a northern branch of the Sogdians was settled on the left-bank flatlands of the middle Syr Darya. Somewhat later, the Saka and Sogdian populations of the middle and upper Syr Darya established Ferghana and Usrushana. The formation of these ethnic groupings was promoted by two complementary processes – the emergence of sedentary regions in which the dominant occupation was agriculture, and the beginnings of urbanization. The Chorasmians, Sogdians and Sakas shared many ethnic and cultural traits with other peoples and tribes of Central Asia. Valuable evidence for their anthropological and ethnic characteristics come from the Bisutun, Persepolis and Naqsh-i Rostam reliefs. To judge from this evidence, the Central Asian peoples and tribes were virtually indistinguishable in clothing, head-gear and armaments. Their dress was much the same, consisting of short tunics, a broad belt and narrow trousers; only the Sakā Tigraxaudā were set apart by their sharp-pointed cap. Ancient Greek and Persian accounts do not distinguish between the oasis peoples and the steppe tribes. On the contrary, they claim that ‘the Massagetae and Sakas also include Attasians and Chorasmians’ and that ‘in ancient times the Sogdians and Bactrians differed little from the nomads in life-style and customs’ (Strabo). All this points to close ethnic, linguistic and cultural bonds between the Central Asian peoples and the tribes speaking Eastern Iranian languages of the Indo-European group, while anthropological analysis of excavation material shows that they were all of Europoid type. Between the seventh and fifth centuries B.C., all these peoples were in the final stages of the transition to a sedentary farming and pastoral life-style.

Irrigation and agriculture

The development and success of the agricultural economy was closely dependent on the progress made in artificial irrigation. This had been introduced in the Late Bronze Age, and agricultural and pastoral techniques were still relatively primitive in the Early Iron Age, but advanced irrigation networks were developed in Chorasmia and Ferghana between the sixth and fourth centuries B.C. (see Chapter 12). Different types of irrigation were developed to meet different geographical circumstances. On the plains of Chorasmia and Ferghana, in the Amu Darya deltas and on the upper and middle Syr Darya, spring and summer floods were used to store water, which was then diverted into artificial canals.

In foothill areas, tunnel irrigation was the commonest form: groundwater was diverted via underground catchment tunnels. In the mountains meltwater streams were used. Artificial irrigation was intensively developed, particularly in the lower reaches of the Amu Darya and along the delta arms, where the steady flow was easier to control. Chorasmia

had grand canals 20 to 40 m wide but not very deep, extending for a distance of 60 to 70 km. In the Aral and Syr Darya region, the irrigation system was complex. Farming on mountain terraces and in river basins and basin (estuary) farming depended on natural rain with the water supply controlled by dykes and dams.⁴ In the valleys of the Syr Darya and lower Amu Darya, the development of artificial irrigation made agriculture the basis of the state economy. The agricultural products included millet, barley, sesame and wheat. In addition to cereals and oil crops, pumpkins, melons, fruit such as apricots, peaches and plums, and vineyards were cultivated in the oases, while orchards of apricots, walnuts and almonds were grown in the hills.

Mining and manufacture

Archaeological studies and written sources indicate that the population was engaged in various occupations – in mining and smelting copper and iron, mining precious stones, manufacturing tools, arms and pottery, and in weaving and building activities. Internal trade and commerce flourished among the population of the oases and steppes in Chorasmia, Ferghana and Usrushana. The region was involved in trade with countries to the south of Central Asia, India, the northern Aral steppes and possibly the Volga region. Gold, copper, silver and iron were mined in the Kyzyl Kum, the Nuratau mountains, the Naukat deposit in the Ferghana valley, the Khojand hills, the Kurama (Kara-Mazar mountains) and Chatkal ranges, the Ahangaran valley, the Almalyk district and the Karatau mountains. Many places where metals were smelted have been identified, complete with fragments of slag, in settlements in the Kayrak Kums. These probably drew their raw materials from deposits at Naukat, Uchkatli Miskon, Dzhidargamirsay, Chakadambulak, Aktashkan, Kochbulak and Koni Mansur in the Kara-Mazar. Antimony workings from the middle of the first millennium B.C. are known at Bagashiny in the Sokh river valley in south-western Ferghana. Piles of copper slag have been recorded in the southern Bukantau hills and along the Kerichetau range near the Aral Sea. Greenstone hammers and a large stone pick weighing as much as 8 kg have been found, used by ancient miners chiefly for open-cast ore-mining. Hammers, rounded or elongated, were made of rectangular pebbles with the sharp edges struck off for ease of attachment to the wooden shaft.

The quantity of the metals and the range of artefacts made from them, particularly arms, harness, armour, sickles, knives, needles, jewellery and personal ornaments, are seen in the objects found in archaeological excavations. According to Herodotus (I.215), the Massagetae used bows and lances, but their favourite weapon was the battle-axe. They

⁴ Andrianov, 1969, p. 231.

used copper for their battle-axes, spear-points and arrow-heads, and adorned their head-gear, belts and girdles with gold. Their horses had breast-plates of copper, but they inlaid their horse trappings with gold. Both gold and copper were abundant, but not silver or iron. Precious stones were also found there. Turquoise was mined in the land of the Sakas (Pliny), possibly in the Nuratau, Khojand and Isfara mountains and in the Kyzyl Kum. According to the DSf inscription of Darius, when his palace in Susa was built, *kāsaka haya axšaina* (turquoise) was brought from Chorasmia and *kāsaka haya kapautaka* (blue stone or lapis lazuli) and *sinkabruš* (carnelian or cinnabar) from Sogdiana. During this period the bulk of those who produced material goods in the region's sedentary farming and pastoral societies lived in kinship-based rural, or later urban, communes and were collectively engaged in agriculture or in domestic crafts. They paid rent to the state, the tribal military aristocracy and the clergy, and also had other social obligations. The class of slaves included those made captive in war and impoverished commune members, who had to work on the farms of landlords, help in building and maintaining irrigation systems, or join the private armies of the rulers and the aristocracy.

In the steppes and mountains, cattle-breeding and horticulture dominated economic activities. The rapid growth of cattle-breeding, particularly in the steppes, played an increasing role in the economy as a whole, changed the lifestyle of the pastoral population and added to the importance of these areas as against oases with their craftsmen and farmers. The two economies supplemented each other in a way that increased general prosperity, but eventually led to the emergence of a class structure and the exploitation of slave labour.

The development of cities and urbanization

The process of urbanization began earlier and on a greater scale in Chorasmia and on the left bank of the middle Syr Darya, localities which were more advanced in economic and cultural terms. They were geographically closer to the ancient urban centres of southwestern and southern Central Asia and were open to their influence through Margiana and Sogdiana. They were later incorporated as provinces of the Achaemenid Empire and came into its socio-economic orbit for a time. In the southern Aral region, the sedentary farmers and pastoralists of the Chorasmian oasis represent the Late Bronze Age Amirabad cultural pattern seen in the Dzhanbas and Yakka-Parsan settlements. At that time they had master craftsmen (the 'house of the caster') with settled houses and social gradations.⁵

The oldest Chorasmian city, and the key monument of this period, was Kyuzeli-gîr, dating from the fifth and fourth centuries B.C. It lay on the left bank of the Amu Darya in

⁵ Itina, 1977a.

the Sarîkamîsh region of the delta. Standing on a natural elevation, roughly triangular in ground-plan, it occupied an area of 25 ha. The city was surrounded by a powerful defensive wall with oval bastions. Its residential district was densely packed with buildings of rectangular unbaked brick and *pakhsa*. It had an advanced pottery industry, based on the wheel, and art objects of a type common in Saka burial complexes of the period have been found.⁶ Another early city of the same date, Kalâlî-gîr, was surrounded by triple walls with bastions and had four gates with entrance barbicans and a hill-top palace, but it was never completed.

In Chorasmia, in the eastern part of the south Akcha Darya delta, the agricultural oasis of Dingildzhe dates from the fifth century B.C. The eastern part of the site was occupied by a large house with many rooms and out-buildings, the western part by a large courtyard. The whole was surrounded by an outer wall 2 m thick, built of large rectangular unbaked bricks of archaic type. The archaeologist who studied the farmstead suggests that it might have been a communal home for the extended family of the district governor. Its inhabitants were engaged in agriculture and cattle-breeding within the oasis, pottery, metal-work and making farm products. Dingildzhe points to the relatively high standard of architecture, building techniques and design that prevailed in ancient Chorasmia.⁷

Between the fourth and second centuries B.C. Chorasmia had a series of walled cities with strong moats, complex fortifications and gateway barbicans. They defended farming districts that lay along the caravan routes, and served as centres for crafts, trade and culture. They include Dzhanbas-kala and Bazar-kala, with precise and regular ground-plans, on the right bank and Hazarasp (Sauvar) and Dzhingirbent on the left bank of the Amu Darya.⁸ Chorasmia's ancient cities and fortresses have several characteristic features. They were either built on marshland where the farming population met the steppe, or stood on the major trade routes. Fortresses on the plains, such as Hazarasp, had a regular rectangular ground-plan; smaller fortresses stood on high ground, such as Kalâlî-gîr II, Lesser Kîrkkîz, Burlî-kala; and at the foot lay undefended secondary settlements, such as Guldursun, Akcha Gelin, Kunya-Uaz and Toprak-kala. Their size and strength contrasted sharply with the mass of small unfortified settlements in the farming oases.⁹

The outstanding structure of ancient Chorasmia was the great religious centre of this far-flung region, the fortified sanctuary of Koy-Krîlgan-kala (fourth century B.C. to fourth century A.D.) in the southern Akcha Darya delta, on the right bank of the Amu Darya. Circular in ground-plan with a diameter of about 90 m (Fig. 1), it consists of a large

⁶ Tolstov, 1962, pp. 96–104; Vishnevskaya, 1972, pp. 533–4, 1978, pp. 544–5; Vorob'eva, 1979, p. 39.

⁷ Vorob'eva, 1973.

⁸ Tolstov, 1948, pp. 113 et seq.; Itina, 1977b pp. 193–202; Itina, 1981, p. 15.

⁹ Nerazik, 1972, pp. 34–7, 1981, pp. 219–27.

cylindrical building surrounded at a distance of 15 m by a fortress wall. The space between the building and the wall is occupied by several tiers of buildings. The site has two periods of occupation and three phases of building. The central two-storey building is a round, monumental structure with a single row of arrow-slits over a row of trapezoid windows. In the lower storey there were eight rooms roofed with twin domes, communicating with the central chamber by arched passages. It is thought that the central building may have been a temple, whose lower storey had religious functions, while the upper part served as a store. The lower floor was divided into two identical halves, suggesting that the temple may have been used as an astronomical observatory, as is suggested by its alignment. Shortly after the central structure was completed, the open space up to the fortress walls began to be filled with houses and storage premises. In the second period of construction the ruined central building was partially adapted for living quarters; some rooms were cleared and repaired and the whole area between the central building and the fortress wall was filled with clearly separated blocks of buildings. The third construction period provided a number of similar houses which utilized the older buildings. Each house was probably an independent economic unit. The finds, especially the pottery, reinforce this interpretation. The bottom stratum contains an assemblage of well-formed vessels with a red slip – a censer, small-stepped altars and terracotta figurines representing deities of the Chorasman pantheon. The upper strata, however, yielded a completely new series of pottery with a light-coloured slip, unusual in Chorasmania, with the commonly found Kushan-style vessels and coins. Koy-Krîlgan-kala¹⁰ may be associated with an astral cult.

The system of Chorasman fortification reached a high standard in this period. Walled cities usually had a severely regular rectangular ground-plan divided by an axial street. Koy-Krîlgan-kala, the only example of a fortified sanctuary, takes the form of a central building surrounded by an external wall strengthened with nine bastions. Frontier fortresses were built at strategic points on the borders of oases, defended by many-tiered projecting bastions spaced to command all approaches. Fortified houses had a dual role, for residence and defence. Chorasman fortifications were developed particularly between the fourth century B.C. and the first century A.D. Eventually private castles proliferated and fortresses of new design developed on the edge of the oases. The walls of cities, fortresses and settlements in ancient Chorasmania were built on inclined *pakhsa* or raw-brick socles. They were 10–20 m high and 5–8 m thick. To strengthen the defences, supplementary outer walls were built 5–20 m from the fortress walls, with open ground intervening. Arrow slits were generally arrow-shaped and to widen their fire they were grouped in a chessboard

¹⁰ *Koy-Krîlgan-kala*, 1967.

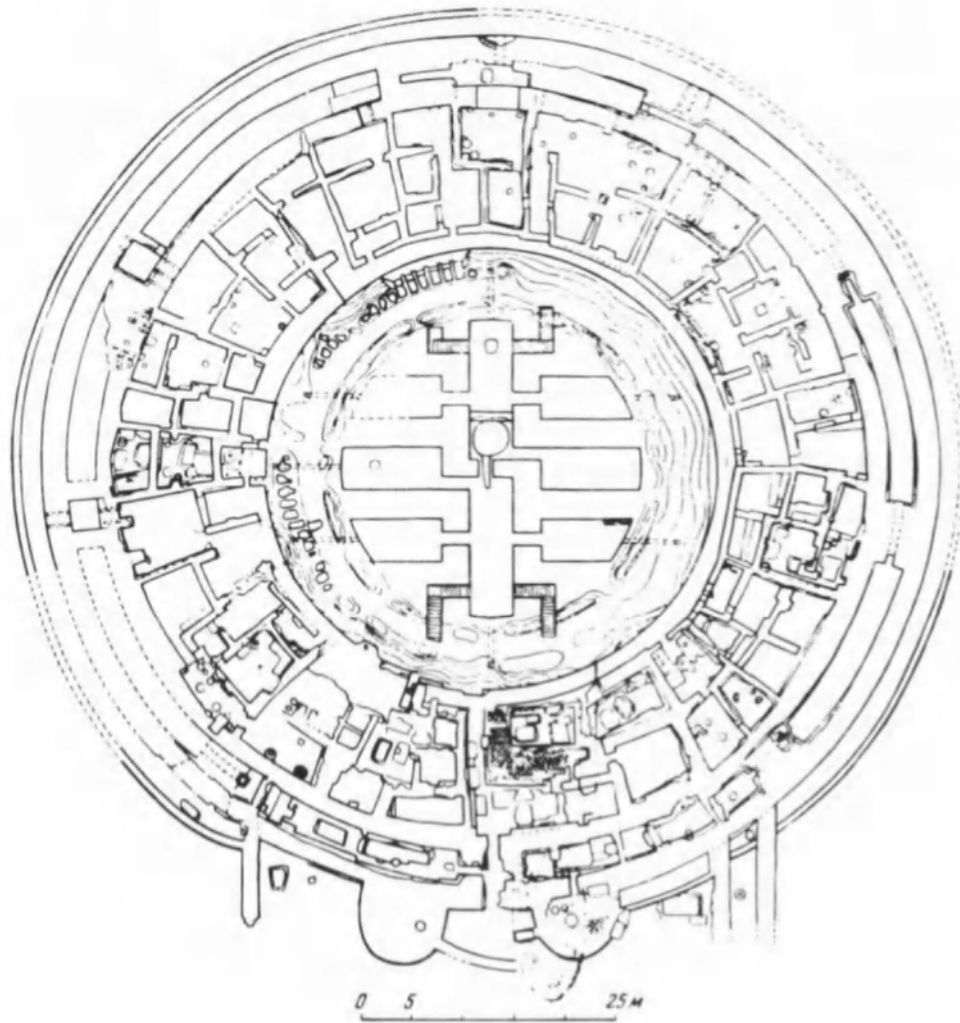


FIG. 1. Koy-Krîlgan-kala. Drawing from an aerial photograph. E. J. Brill, Leiden.

pattern. Particular attention was paid to the gates, which sometimes had additional projecting bastions at the entry, on the corners and along the sides.¹¹

There is evidence of cattle-breeding in the Sarîkamîsh area of the Amu Darya delta. Here archaeologists have discovered the Kuyusay culture, represented by settlements and burial-grounds (between the seventh and fourth centuries B.C.). Its culture has a local Saka substratum in close contact with an external component, reflected in imported wheel-thrown pottery from southwestern and southern Central Asia.¹² There is a striking variety of burial rites in Chorasmia at this period and a growing influence of the Zoroastrian rite with its ossuary type of burial is clearly discernible.

¹¹ Khodzhanizov, 1981, pp. 43–56.

¹² Vaynberg, 1979, pp. 1–76.

The economic and cultural pattern of the semi-sedentary Saka-Massagetae pastoralists and farmers in the lower Syr Darya plain is illustrated by a series of sites: the extremely rich mausoleum complexes for tribal leaders in the northern Tagisken country from the late second and early first millennia B.C. with their monumental raw-brick architecture and pottery, made by skilled craftsmen; the sixth-to-fifth-century-B.C. barrows at Uygarak and in southern Tagisken;¹³ the fourth-to-second-century-B.C. walled settlements of Chirik-Rabat and Babîsh Molla, together with their farming land and its irrigation works on the Zhani Darya¹⁴ to the west of the Syr Darya; and finally, the monuments of agricultural oases at Dzhetî-Asar along the tributaries of the Zhani Darya and Kuvan Darya, which lasted from the first century B.C. to the Early Middle Ages.¹⁵ All these suggest a distinctive, complex culture with an advanced pastoral economy alongside agriculture. There were large cities, smaller settlements, a system of fortress-type strongholds with thick walls and towers and enormous burial grounds. The early phases are marked by monumental raw-brick architecture, wheel-thrown vessels and ornaments that incorporate elements from the southern farming cultures (the northern Tagisken cemeteries imported Yaz-II-type pottery, beads and animal figure art, drawn from the worlds of Central and Western Asia (from Uygarak and south Tagisken) and elements of the Scytho-Siberian animal style (from southern Tagisken and Uygarak).

On the left bank of the middle Syr Darya, urbanization was intensive and impressive in scale. Here in Ushrushana the earliest urban centres were formed between the seventh and fifth centuries B.C. The fortress-city of Khvatak (now the site of Nur-tepe), stands on a high chain of hills on the north-western edge of the Ura-Tyube oasis. Some 16 ha in area, it consists of a citadel and town surrounded by a system of fortifications. The southern defence of the city consisted of a natural dyke of loess and a wall of *pakhsa*, 8 m thick, built between the sixth and fifth centuries B.C. Within the town and citadel, excavations have revealed thick cultural strata containing the remnants of the original underground dwellings and of later well-designed *pakhsa* and unbaked-brick structures. The finds include an assortment of wheel-turned and hand-luted pots for storage, cooking and table use, querns and spindle whorls. The irrigation system, using mountain streams and springs, helped develop the agricultural economy. Craftsmen also played an important role in city life. The powerful defences of both town and citadel, its complex architecture and planning structure and the fine pottery are evidence of the advanced social life and cultural level of the city.¹⁶

¹³ Vishnevskaya, 1973; Tolstov and Itina, 1966, pp. 151–75; Vishnevskaya and Itina, 1971, pp. 197–208.

¹⁴ Tolstov, 1962, pp. 136–86.

¹⁵ Levina, 1971, Vol. 7.

¹⁶ Negmatov et al., 1982, pp. 89–111.

Kurukata (Cyropolis in classical sources) is known to have been the second oldest and largest city of Usrushana, with powerful defensive walls and a specially strengthened inner fort. Many opinions have been expressed about its location. Although the name 'Kurukata' has been preserved in the name of the modern settlement of Kurkat in northern Tajikistan (and the ruins of an ancient city lie nearby) it is preferable to identify it with Ura-Tyube. The heavily fortified citadel (Mug-tepe), here in its centre, 6 ha in area, is surrounded by high, thick walls. Excavations have revealed deep cultural strata with architectural remains from the sixth to the second centuries B.C.¹⁷ Written records also speak of the old Usrushanian fortress-cities of Gaza, Baga and four others that are unnamed. The city walls at Gaza are, however, 'earthen and low'.¹⁸ The remaining cities of the province are being explored.

Besides the above-mentioned sites, archaeologists have discovered another major urban centre, on the Khojand plain on the left bank of the Syr Darya where Usrushana meets Ferghana. It was founded in the sixth to fifth centuries B.C. and was fortified initially with loess dykes and later with defensive walls of large unbaked bricks of an archaic rectangular type. It occupied a square site, 20 ha in area, and consisted of two parts: the town itself and the citadel. It was inhabited continuously up to the early centuries of our era. The earliest strata produced wheel-thrown and hand-made pottery for storage (pitchers and jars), for cooking (hand-made cauldrons) and for the table (bowls, cups, vase-like vessels and goblets), including carefully made, technically advanced examples which borrowed pottery techniques from southern Central Asia and from the central Ferghana's Eylatan culture (seventh to fourth century B.C.) Large grainstores using pitchers, stone querns, pestles and terracotta spindle whorls have been found, indicating cereal farming, milling, the storage of foodstuffs and other craft products and suggesting that the local economy was based on agriculture and local crafts.¹⁹

Development in Ferghana

In Ferghana an early farming life-style was established at oases of the Chust culture (e.g. Dalverzin and Chust) which had underground structures dating from the tenth to the eighth centuries B.C.²⁰ In the subsequent (Eylatan) period (seventh to fourth century B.C.) agricultural settlements with traces of ground-level architecture and defensive dykes appear. They

¹⁷ Negmatov, 1957, pp. 16–20; Ranov and Saltovskaya, 1961, pp. 117–29; Negmatov and Saltovskaya, 1962, pp. 71–7.

¹⁸ Negmatov, 1957, pp. 21–3.

¹⁹ Negmatov, 1962, 1973, 1975, 1980b.

²⁰ Zadneprovskiy, 1962, pp. 11–107, 1966, pp. 193–207, 1978.

provide a clear picture of early towns in the Shurabashat and Markhamat (the Ta-yüan and Kushan) periods between the fourth century B.C. and the fourth century A.D. Cultural strata from these two periods have been recorded at the sites of Eylatan, Shurabashat, Kara Darya, Markhamat, Minga-tepe, Dzhelandî, Turtkul', Severo-Kur-shab-I, Kurgan-tepe, Yangibazar, Uchkurgan and Kaynovat.²¹

The Eylatan culture of Ferghana is known from a number of excavated sites. Eylatan, in eastern Ferghana, between the Naryn and the Kara Darya rivers, consists of an inner walled village 20 ha in area and an outside dyked area of 200 ha that might have been used for cattle-pens. The residential settlement had ground structures but no citadel. Finds include pottery, hand-made on a cloth mould (a sand-filled bag), and wheel-thrown pottery of the same shapes, the commonest types being round-based cups and bowls. The cups were often painted with horizontal lines and sometimes with decorative designs. Eylatan-type pottery is found in the lower strata at Shurabashat and other sites in eastern Ferghana.

To this sedentary farming culture belong the Aktam, Niyazbatîr and Kungai burial-grounds of central Ferghana, all with much the same burial inventory of pottery, iron bracelets, pins, beads, earrings, iron knives and bronze arrow-heads. There are, however, different grave arrangements: 'small' mounds with a single burial pit and long ones with three to nine pits in Aktam, 'long' graves 30 m from north to south, with three to eleven burials, and 'small' round ones with one to three burials, all resembling cairns of cobblestones, in Kungai. The differences can probably be explained by membership of different ethnic groups. In the Shurabashat and Markhamat periods, the development of agriculture and the growth of urban centres were matched by the construction of an irrigation network, the establishment of a separate Ferghana state (Tayüan) and the emergence of ancient Ferghana's Iranian-speaking people, the Parikianians, from local Saka and Sogdian stock.²²

In the Chirchik and Ahangaran District of Čãč (Chach), small early urban centres sprang up around the settlement of the predominantly farming cultures of the very Late Burgulyuk period (ninth to fourth century B.C.) and throughout the Kaunchi period (third century B.C. to eighth century A.D.). One such centre has been identified at Shash-tepe in the city of Tashkent. A Late Burgulyuk cultural stratum on continental loess was found to contain the remains of sixth-to-mid-fourth-century-B.C. semi-subterranean houses, while above was the first defensive wall of the Shash-tepe fort, made of raw brick and *pakhsa* and dating from the mid-third century B.C. By that date the farming settlement of the mid-first millennium had developed into a small town with an area of about 1 ha with a defensive wall.²³ A

²¹ Zadneprovskiy, 1962, pp. 108–99; Gorbunova, 1977, pp. 107–20, 1979, pp. 16–34.

²² Zadneprovskiy, 1956, pp. 39–44, 1978, pp. 47–9.

²³ Filanovich, 1980, pp. 459–60.

small urban centre dating from the first centuries B.C. has been identified beneath the site of Kanka, and in the Kaunchi-II period (fourth to fifth century A.D.) a host of urban-type settlements arose. Tashkent too was developing as a town, with urban components of a town fort, a ruler's palace and a šahristān. Archaeologists conclude that the ancient cultural substratum underlying the urban and rural culture of Čāč, or that part of the Chirchik valley that was incorporated into 'Greater Tashkent', was the Kaunchi culture.²⁴ The evidence of the largest site, Kaunchi-tepe, dates the beginning of irrigated agriculture in 'Greater Tashkent' to the third and second centuries B.C.²⁵ and the construction of the first artificial canal, that of Baz-su, to the first century B.C.²⁶ The agricultural use of the Chirchik basin and the construction of canals developed during the early centuries A.D.²⁷ The initial phase of the urbanization of Čāč can then be dated significantly later than that of other parts of the region.²⁸

A review of the urbanization process in the Aral and Syr Darya zone of northern Central Asia and the descriptions given above of the early urban centres of Chorasmia, Khojand, Usrushana, Ferghana and Čāč consequently enable us to state that the earliest of these centres, the most impressive in terms of area, topography and planning and the most advanced in economic and cultural respects, were those of Usrushana and Khojand on the left bank of the middle Syr Darya. These centres witnessed the transformation of cultural traditions coming from other parts of northern Central Asia.

The towns and urban culture of Chorasmia and the upper and middle Syr Darya seem to have based their development on predominantly local traditions and on those drawn from the centre (Sarazm), south (Sapalli, Dashli and Kuchuk-tepe) and south-west (Altyn-tepe) of Central Asia.²⁹ We see a combination of local traditions, the use of cultural standards established in other centres and cultural interaction and cross-fertilization.

Subsequent developments

In the last centuries B.C. and the first centuries of the Christian era the agricultural areas in the Aral and Syr Darya zones developed chiefly within the independent states of Chorasmia (Khwārizm) and Ta-yüan (Ferghana), though for brief periods they were partially included

²⁴ Buryakov, 1975, pp. 186–7; Filanovich and Abdullaev, 1975, p. 515; Abdullaev et al., 1977, p. 522; Buryakov et al., 1979, p. 546.

²⁵ *Drevniy Tashkent* 1973, p. 141; *Drevnosti Tashkenta*, 1976, pp. 49, 115–16, 124, 130; *Drevnosti Tuyabuguza*, 1978, pp. 112, 158.

²⁶ *Drevniy Tashkent*, 1973, pp. 102–3.

²⁷ *Drevnosti Charvaka*, 1976, pp. 83–4.

²⁸ Rtveladze, 1980, p. 29.

²⁹ Negmatov, 1982a, pp. 61, 63, 1982b, pp. 51–3, 1982c, pp. 72–88.

as provinces of the empires of Alexander the Great, the Seleucids, Graeco-Bactrians and Kushans. Between 290 and 160 B.C., Usrushana and Khojand appear to have been part of the Graeco-Bactrian kingdom.³⁰ These political changes influenced their material culture. Archaeological investigations have revealed Hellenistic elements in Usrushana, Khojand and western Ferghana³¹ and finds from Khojand clearly betray Hellenistic influence in the formation of Central Asia's culture.³²

FERGHANA (TA-YÜAN)

Around 160 B.C. Usrushana and Khojand became independent of the Graeco-Bactrians: Ferghana, it seems, had never been part of it, and Greek ascendancy never extended beyond the regions conquered by Alexander.³³ A remark by Strabo (XI.11.1), however, has led many scholars to assume that Ferghana was included in Graeco-Bactria. Coins of the Graeco-Bactrian monarchs have been found there, but possibly as a result of commerce.³⁴ In the mid-second century B.C. the Yüeh-chih tribes passed southwards through Ferghana and Usrushana, and subsequently conquered Bactria. It seems likely that the far-flung, wealthy and densely populated state of Ta-yüan arose about the same time. Much detailed information about this state is given by the Chinese chronicler Szü-ma Ch'ien, who passed through Ta-yüan in the latter half of the second century B.C.³⁵ The name Ta-yüan was used until the second century A.D., when it was replaced by Pu-han and Pa-han-na (fifth century A.D.) – the Chinese transcriptions of the name 'Ferghana'. The identification of Ta-yüan with Ferghana is firmly established in historical literature.³⁶

According to the Chinese sources, the country had many large and small towns and settlements, numbering over seventy. The population was 300,000 and the inhabitants had deep-set eyes and thick beards; they were skilled merchants and held women in high esteem. The country's army numbered 60,000 fighting men armed with bows and spears, skilled in shooting from horseback. It was a land of highly developed agriculture; both wheat and rice were grown; there were large vineyards, wine was made and stored for dozens of years, and much *mu-su* (lucerne) was sown. Particularly famous were the Ferghana horses, highly prized in neighbouring lands and especially in China. They were said to 'sweat blood' and were considered 'heavenly'. Emperor Wu-ti was particularly keen to

³⁰ Negmatov, 1957, p. 287.

³¹ Negmatov, 1980a, pp. 54–6.

³² Belyaeva, 1980, pp. 11–12.

³³ Bartol'd, 1964, p. 456.

³⁴ Gafurov, 1972, p. 123.

³⁵ Bichurin, 1950, Vol. II, pp. 161–2, 186–8.

³⁶ Gafurov, 1972, p. 132.

have these blood-sweating horses. At one time they were worshipped in China and poets wrote odes to them.

Ta-yüan also included Khojand and Ushrushana.³⁷ To the north and west it bordered on K'ang and to the south on the Yüeh-chih or Kushan possessions. Its capital was the city of Ershi, identifiable either with the ancient site of Mark-hamat in Andizhan District or with Khojand or Ura-Tyube.³⁸ Its rulers also had a residence in the city of Yu-chen, possibly present-day Uzgen. As it was rich in horses, Ta-yüan attracted the attention of the Han emperors, who attempted to subdue Ta-yüan. Many years of warfare ensued against these invaders. In 104 B.C. General Li Kuang-li moved against Ta-yüan with a 100,000-strong army – 60,000 cavalry and 'several dozen thousands of young warriors from China. The war lasted for four years. The entire Han Empire was set in motion. More than fifty chieftains were sent to Ta-yüan ...'. The campaign was carefully prepared: the Chinese army even included craftsmen to divert the water from Ferghana's cities and horse marshals to select 'heavenly' horses in Ferghana; it carried 'dried food provisions'. Headed by their king, Mu-ku-a, the people of Ferghana fought the invaders boldly. Both sides suffered heavy losses and Mu-ku-a died through treachery. Particularly ferocious was the forty-day siege of the capital of Ferghana. According to Szü-ma Ch'ien, 'Regardless of all this, the Chinese could not enter the city and took the road back', contenting themselves with 'several dozen of the renowned horses' and elevating to the throne, instead of Mu-ku-a, the old Ferghana magnate Mo-tsai. However, they did not succeed in entrenching themselves in Ferghana. After their army had withdrawn, the puppet ruler was killed by the people, and the younger brother of the valiant Mu-ku-a, known in Chinese as Chang-fun, was placed on the throne. It is interesting to note that the Chinese took from Ferghana the art of cultivating vines, lucerne and possibly also pomegranates, cucumbers, walnuts and figs.

CHORASMIA (KHWĀRIZM)

Chorasmia had secured its independence from Persia before the end of the Achaemenid Empire. According to Arrian (IV. 15.4–6) Pharasmanes, King of Chorasmia, visited Alexander during his sojourn in Bactria in 329–320 B.C. and promised to guide him and provide supplies for his army if he chose to proceed against Colchis and the Amazons, subduing all the races that lived in these regions up to the Euxine Sea. The arrival of an embassy from the European Scythians in this context probably refers to the Saka-Massagetae, their neighbours from the Aral regions. A friendly alliance was concluded with the head of the Chorasmian state. Between the fourth and first centuries B.C.,

³⁷ Bichurin, 1950, Vol. II, p. 312.

³⁸ Bernshtam, 1951, p. 11; Aristov, 1903, p. 93.

Chorasmia was a powerful independent state. Although there is virtually no written information, there is incontrovertible evidence about the growth of its ancient cities and settlements with strong and structurally developed fortifications which have been discovered in recent times. Little is known about the country's political history in the early centuries of the Christian era.

It has been suggested that Chorasmia formed part of the Kushan Empire³⁹ and that the latter stretched from the Aral Sea to the Indian Ocean.⁴⁰ Although there is as yet no firm evidence to substantiate the claims concerning 'Chorasmia in the Kushan Empire' that are frequently found in the literature⁴¹ and some scholars locate the northern borders of the Kushans far to the south of Chorasmia,⁴² the Aral region and the lands between the lower Amu Darya and Syr Darya – in fact the boundary areas – were still held by semi-sedentary and nomadic Saka-Massagetae tribes under the influence of Chorasmian culture.

³⁹ Tolstov, 1948, p. 151, 1962, p. 224; Gulyamov, 1974, p. 119.

⁴⁰ Gafurov, 1974 p. 61.

⁴¹ Gafurov, 1972 p. 151.

⁴² Masson, 1975 pp. 42–9.