

# Qazaq Historical Review

ACADEMIC JOURNAL

The images of Qazaqstan's distant past never cease to arouse interest. Ruins of ancient settlements and majestic burial mounds, centers of ancient metallurgy and religious settlements, ancient tools, ceramics or coins, all this has a strong emotional impact. The study of the archaeological heritage of Qazaqstan in Soviet times and during the sovereign period has significantly expanded the horizons of national history, proved the existence of ancient and developed archaeological cultures, and their global connection with the most ancient centers of human civilization.

Modern representation of archaeological discoveries in museums and school textbooks, modern monuments and symbols of the state testify to the importance of the ancient period in our days. Sometimes the past is incorrectly, or biasedly interpreted and non-existent sensations or fantastic phenomena are 'found' in it. To neutralize all this, archaeologists of Qazaqstan not only conduct scientific research, but also conduct an active dialogue with society, explaining in simple language the goals and methods of complex archaeological research.

The current issue of the scholarly journal *Qazaq Historical Review* is devoted to the current results of archaeological research. The editorial board has invited modern Qazaqstani archaeologists as authors to publish the results of their research. We hope that the new published material will help in further research.

The special editor of the issue is Asemgul Kasenova, a Candidate of History.

Қазақстанның байырғы тарихының белгілері ғылыми қызығушылықты тоқтатқан емес. Көне қаланың іздері мен әр жерден менмұндалап көрінетін ұлы қорғандардың қалдықтары, байырғы металлургияның ошақтары, әдет-ғұрып орындары, ежелгі еңбек құралы, керамика мен ескі тиын мәнәттері – бәрі де бұрынғы өткен дәуірдің адамға айрықша әсер қалдыратын белгілері. Қазақстанның археологиялық мұрасына жасалған советтік кезеңдегі және одан кейінгі зерттеулер отан тарихының көкжиегін елеулі кеңітіп, кең байтақ жерімізде ежелгі және дамыған археологиялық мәдениеттер өмір сүргенін және оның адамзат өркениетінің өзге де ежелгі ошақтарымен ілкі байланыстарда болғанын дәлелдеді.

Археологиялық зерттеу нәтижелерін музейлер мен мектеп оқулықтарында көрсетіліп, ескерткіштер мен мемлекеттік рәміздерде бейнеленгені – ежелгі кезеңнің бүгін де маңызды екенін білдіреді. Кейде археологиялық құнды мағлұматтарды әркім әрқалай түсінетін, ғылыми негізсіз болжам жасап, тіпті қиялғажайып құбылысқа да айналдыратын сәттер жоқ емес. Мұндайдың алдын алу, жол бермеу үшін Қазақстан археологтары ғылыми зерттеумен қатар қоғаммен диалог орнатып, күрделі зерттеулердің мақсаты мен әдіс-тәсілдерін қарапайым тәсілмен түсіндіріп те жүр.

*Qazaq Historical Review* ғылыми журналының бұл нөмірі археологиялық зерттеулердің өзекті қорытындыларына арналған. Редакция алқасы ғылыми ізденістер мен нәтижелерді жариялау мақсатымен Қазақстанның қазіргі белгілі археологтарын автор ретінде тартып отыр. Жаңа материалдар кейінгі зерттеулерге пайдасын тигізеді деп үміттенеміз.

Журналдың бұл нөмірінің арнаулы редакторы: тарих ғылымдарының кандидаты Әсемгүл Қасенова.

Образы далекого прошлого Казахстана не перестают вызывать интерес. Развалины старинных городищ и величественные курганы, очаги древней металлургии и культовые поселения, древнейшие орудия труда, керамика или монеты – все это оказывает сильное эмоциональное воздействие. Изучение археологического наследия Казахстана в советское время и в суверенный период значительно расширило горизонты отечественной истории, доказало существование древних и развитых археологических культур, их глобальную связь с древнейшими очагами человеческой цивилизации.

Современная репрезентация археологических открытий в музеях и школьных учебниках, современных памятниках и символах государства свидетельствует о важности древнейшего периода в наши дни. Порой это прошлое неверно или предвзято интерпретируется, в нем находят несуществующие сенсации или фантастические явления, и для того чтобы нейтрализовать все это, археологи Казахстана не только проводят научные исследования, но и ведут активный диалог с обществом, простым языком объясняя цели и методы сложных археологических исследований.

Текущий номер научного журнала *Qazaq Historical Review* посвящен актуальным результатам археологических исследований. Редакционная коллегия пригласила в качестве авторов современных археологов Казахстана для публикации результатов их научных изысканий. Надеемся, новый публикуемый материал поможет в дальнейших исследованиях.

Специальный редактор номера кандидат исторических наук Асемгуль Касенова.



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## The Taldysay Settlement: a Site of Ancient Metallurgy in the Zhezkazgan-Ulytau Mining and Metallurgical Center<sup>1</sup>

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**Keywords:** Zhezkazgan-Ulytau Mining and Metallurgical Center; industrial and housing complexes; metal production; metalworking; thermal engineering structures; ore; slag; doping

**Тірек сөздер:** Жезқазған-Ұлытау таулы металлургия орталығы; тұрғын үй-өндірістік кешені; металл өндірісі; металл өңдеу; мыс қорыту құралдары; руда; шлак; легирлеу (қыю)

**Ключевые слова:** Жезказган-Улытауский ГМЦ; производственно-жилищные комплексы; металлопроизводство; металлообработка; теплотехнические сооружения; руда; шлак; легирование

The publication examines the problems of metallurgy of the Late Bronze Age. With the use of scientific research data, it became possible to restore the entire technological process of production of metal products, starting from the extraction of copper from ore to the manufacture of complex objects from copper and copper alloys. In the Taldysay Settlement, almost the entire cycle of metal production was represented: smelting copper from ore, casting end-products, and forging them, which made it possible to obtain information on ancient technologies. The final stage of metallurgical production is metalworking, which includes various foundry and forging operations, as well as side operations: preparation of crucibles, lyachkas, casting molds, and stone tools for metal processing.

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## Талдысай қонысы – Жезқазған-Ұлытау таулы-металлургия орталығындағы ежелгі ескерткіш

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Мақалада кейінгі қолда дәуірі кезеңіндегі металлургия мәселелері қарастырылған. Жаратылыстанудың ғылыми зерттеулерін пайдалана отырып, рудадан мыс алудан бастап, мыс пен мыс қоспаларынан алуан түрлі күрделі өнім өндіруге дейінгі технологиялық процесті толық қалпына келтіруге мүмкіндік туды. Талдысай қонысында рудадан мыс қорыту, бұйым жасау, өңдеу секілді металл өндірісінің әрбір сатысы түгелге жуық бар. Ежелгі технологиядан бұл да жақсы мәлімет береді. Металл өңдеу, ұстахана жұмыстары, мыс құю, ол үшін үшін тастан қалып пен ыдыс жасау – бәрі де металлургия өндірісінің соңғы сатылары саналады.

**Қаржыландыру көзі:** Мақала ҚР ҒЖБМ ҒК бағдарламалық-нысаналы қаржыландыру аясында дайындалған, ЖТН BR20280993.

**Сілтеме жасау үшін:** Ермолаева А.С., Ержанова А.Е., Дубягина Е.В. Талдысай қонысы – Жезқазған-Ұлытау таулы-металлургия орталығындағы ежелгі ескерткіш. *Qazaq Historical Review*. 2024. Т. 2. № 1. 6–18-бб. (ағылшынша). DOI: <https://doi.org/10.69567/3007-0236.2024.1.6.18>

## Поселение Талдысай – памятник древней металлургии в Жезказган-Улытауском горно-металлургическом центре

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В публикации рассматриваются проблемы металлургии позднебронзовой эпохи. С привлечением данных естественно-научных исследований представилось возможным восстановить полностью технологический процесс производства изделий, начиная от получения меди из руды до изготовления сложных предметов из меди и медных сплавов. На поселении Талдысай был представлен почти весь цикл металлопроизводства: выплавка меди из руды, литье готовых изделий, их кузнечная доработка, что сделало возможным получить сведения по древним технологиям. Завершающей стадией металлургического производства является металлообработка, включающая различные литейные и кузнечные операции, а также побочные операции: приготовление тиглей, льячек, литейных форм, каменных орудий для обработки металла.

**Источник финансирования:** Статья подготовлена в рамках программно-целевого финансирования КН МНВО РК, ИРН BR20280993.

**Для цитирования:** Ермолаева А.С., Ержанова А.Е., Дубягина Е.В. Поселение Талдысай – памятник древней металлургии в Жезказган-Улытауском горно-металлургическом центре. *Qazaq Historical Review*. 2024. Т. 2. № 1. С. 6–18. (на англ. яз.). DOI: <https://doi.org/10.69567/3007-0236.2024.1.6.18>

### Introduction

The research group uses materials from the Taldysay Settlement to resolve issues related to the technical side of the metal production process. Many years of field archaeological research on the settlement contributed to the accumulation of metal products, which made it possible to carry out complex reconstruction and experimental work to recreate both the general design of smelting furnaces and the technological process of obtaining copper in them and making products from it.

In the system of the West Asian (Eurasian) Metallurgical Province (EAMP) of the Late Bronze Age (LBA), the most important producers of copper and bronze were the mining and metallurgical centers (MMC) of present Qazaqstan (Fig. 1.a).

One of the largest, the Zhezkazgan-Ulytau MMC, operated in the territory of the present Central Qazaqstan and was based on the development of the rich Zhezkazgan copper ore deposits [Berdenov 1998: 184–185]. As a result of geological and archaeological research in the 1930–1950s, numerous ancient developments and settlements for copper mining and smelting were identified [Valukinsky 1948: 33–39; Margulan 2001: 20, 53–54]. During the development of industrial quarries, all of them were destroyed. For the Taldysay Settlement, its location outside



## ГОРНО-МЕТАЛЛУРГИЧЕСКИЕ ОБЛАСТИ И ЦЕНТРЫ

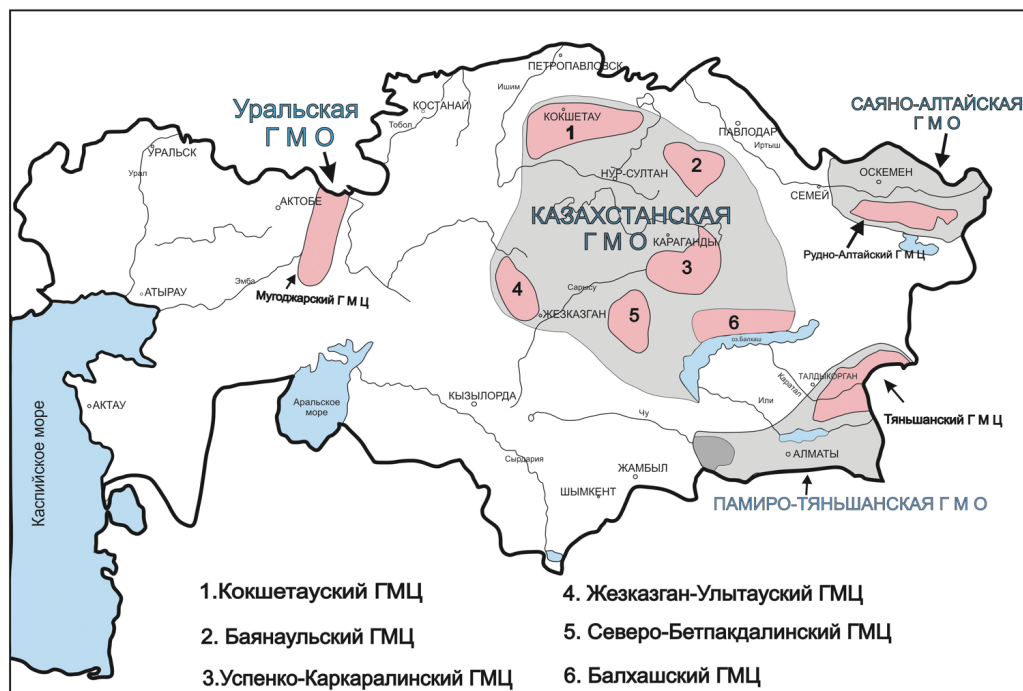


Fig. 1. a) Mining and metallurgical regions and centers of Qazaqstan (according to E.N. Chernykh, S.A. Berdenov); b) General view of the Taldysay Settlement (aerial photography by Renato Sala and Jean-Marc Deom)

1-сур. а) Қазақстанның таулы-металлургия облыстары мен орталықтары (Е.Н. Черных, С.А. Берденов бойынша); б) Талдысай қонысының жалпы көрінісі (аэрофототүсірілім: Р. Сало және Ж.-М. Деом)

Рис. 1. а) Горно-металлургические области и центры Казахстана (по Е.Н. Черных, С.А. Берденову); б) Общий вид на поселение Талдысай (аэрофотосъемка: Р. Сало и Ж.-М. Деом)

the industrial development zone turned out to be a saving grace. The settlement is in the tract of the same name at the confluence of the Ulken Zhezdy and Bala Zhezdy rivers in the present Ulytau administrative district of the Ulytau region (Fig. 1.b).

Since the early 1990s, a comprehensive study of the site has been carried out, including field and laboratory research using natural scientific methods and experimental and three-dimensional modeling (Fig. 2). These works contribute to the solution of controversial problems not only of the Zhezkazgan-Ulytau MMC, but also of the ancient copper metallurgy of Qazaqstan as a whole.

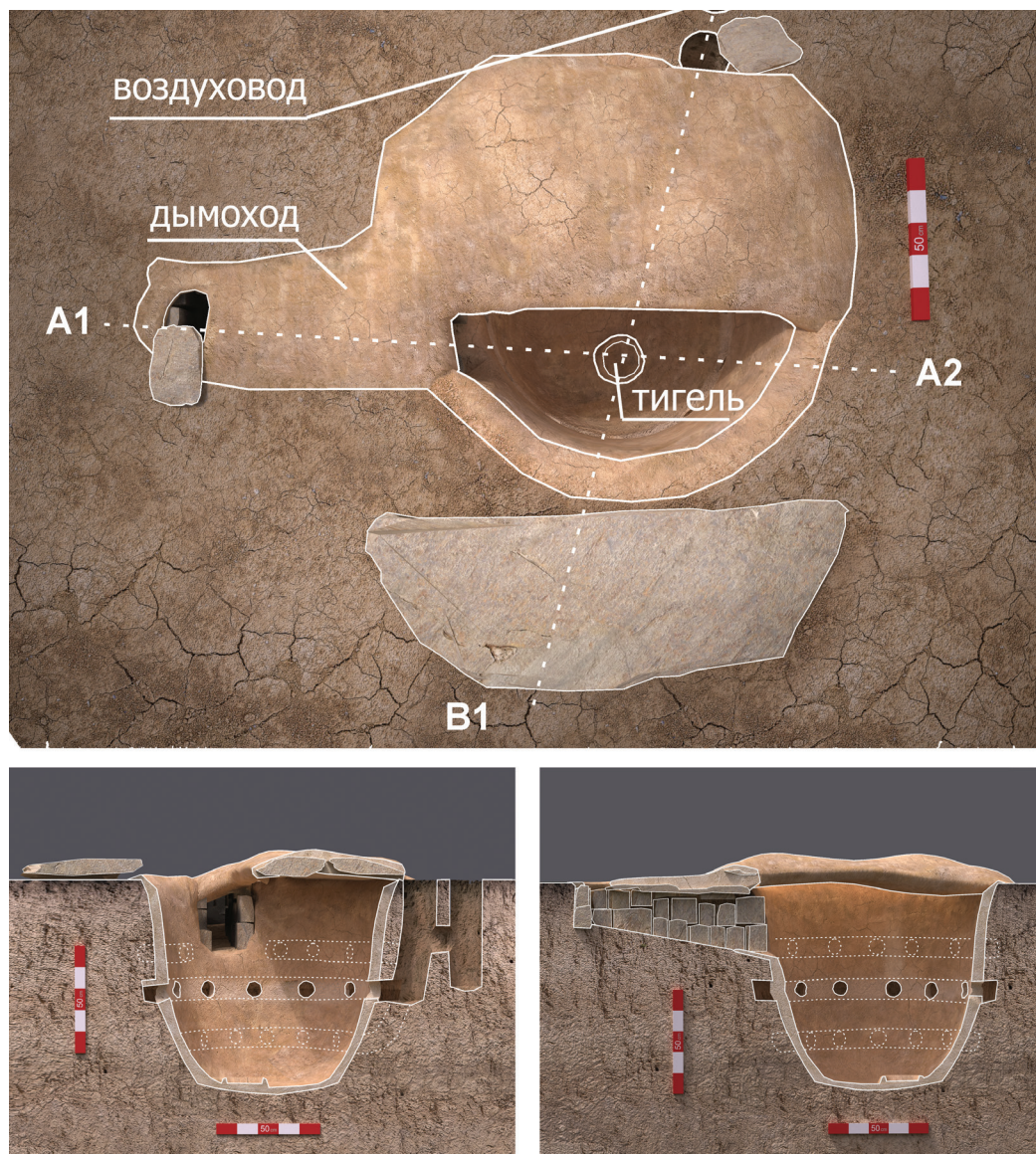


Fig.2. Taldysay Settlement. Three-dimensional graphic model of a thermal engineering structure (TES) of a half-shaft type.  
2-сур. Талдысай қонысы. Мыс қорытуға арналған, жартылай жер астына қазылған ошақтың графикалық көрінісі  
Рис. 2. Поселение Талдысай. Трехмерная графическая модель полушахтного теплотехнического сооружения (ТТС)



## Results

At the settlement, thermal engineering structures (TES) of various types formed industrial and housing complexes, indicating the appearance of specialized settlements of metallurgists in the MMC during the Bronze Age (Fig. 3–8). Industrial and housing complexes functioned on Taldysay throughout the Late Bronze Age (2nd millennium BC), starting from the objects of the Petrovka culture (Nurtay type of sites) to the buildings of the Andronovo horizon [Ermolaeva 2016: 126–141; Ermolaeva et al. 2017: 22–38]. The metallurgical specialization of the settlement, like the entire Zhezkazgan-Ulytau MMC, was dictated by the richest deposits of oxidized and sulfide copper ore.

Open metallurgical complexes and impressive collections of different categories of finds determined the specialization of the inhabitants of the settlement in metal production, represented by the smelting of copper from ores and metalworking, consisting of various foundry

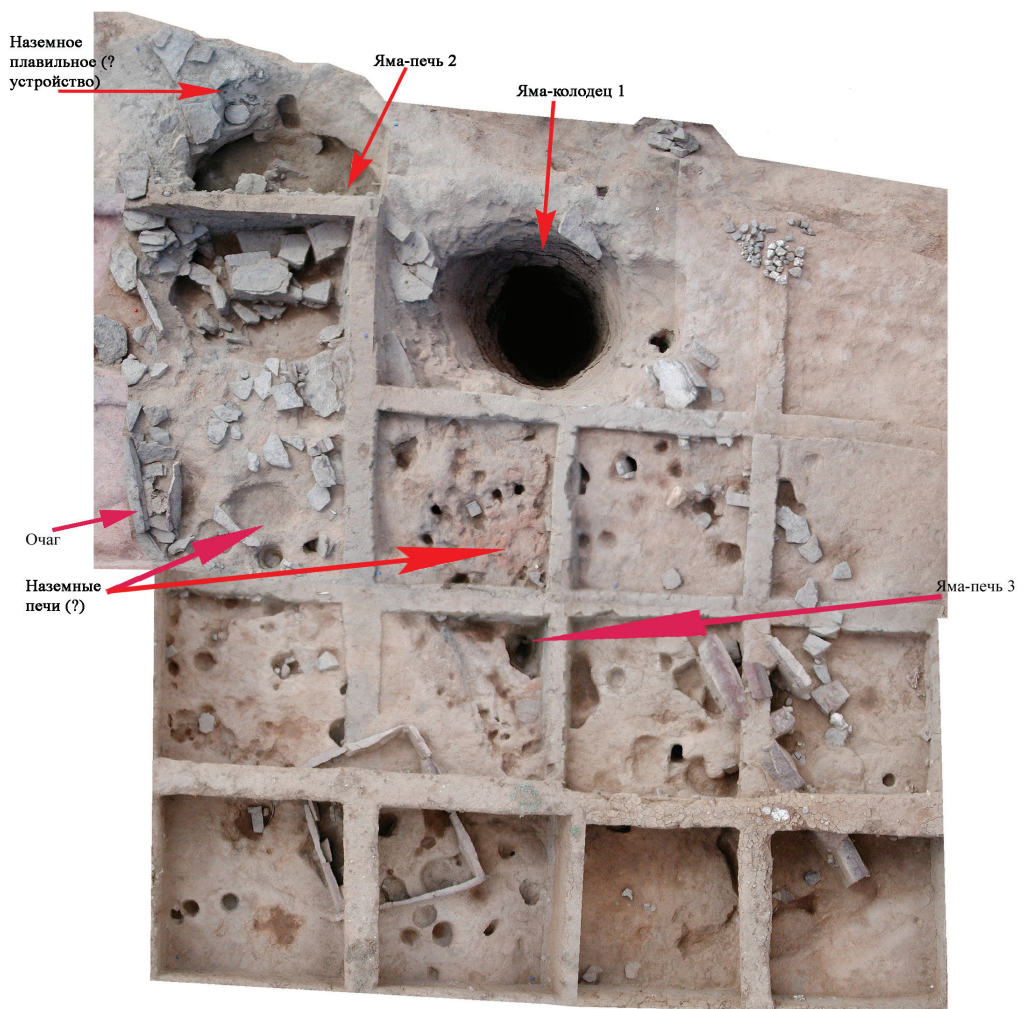


Fig. 3. Taldysay Settlement. Western Housing and Industrial Complex (WHIC). Photo collage. General view from the north side of the production site

3-сур. Талдысай қонысы. Батыс тұрғын үй-өндірістік кешені. Фотоколлаж. Өндірістік алаңның солтүстік жағынан қарағандағы көрінісі

Рис. 3. Поселение Талдысай. Западный жилищно-производственный комплекс (ЗЖПК). Фотоколлаж. Общий вид с северной стороны производственной площадки



and forging operations, as well as the preparation of crucibles, lyachkas, casting molds, and stone tools for metal processing.

According to the classification, all thermal engineering structures (TES) were divided mainly into three types according to the criteria of relation to the surface and fundamental differences in the internal and external structure.

1) Mine-type TES, sunk into the ground up to two meters or more, with long horizontal chimneys and a complex air-conducting system. Furnaces of this type operated without forced blast (Fig. 4: a, c–d).

2) TESs of the ground type were small, had a slight depth of the furnace into the ground, and operated on forced blast using bellows (Fig. 4: b).

3) The transitional option was probably a half-shaft type TES, buried half a meter to a meter into the ground. This includes TESs that were varied in their design, having similarities in individual design elements with both types of stoves, including with different options for

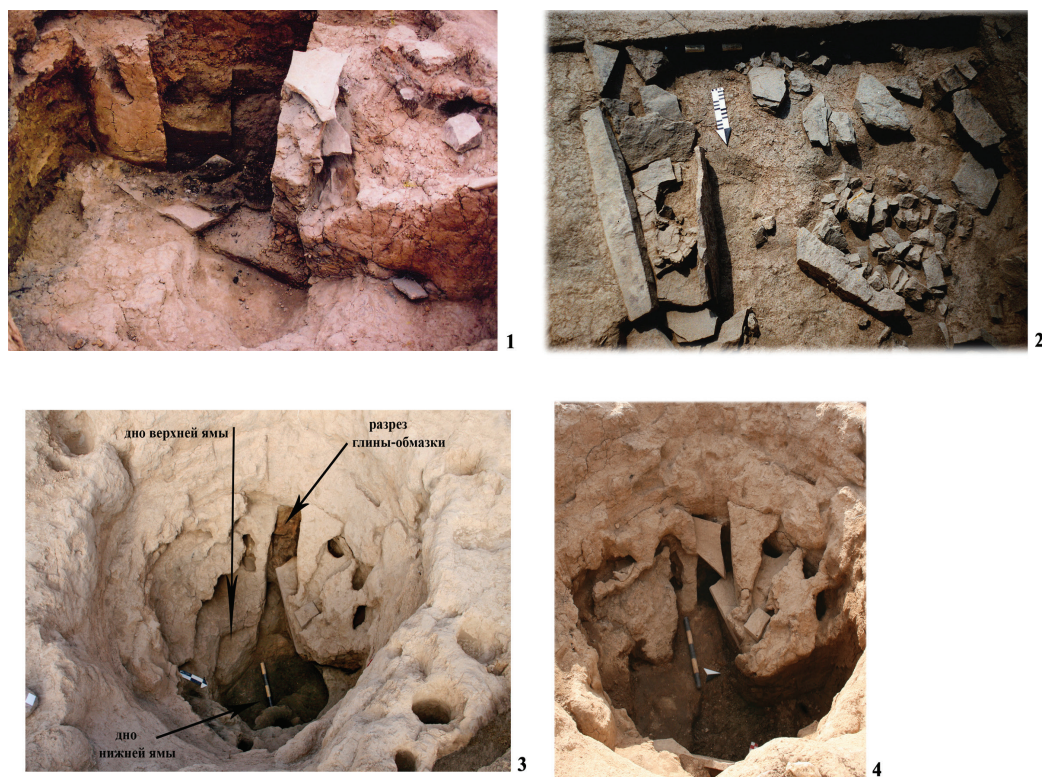


Fig. 4. Taldysay Settlement. a) Western Housing and Industrial Complex, the shaft-type thermal engineering structure; b) Western Housing and Industrial Complex, the ground-type thermal engineering structure; c–d) Eastern Housing and Industrial Complex, the thermal engineering structure of shaft type

4-сур. Талдысай қонысы. а) Батыс тұрғын үй-өндірістік кешені, мыс қорытқыш ошақ түрі; б) Батыс тұрғын үй-өндірістік кешені, жер бетіндегі мыс қорытқыш ошақ; в) Батыс тұрғын үй-өндірістік кешені, теплотехническое сооружение наземного типа; с–д) Шығыс тұрғын үй-өндірістік кешені, мыс қорытқыш ошақ

Рис. 4. Поселение Талдысай. а) Западный жилищно-производственный комплекс, теплотехническое сооружение шахтного типа; б) Западный жилищно-производственный комплекс, теплотехническое сооружение наземного типа; с–д) Восточный жилищно-производственный комплекс, теплотехническое сооружение шахтного типа

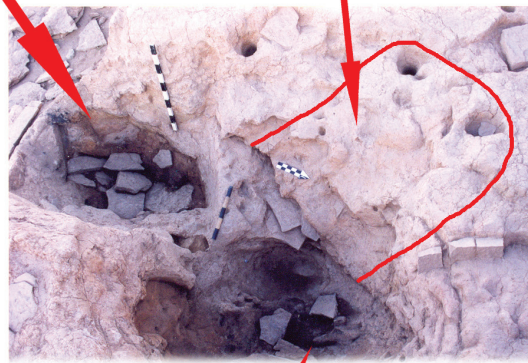




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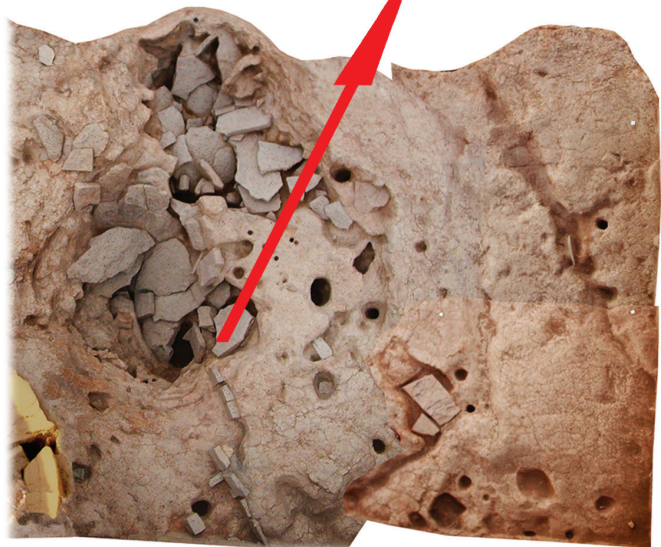
ЗАПАДНАЯ СЕКЦИЯ

ЮЖНАЯ СЕКЦИЯ



2

СЕВЕРНАЯ СЕКЦИЯ



3



Fig. 5. Taldysay Settlement. Eastern Housing and Industrial Complex, the three-section thermal technical structure of shaft type. a) southern section; b–c) southern, northern, and western sections

5-сур. Талдысай қонысы. Шығыс тұрғын үй-өндірістік кешені, жерді қазып жасалған мыс қорытқыш ошақ. а) оңтүстік секциясы; б–с) оңтүстік, солтүстік және батыс секциясы

Рис. 5. Поселение Талдысай. Восточный жилищно-производственный комплекс, трехсекционное теплотехническое сооружение шахтного типа. а) южная секция; б–с) южная, северная и западная секции



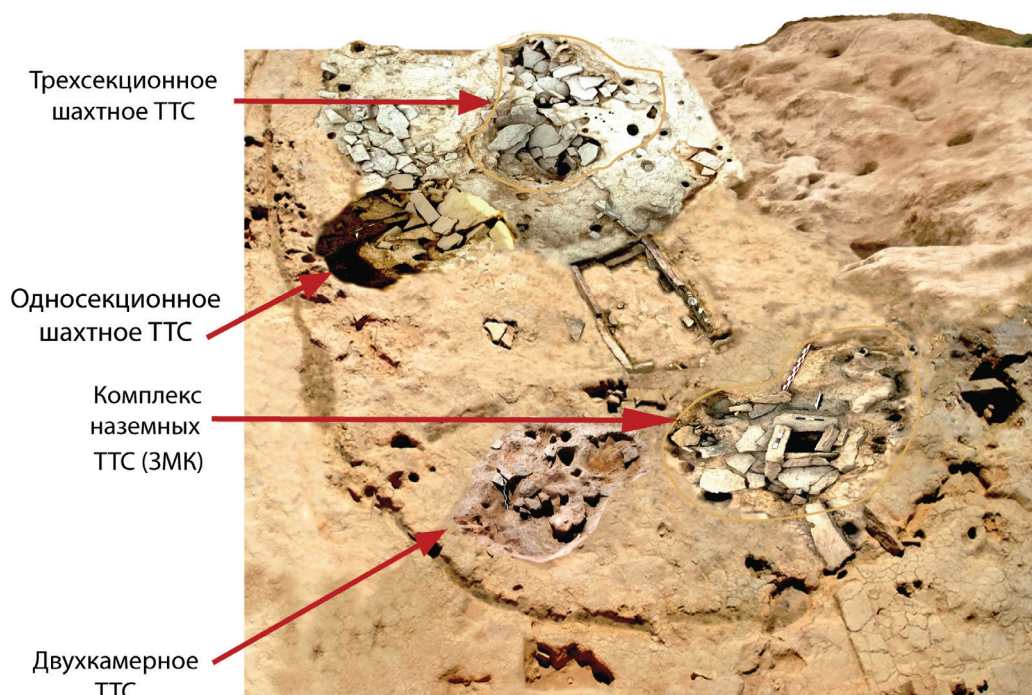


Fig. 6. Taldysay Settlement. Eastern Housing and Industrial Complex, the thermal engineering structure of shaft and ground types. Photo collage

6-сур. Талдысай қонысы. Шығыс тұрғын үй - өндірістік кешені, жер бетіне және жер астына салынған мыс қорытқыш ошақ. Фотоколлаж

Рис. 6. Поселение Талдысай. Восточный жилищно-производственный комплекс, теплотехническое сооружение шахтного и наземного типов. Фотоколлаж



chimneys (Fig. 7). The same type includes three-section TESs (Fig. 5), which could be used for roasting primary sulfides [Rusanov, Ermolaeva 2011: 36–58].

Taldysay thermal engineering structures of ground type are similar to the designs of furnaces in different regions of Eurasia: in present Northern Qazaqstan at the settlement of the Petrovka culture Semiozerka 2, at the fortified settlements of the Sintashta culture in the Southern Urals, at the Chervone Ozero-3 Settlement of the Srubna culture of the Kartamysh archaeological district of the Donetsk Mining and Metallurgical Center (Eastern Ukraine) [Grigor'ev 2000: 444–531; Brovender 2013: 127–151]. It is probable that only basic models were borrowed, based on the similarity of metallurgical processing technology, without a complete imitation of the TES designs of these regions.

Metallurgists of Sary-Arqa, working in different environmental conditions with a limited possibility of obtaining charcoal, had Zhezkazgan deposits rich in copper sulfide ore as a source of raw material, so they significantly modified the design of the TESs, transferring them mainly to the mode of natural rather than forced air injection. In shaft-type furnaces, the redistribution of sulfide copper ore was carried out.

The main parameters of the Taldysay metallurgical furnaces were replicated by Igor Rusanov, who designed three types of TES in 2012–2013. The experiment confirmed the identification of thermal engineering structures with copper smelting furnaces for smelting copper from oxidized and sulfide ores [Rusanov 2013: 364–388].

Experiments showed that the process of producing copper from secondary sulfides was simpler and less expensive: savings in fuel, labor, and time were achieved; copper smelting was more efficient with less effort and expense. The use of thermal units of such sizes as mine-type TES is





1



2



Fig. 7. Taldysay Settlement. Northern Housing and Industrial Complex, the semi-shaft type thermal engineering structure with a chimney

7-сур. Талдысай қонысы. Солтүстік тұрғын үй – өндірістік кешені, жартылай жерге қазылған, мыс қорытқыш мұржалы ошақ

Рис. 7. Поселение Талдысай. Северный жилищно-производственный комплекс, теплотехническое сооружение полушахтного типа с дымоходом

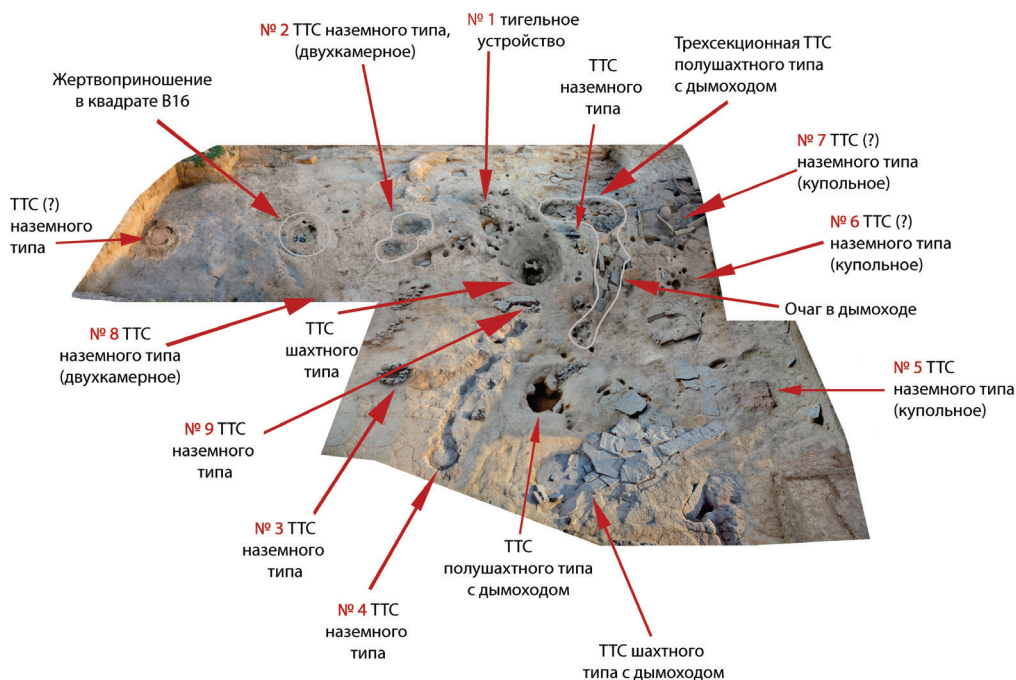


Fig. 8. Taldysay Settlement. Northern Housing and Industrial Complex. Photo collage. General view from the north. Thermal engineering structures of shaft, half-shaft, and ground types 8-сур. Талдысай қонысы. Солтүстік тұрғын үй-өндірістік кешені. Фотоколлаж. Солтүстігінен қарағандағы жалпы көрінісі. Жер бетіне және жартылай жер астына салынған ошақ  
 Рис. 8. Поселение Талдысай. Северный жилищно-производственный комплекс. Фотоколлаж. Общий вид с северной стороны. Теплотехническое сооружение шахтного, полушахтного и наземного типов

due to the lack of fuel in the semi-desert region of Ulytau and the presence of easily accessible copper raw materials, i.e. secondary sulfides. Experiments and calculations confirmed that the use of a mine-type TES at Taldysay provided significant fuel savings due to the exothermal combustion of sulfur, which increases the melting point of copper.

Using the example of the Taldysay TES and the experiment carried out, it was confirmed that all pits of this type, indeed, had air ducts like the TESs of Atasu, Myrzhiik, Aqmustafa settlements of the North Betpaqдала MMC [Kadyrbaev 1983: 134–142; Kadyrbaev, Kurmankulov 1992: 245].

The study of fragments of copper ores and metallurgical slag showed that both oxidized malachite-azurite and sulfide chalcocite-covellite copper ores were used at the Taldysay Settlement. Almost the entire metallurgical cycle was carried out at the settlement: smelting copper from ore, casting products, and forging them.

The presence of not only copper smelting, but also copper foundry production is confirmed by finds of copper end-products: knives (Fig. 9: b–c), punches, chisels, awls, needles, paper clips, beads, etc., stone (Fig. 10: b) and ceramic casting molds, ceramic lyachkas, nozzles and crucibles (Fig. 10: a, c), bone and stone polishes for polishing products after casting.

Weaponry, which includes arrowheads made of stone, bone, and copper, and casting molds made of talc, is the most representative category of finds. Copper arrowheads are morphologically diverse and chronologically mark different stages of the functioning of the site during the 2nd millennium BC. (Fig. 9: a). All of them belong to the forged and cast classes. The nature of the nozzle makes arrowheads with a protruding and hidden socket from the Early Alakul period stand out among the forged ones. After being cast into a mold, each piece was subjected to extensive

forging. Knives made using forged and cast technologies (Fig. 9: b-c) are another diagnostic category of products.

South Korean archaeometallurgist Jang-Sik Park has conducted an extensive technological study of the metal. A study of the chemical composition and manufacturing technology of metal products has shown that many products were made using casting + forging technology and were subjected to extensive forging finishing. Emphasis on forging was associated with the use of unalloyed copper, where metallurgically “pure” copper was used as the starting material.

The combined use of unalloyed copper as a raw material and extensive machining as a key fabrication method demonstrates knowledge of the material properties that are determined by various thermal and mechanical treatments. In this technological tradition, thermomechanical processing has played a key role in suppressing the undesirable effects encountered when using nearly pure copper. Forging may be the primary method of shaping the material, during which noticeable reinforcement may be observed. The manufacturing method must be carefully coordinated with the chemical composition of the alloys used, which, apparently, was considered and understood by the ancient foundries. It is important to note that there were items added with tin and containing appreciable amounts of arsenic, indicating that these elements were available on a limited scale and their beneficial effects were known at the time.

Ilaria Calgaro and Miljana Radivojević from University of London analyzed experimental slags and copper ingots that were obtained by melting a charge of secondary sulfides in an experimental shaft furnace similar to the ancient one. As a result, it was confirmed that, in general, the slags and ingots obtained during Rusanov’s experiment correspond in composition and microstructure

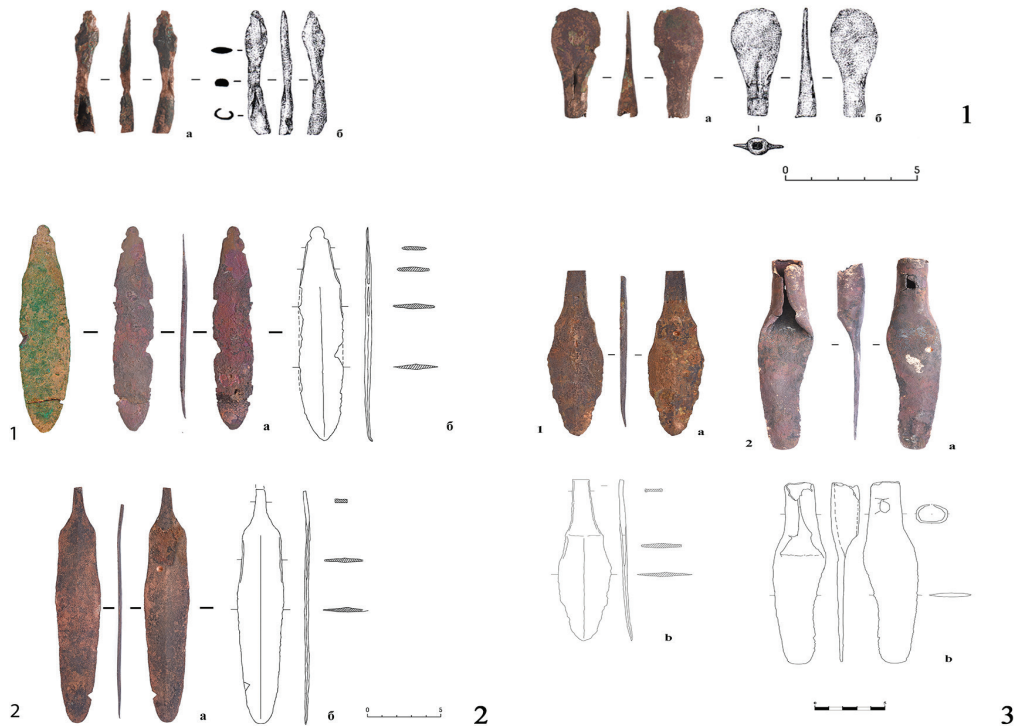


Fig. 9. Taldysay Settlement. a) metal arrowheads; b–c) metal knives

9-сур. Талдысай қонысы. а) жебенің металл ұшы; б–с) металл пышақтар

Рис. 9. Поселение Талдысай. а) металлические наконечники стрел; б–с) металлические ножи





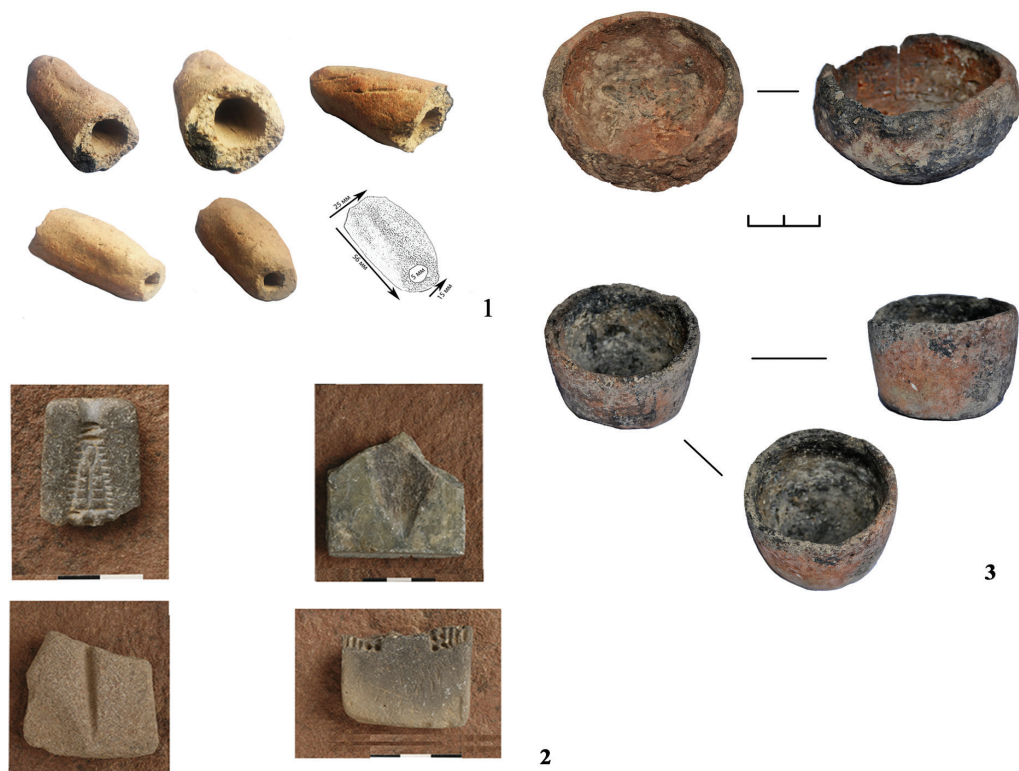


Fig. 10. Taldysay Settlement. a) clay nozzles; b) clay crucibles; c) stone casting molds  
10-сур. Талдысай қонысы. а) сазтөбе; б) металл ерітетін саз ыдыс; с) тас қалыптар  
Рис. 10. Поселение Талдысай. а) глиняные сопла; б) глиняные тигли; с) каменные литейные  
формы



to the ingots found in the shaft furnaces of Taldysay or nearby. The analysis confirmed the actual correspondence of the functioning of experimental mine-type TES with ancient metallurgical furnaces and the reproduction of the experiment with good results, which allows to extend this information to other Bronze Age sites on which the same or similar smelting structures are located.

## Conclusions

Thus, the metallurgical specialization of the population of the Zhezkazgan-Ulytau MMC was dictated by the richest deposits of oxidized and sulfide copper ore. The industrial and housing complexes identified in the settlements reflect a developed paleo economic infrastructure with mining, metallurgical and metalworking specialization, as well as the development of ceramic, leather, bone-carving, and woodworking industries. The study of the Taldysay Settlement has been carried out comprehensively. Using materials from the settlement, issues related to the technique and technology of metal production in the Late Bronze Age in the MMC have been resolved.

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## Bowl with Underglaze Painting from Otrar (excavated in 2018)<sup>1</sup>

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**Keywords:** Middle Ages; Karakhanids; Otrar; glazed ceramics; ornithomorphic and epigraphic décor

**Тірек сөздер:** ортағасыр; Қараханидтер; Отырар; жылтырақ керамика; орнитоморфты және эпиграфиялық декор

**Ключевые слова:** средневековье; Караханиды; Оtrar; глазурованная керамика; орнитоморфный и эпиграфический декор

A bowl depicting a bird (presumably a steppe eagle, *Aquila nipalensis*), with underglaze painting and epigraphic décor, was found in a stratigraphic excavation in the northern part of the *shakhristan* of medieval city-site Otrar. The bowl was found in the layer of the X–XI centuries and refers to the Qarakhanid period. The article is presenting some analogies of the bird's image and adding its ornithological attribution. The image of an eagle is not typical for glazed ceramics of the Qarakhanid period; the Otrar bowl is one of the rare and interesting finds.

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## Отырардан табылған сырлы өрнекті тостаған (2018 жылғы қазба жұмыстары бойынша)

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Ортағасырдағы Отырар қаласы шахристанының солтүстік бөлігіне жасалған қазба жұмыстары кезінде құс бейнесі (дала қыраны) мен эпиграфиялық өрнегі бар тостаған табылды. Тостаған X–XI ғасырлардағы Қараханидтер кезеңіне жататын топырақ қабатынан шықты. Мақалада құс бейнесінің кейбір сипаттамалары жасалып, орнитологиялық атрибуциясы берілген. Ал қыран құстың бейнесі Қарахан дәуіріндегі өрнекті керамикада кездеспейді. Сондықтан Отырар ыдысы өте сирек кездесетін және қызықты олжалардың бірі саналады.

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**Сілтеме үшін:** Камалдинов И.Р. Отырардан табылған сырлы өрнекті тостаған (2018 жылғы қазба жұмыстары бойынша). *Qazaq Historical Review*. 2024. Т. 2. № 1. 19–25-бб. (ағылшынша). DOI: <https://doi.org/10.69567/3007-0236.2024.1.19.25>

## Чаша с подглазурной росписью из Отрара (раскопки 2018 года)

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Чаша с подглазурной росписью в виде изображения птицы (степного орла) и эпиграфическим декором найдена в стратиграфическом раскопе северной части шахристана средневекового городища Оtrar. Чаша обнаружена в

<sup>1</sup> Translation into English: Zarine A. Dzhandosova, Candidate of History, Associate Professor, Head of the Department of Central Asia and Caucasus, St. Petersburg State University.

слое X–XI вв., т.е. относится к караханидскому периоду. В статье представлены некоторые аналогии изображению птицы, а также дана орнитологическая атрибуция. Изображение орла нетипично для глазурованной керамики караханидского периода. Отрарская чаша относится к числу очень редких и интересных находок.

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## Introduction

Otrar, a city in the present-day Southern Qazaqstan, was the main city of the Farab district in the 4<sup>th</sup> to 12<sup>th</sup> centuries, widely known in the East. Both medieval Arab and Persian writers, historians, and geographers, recognized this city as a political, commercial, and cultural center that played an important role in the history of Central Asia [Bajpakov 2014: 83].

In the 11<sup>th</sup> and 13<sup>th</sup> centuries, the urban culture of the Otrar Oasis reached its highest peak. A quarter of pottery appeared in the city, and the production technology of pottery was improving. It was at this time that pottery coated with glaze appeared and became popular. Strengthening the cultural and economic relations of the 11<sup>th</sup> and early 13<sup>th</sup> centuries between the regions of Central Asia, the Middle East and present-day Qazaqstan ensured the rapid spread of the fashion of new artistic products, including pottery, as well as advanced technologies.

Artistic ceramics of this era met the increased demands of the more developed society. The shapes of vessels, their proportions, and details changed, and decorativeness, which was one of the main features of Central Asian medieval art, increased. Craftsmen introduced new ornamental elements, new compositions and color schemes.

## Methods and materials

The archaeological study of the ancient and medieval strata of the Otrar settlement was carried out in 2018 (Fig. 1a). It was a continuation of the work, which began in 2015, within the framework of the project “Archaeological research of the Otrar settlement”, overseen by Karl Baipakov (1940–2018). The research team included Aiman Avizova, Ilyar Kamaldinov, Nurlan Seraly, and Ali Seraliev. Stratigraphic excavations with an area of 500 square meters were brought to a depth of 6.5 m, that is, the level of cultural strata of the 10<sup>th</sup> and 11<sup>th</sup> centuries (Fig.1b).

## Results

An archeologically whole dish with an animal-shaped image was found on the floor of Room 6A of stratigraphic excavation. The bowl was found on the construction horizon No.9 represented by the material properties of Otrar and the Otrar Oasis in the Qarakhanid period (X–XII centuries). The collection of glazed ceramics includes 1 dish and some lamps. They were made from clay, well erased, on a potter’s wheel, the broken fragments were pink and completely fired.

In addition to glazed and non-glazed dishes, the layer revealed beads, items made of bone, stone and metal, incense burners, *dastarkhans*, *chirag* lamps, hearth stands (floor-mounted portable altars), clay items for sanitary and hygienic purposes, etc.

A bowl with a wide rim (diameter 31 cm) on a slightly concave disc-shaped tray (11 cm) (Fig. 2a). The surface of the product is covered with colorless lead glaze over painting on white engobe. Polychrome underglaze painting, made with black, green and brown paint of various shades, occupies the entire interior space of the bottom of the bowl. The outline of the images is painted





Fig. 1. Otrar ancient settlement: (a) aerial photo; (b) general view of excavation 9, photography by Ilyar Kamaldinov

1-сур. Отырар қалашығы: а – аэрофото; б – қазбаның жалпы көрінісі, фотоны Ильяр Камалдинов түсірген

Рис. 1. Городище Оtrar: а – аэрофото; б – общий вид раскопа 9, фото Ильяра Камалдинова



in black, and the silhouette is painted in green and brown. In the center of the dish, surrounded by an epigraphic ornament, a bird of prey is depicted, which looks quite realistic. The master emphasized the features of a sharp beak with a characteristic hump, feathered legs up to the toe (trousers) and pointed claws.

### Discussion

The epigraphic ornament consists of realistically stylized Arabic letters, which are repeated and clearly perform a decorative function. The drawing is complemented by round spots of green color, which are located between the pseudo-letters. Wide and thin strips are elegantly edging on the dish. It should be noted that imitations of Arabic letters are arranged with their tops towards the center of the vessel; this is typical for the end of the 10th century, since starting from the 11th century the letters began to be arranged with their tops towards the edge of the vessel. This particular feature for Sogdian ceramics was first traced and noted by Galina Shishkina [Shishkina 1979: 56; Brusenko 1986: 54].

Researcher, ornithologist and PhD Ruslan Urazaliev of the Qazaqstan Association for Biodiversity Conservation (QABC), at my request, studied the image of the bird from a photograph. In personal



Fig. 2. (a) the bowl from the Otrar site with an image of a bird, photo by Ilyar Kamaldinov; (b) a steppe eagle, photo by Ruslan Urazaliev; (c) a fragment of ceramics depicting a bird from the Akhsikent Settlement, after: [Anarbaev 1999: 58]

2-сур. Құс бейнесі бар Отырар тостағаны (а), фотоны Ильяр Камалдинов түсірген; дала қыраны (б), фотоны Руслан Оразалиев түсірген; Ақсикент (с) қалашығындағы құс бейнелі керамика сынығы [Анарбаев 1999: 58]

Рис. 2. Чаша с городища Оtrar с изображением птицы (а), фото Ильяра Камалдинова; степной орёл (б), фото Руслана Уразалиева; фрагмент керамики с изображением птицы с городища Ахсикент (с), по: [Anarbaev 1999: 58]

correspondence, he said that the image on the bowl conveys a number of attributing features that make it possible to identify the image:

- 1) *Habitus (general physique) and body position correspond to a large eagle.*
- 2) *Beak with a characteristic hump, sharp at the end; beak ratio is realistic.*
- 3) *On the eyes, the artist tried to draw a characteristic eyebrow of an eagle, which gives it that very 'predatory' appearance.*
- 4) *'Trousers' characteristic of eagles; here one of the key features of the morphology of eagles, that is, feathered legs right up to the toes, is very well noted -*
- 5) *Finger with pointed claws; the proportion is in favor of the eagle;*
- 6) *The color of the body is uniform, the edges of the wings are dark.*

Thus, according to the expert, the designer of the bowl tried to depict a large bird of prey of the genus *Aquila* (the family *Accipitridae*), most likely a steppe eagle (Fig. 2b), which often has a sandy color.

Zoomorphic and ornithomorphic images of glazed ceramics of the Qarakhanid period are very rare, and generally this type of decoration is not typical for the local potter tradition of this period. Thus, the well-known ornithomorphic images on of the Otrar Oasis ceramics are represented mainly by images of peacocks, cranes, birds with crests and waterfowl [Bajpakov, Erzakovich 1990: 22].

An almost identical bird image have been discovered on a dish from a ceramic assemblage from the medieval site of Akhsikent in Uzbekistan (Fig. 2c), though the author of the find indicates that the depicted bird was a parrot. A fragment of the bottom part of a glazed vessel was discovered in the northwestern part of the site during excavations of a workshop, in a badrab within Room 3; the dish dates back to the 11<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> centuries [Anarbaev 1999: 58].

The image of a pheasant have been found in glazed ceramics from Sogd (9<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> centuries) and Chach (10<sup>th</sup> to 12<sup>th</sup> centuries). The décor is distinguished by the similarity of the compositional scheme: an image of a pheasant was placed in the center of the dish, and the edge was decorated with epigraphic ornaments and specks [Brusenko 1986: 71; Il'yasova et al 2010: 170–173].

Let us note that the zoomorphic theme occupies a large place in the decorative design of artistic ceramics of Central Asia and Iran in the 10<sup>th</sup> to 13<sup>th</sup> centuries. For example, in Khorasan and Samarkand at that time, images of birds were part of ornamental compositions [Lane 1947: 17–19].

In the rich complex of glazed pottery of Chach in the 9<sup>th</sup> and early 11<sup>th</sup> centuries, the preference of masters for drawing a range of well-defined themes is clearly visible, and birds are most often seen. Their images are not always amenable to accurate ornithological identification, although in some cases the clarity of details and color schemes make it possible to confidently identify a specific type of a feathered creature [Il'yasova et al 2016: 72].

In addition to the Czech oasis, the image of a bird is widely known in Samarqand, Afrasyab and Ghaznavid Azerbaijan, but there is nowhere in such dishes the image of an eagle. Among the known analogies, we cannot find images that researchers confidently interpreted as images of eagles.

A close analogy to the image of an eagle on the Otrar bowl can be the images of birds described in the article by Nadezhda Vishnevskaya "Stamped images of an eagle on ceramic vessels of the 11th–12th centuries from Samarkand." It presents three fragments of ceramic vessels, two of which come from the collection of Boris Kastalsky and were collected in



Samarkand and its environs (the location has not been established), one fragment comes from collections from the surface of the *kyoshk* of the citadel of the Afrasyab settlement. The author of the publication points out that in the medieval art of Central Asia, images of an eagle in a similar iconographic manner are not known. The similarity with the image of an eagle on the Otrar bowl is most clearly expressed in the shape of the beak, tail, legs and claws, however, on these prints the eagles are shown in a frontal projection; in addition, on the body of the eagle there is an image of a vessel with two growing shoots [Vishnevskaya 2004: 342–343].

Images of eagles have been found in the fine arts of Eurasia since ancient times. Two medieval pictorial traditions may be related to the Otrar bowl. These are, relatively speaking, the western, i.e., Greco-Roman-Byzantine and eastern, primarily Iranian, lines. Both traditions were intertwined at different stages of history: mutual influences can be traced under the Achaemenids, in the Hellenistic era, and in the Sasanian period. The Western line was distinguished, first of all, by greater realism of images and firmly defined semantics. The eagle is a bird of power, a companion or symbol of the supreme deity, a bird of victory.

The image of an eagle is widely known in the artistic metal of the East and West; it is characterized by multi-figure plot compositions (laurel branches, scenes of torment, triumphs, etc.). As an example, we can note a silver figurine from the Neskrebovo fire pit in Russia, dating back to the 7th century [Maculevich 1959: 183–205]. The figurine is a sculptural group: a sitting eagle and a rising large snake, which entwines its legs and, stretching out its head, almost falls to the bird's chest.

## Conclusion

The Otrar bowl was probably made in one of the local workshops and is an excellent example of eclecticism in the fine arts of the Qarakhanid period. The Otrar bowl is one of the very rare and interesting finds. As indicated above, the image of a steppe eagle is atypical for the Qarakhanid glazed ceramics, and such a product was found on the territory of present-day Qazaqstan for the first time.

For assistance in writing this article, I would like to express my gratitude to ornithologist Dr. Ruslan Urazaliev.

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## Stone Statues of Central Qazaqstan<sup>1</sup>

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**Keywords:** Sary Arqa; menhir; stele; stone sculpture; stone statue; 'mound with moustache'; fence; Saka; Turkic; Qyrchaq

**Тірек сөздер:** Сарыарқа; меңгір; мұнара; тас мүсін; балбал тас; «мұртты қорғандар»; қоршау; сақ; түркі; қыпшақ

**Ключевые слова:** Сарыарқа; менгир; стела; олений камень; каменное изваяние; курган с «усами»; оградка; курган; сакские; тюркские; кыпчакские

The article examines the stone sculptures of present-day Central Qazaqstan, which are an important source for the history of the ancient and medieval peoples of Eurasia. They not only embody the external appearance of people from past eras, but also reflect valuable information about the social structure and lives of those who left these monuments. The work presents the results of a recent study of ancient and medieval stone sculptures decorating the wide steppes of Central Kazakhstan, and further research and careful analysis of them seem very necessary. The first scientific information about stone sculptures was collected by Shoqan Walikhanov while studying the mausoleum of the Qozy Korpesh and Bayan Sulu during his travels around the outskirts of Issyk-Kul. Alkey Kh. Margulan, in his works, presented serious research on the monuments of Sary Arqa. In the last decade, the chronological framework for studying the stone sculptures of Sary Arqa has been expanding. Currently, the scientist Arman Z. Beysenov in his works, touches on current issues relating to stone sculptures and steles from the Saka period of Sary Arqa and is engaged in a comprehensive study of the complexes in which they are located.

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## Орталық Қазақстанның балбал тастары

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Мақалада Орталық Қазақстанның балбал тастары мен оның ежелгі және ортағасырдағы Еуразия халықтарының тарихында қаншалықты маңызды рөл атқаратыны жөнінде айтылған. Балбал тастар – байырғы адамдардың сыртқы мүсіні ғана емес, сол кездің әлеуметтік құрылымы мен тұрмысынан хабар беретін құнды ақпарат көзі. Бұл еңбекте Орталық Қазақстан – Сарыарқаның кең даласына сән беріп тұрғани ежелгі және ортағасырлық балбал тастарды зерттеу нәтижелері ұсынылған. Мақала Сарыарқаның балбал тастарын толық зерттеп, талдау мәселесіне арналған. Бұл тастар туралы мәліметтерді алғаш рет Шоқан Уәлиханов Ыстықкөл төңірегіне саяхат кезінде Қозы Көрпеш – Баян сұлу кесенесін зерделеген кезде жинақтаған. Әлкей Марғұлан өз еңбектерінде Сарыарқаның монументальді ескерткештері жөніне тоқталып, зерттеушілік пікірлерін жазған. Кейінгі онжылдықта Сарыарқа балбал тастарын зерттеудің хронологиялық ауқымы кеңейе түсті. Қазір ғалым Арман Бейсенов сақ кезеңіндегі Сарыарқаның балбал тастары мен мұнаралары жөнінде өзекті мәселе қозғап, жан-жақты зерттеумен шұғылданып жүр.

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## Каменные изваяния Центрального Казахстана

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В статье рассматриваются каменные изваяния Центрального Казахстана. Как они являются важным источником по истории древних и средневековых народов Евразии. В них не только воплощен внешний облик людей прошлых эпох, но и отражена ценная информация о социальной структуре и быте оставивших эти памятники. В работе представлены результаты исследования древних и средневековых каменных изваяний, которые украшают широкие степи Центрального Казахстана. Статья посвящена проблеме необходимости исследования и полного анализа каменных изваяний Сарыарки. Первые научные сведения о каменных изваяниях были собраны Ч. Валихановым при изучении мавзолея Козы Корпеш – Баян Сулу в период его путешествия по окрестностям Иссык-Куля. Алкей Х. Маргулан в своих трудах представил серьезные научные исследования монументальных памятников Сарыарки. В последнее десятилетие расширяются хронологические рамки изучения каменных изваяний Сарыарки. В настоящее время ученый Арман З. Бейсенов в своих работах затрагивает актуальные вопросы, касающиеся каменных изваяний и стелл сакского периода Сарыарки, занимается всесторонним изучением комплексов, в которых они расположены.

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### Introduction

The territory of present-day Central Qazaqstan, characterized by extensive cultural interactions, is a significant site for the formation and advancement of ancient tribes, whose highly developed culture exerted a significant influence on the culture of the subsequent tribes in the northern, western, and eastern regions of Qazaqstan. Over the course of a long period, Central Qazaqstan was inhabited by tribes of a vibrant original culture. They left behind numerous monuments located along the river valleys, in intermountain depressions, in gorges, in general, where there are meadow grass, convenient irrigated lands and, of course, rich deposits of minerals.

It would be incorrect to say that today we have comprehensive information about the region; many archaeological monuments still need to be explored. Studying the monuments of the region can provide valuable information about the ancient situation not only of the region in question, but also of the entire territory of the Eurasian steppes. It is imperative to note that the absence of information regarding the monuments of Central Qazaqstan renders it impracticable to fully explore many controversial issues in Eurasia.

Central Qazaqstan is one of the regions occupying the vastest space of our country; it is known not only for its natural resources, but also for its unique ancient monuments. Long ago, the Qazaqs called this land Sary Arqa (the Qazaq Uplands). This term refers to a vast plateau bordered in the south by the Aral-Balkhash Lowland, in the west by the Caspian Plain and the Turgay Plateau, in the northeast by the Siberian Lowland and in the east by the Irtys Valley. Geologists believe that the name Sary Arqa successfully conveys the geomorphological structure and relief of Central Qazaqstan (present Qaraghandy (Karaganda) Region).

Since the primitive era, humans have tried to find an explanation for natural phenomena and disasters that they did not understand. During this period of the appropriating economy, individuals heavily relied on nature and their sustenance was contingent upon luck in obtaining food through hunting, gathering, or fishing. They therefore worshiped the forces of nature. During the transition to a productive economy, when humans began to fulfil their essential dietary requirements through the cultivation of cattle and agriculture, they ceased to solely rely

on nature and began to venerate deities, ancestors, and heroes alongside with the forces of nature.

The stone sculptures of Central Qazaqstan comprise a vibrant and numerous collection of monuments belonging to ancient and medieval nomads. For their production, the Qazaq Uplands had suitable raw materials, such as granite and sandstone.

Within the works of Qanysh I. Satbaev, Alkey Kh. Margulan, Mir K. Kadyrbaev, Zholdasbek K. Kurmankulov, Lyubov' N. Ermolenko, Arman Z. Beisenov and others, it has been established that the majority of Sary Arqa sculptures belong to the Middle Ages, namely to the Turkic and Qypchaq times [Kasanova 2019; Kasanova 2020]. Their cultural and chronological diagnostic traits have been distinguished. In addition to the medieval sculptures, there exist sculptures in Sary Arqa from other eras that necessitate precise identification, documentation, creation of cultural, chronological attribution and classification. Until this point, only the classifications

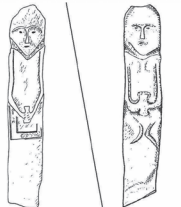


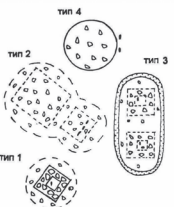
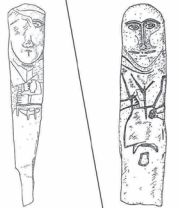


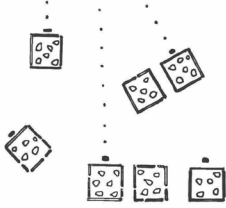
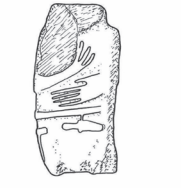







№ п/п	Полнота изображения человеческой фигуры	Поясные/Полные	Погрудные	Антропоморфные стелы	Сооружения
4	Кыпчаки				
3	Тюрки				
2	РЖВ				
1	Поздняя Бронза				



Fig.1. The tradition of stone monumental sculpture on the territory of Central Qazaqstan is represented by monuments of four chronological groups

1-сур. Орталық Қазақстандағы монументальді тас мүсін дәстүрі хронологиялық төрт топ ескерткіштері арқылы көрсетілген

Рис.1. Традиция каменной монументальной скульптуры на территории Центрального Казахстана представлена памятниками четырех хронологических групп

of medieval sculptures of the present-day Qazaq steppes have been developed and no special geological identification or mapping of the monuments has been conducted.

One of the oldest traditions of honoring the dead was the perpetuation of their memory through the construction of special structures and installation of statues. In the steppes and valleys of the Qazaq Uplands, the Sary Arqa, which are abundant in pastures and water sources, and therefore conducive for nomads, stone sculptures from different epochs are still preserved (Fig.1).

There are sculptures of different sizes, from 1 m to giant ones, over 4 m high; they can stand alone or in groups. They are usually installed near stone structures that look like quadrangular fences or mounds. In rare cases, such stone structures are missing.

Stone sculptures, which draw attention and impart an ancient flavor to the unending Qazaq Steppe, have consistently piqued the curiosity of both travelers and scientists. Shoqan Walikhanov, a talented Qazaq scholar from the 19th century, wrote one of the first scholarly articles on the sculptures of Sary Arqa and described and sketched the original sculptures near the Qozy Korpesh and Bayan Sulu *mazar* [Walikhanov 1984: 309]. Since the sculptures themselves have long been lost, Walikhanov's drawings are of great value.

Some sculptures from Central Qazaqstan were included in the first summary work on the sculptures of the entire Qazaq Steppe, published at the beginning of the 20th century. The author is the French researcher Joseph Antoine Castanier [Castanier 1910].

Alkey Khaqanovich Margulan, an outstanding Qazaq archaeologist, made a great contribution to the study of monuments of Central Qazaqstan (statues and *menhirs*) in the 1940s – 1960s. The study of stone sculptures became a key area of research for the Central Qazaqstan Archaeological Expedition (CQAE), which was founded in 1946. The initial results of this research were published by Alkey Kh. Margulan and the famous Russian archaeologist Leonid R. Kyzlasov in 1951 [Margulan 1951: 3–52]. Alkey Kh. Margulan introduced dozens of Sary Arqa sculptures to scientific circulation. They are presented in a solid general article and in a posthumous monograph [Margulan 1979; Margulan 2003: 36].

## Materials and methods

Information regarding several sculptures of Central Qazakhstan is given in the classic work of Yakov A. Sher about the Semirechye sculptures [Sher 1966].

Since the conclusion of the 1970s, the CQAE team comprising of Mir K. Kadyrbaev, Zholdasbek K. Kurmankulov, Serzhan M. Akhinzhanov, and Lyubov' N. Ermolenko has consistently pursued the identification and investigation of sculptures from Central Qazaqstan. Consequently, Zholdasbek K. Kurmankulov and Lyubov' N. Ermolenko introduced over a hundred previously unknown ancient and medieval Sary Arqa sculptures [Ermolenko 2004; Kurmankulov, Ermolenko 2014]. Arman Z. Beisenov has been studying the sculptures of Central Kazakhstan for the past decade [Beisenov, Ermolenko 2014].

Researchers have established that the tradition of making stone sculptures in Sary Arqa dates to the Late Bronze Age, when the settled population of the steppes mastered nomadic pastoralism. Alkey Kh. Margulan believed that the first stone sculptures on the territory of present-day Central Qazaqstan depicted animals [Margulan 1979]. For example, he highlighted rough sculptures, whose outlines resembled the upturned face of a ram (*qoytas*), a horse (*tulpartas*), or a bear (*ayutas*). During this period, sculptures also appeared on which a human face was indicated. One of them was discovered in the valley of the Aksay River. It is challenging to determine who was depicted: a deity, an ancestor, or a revered deceased individual.

Several sculptures from the Bronze Age have been preserved, as well as many standing large, elongated stones called *menhirs*. Many *menhirs* possess a beveled top, which lends them the



appearance of sculptures depicting animals schematically. Most of the *menhirs* were found in the Qarqaraly and Bayanaul Mountains, north of Lake Balkhash, along the Sarysu and Atasu rivers, in the Aqqoytas, Qyzyltau, Ortau, and Aqtau Mountains, which were favorable for cattle breeding. Monuments of this kind received in Qazaq folk toponymy the names *symtas*, *serektas*, *saghantas*, *qanattas*, *qorghantas*, *samalatas*, etc.

The emergence of nomadic pastoralism was accompanied by the complexity of social relationships, the increasing significance of war in nomadic society, and the rise of the social status of a warrior. In the sculptures of the early nomads, the depiction of a warrior prevails.

Stone sculptures from the Saka period, dating from the 7th to 5th centuries B.C., were recently discovered on the territory of Sary Arqa. Currently, approximately three dozen such monuments have been found. Many of these sculptures are associated with burial mounds, and certain were discovered near the so-called ‘mounds with mustache’, specifically the mounds with two arched stone ridges directed towards the east [Ermolenko, Kurmankulov, Kasenova 2016: 129–135] Among the Saka sculptures, several exhibit similarities to Scythian sculptures from the Northern Black Sea Region and the Northern Caucasus. They sometimes depict an *akinak* (dagger), a *chekan* (battle axe), and the details of a naked body (shoulder blades, spine, buttocks, signs of the male gender) Another form of sculpture prevalent during the Saka era pertains to miniature sculptures

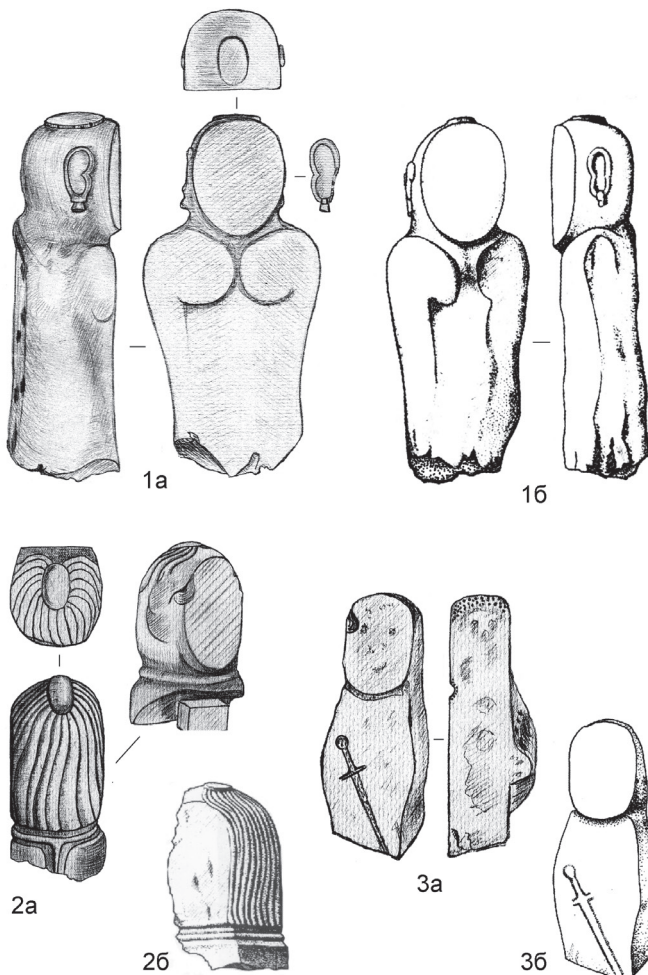


Fig.2. Early Iron Age sculptures  
2-сур. Ерте темір ғасырынан  
қалған балбал  
Рис.2. Изваяния раннего желез-  
ного века

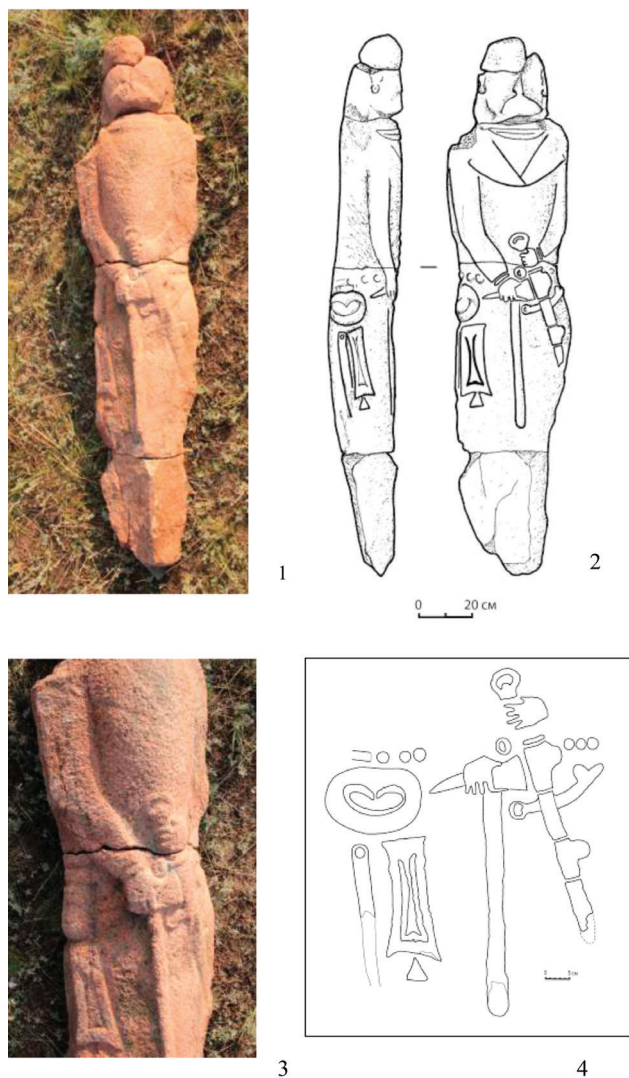


Fig 3. Turkic sculptures. Borili tract. (Ulytau district)  
 3-сур. Түркі балбал тасы. Бөрілі ша-  
 тқалы. (Ұлытау ауданы)  
 Рис 3. Изваяния тюркское. Урочище  
 Борили. (Улытауский р-н)

depicting human heads. On the top of the head, there exists a rounded cone-shaped protrusion, or more commonly, a strand of hair (Qaz. *aidar*) Therefore, the *aidar*, which has survived to this day as a child's hairstyle, has ancient origins. As per the Qazaq heroic epic 'Qoblandy Batyr', *aidar* was once the hairstyle of young men (Fig. 2) The cone-shaped protrusion may have represented a case in which the *aidar* was placed. One of the sculptures displaying a protrusion on the top of the head was discovered in the vicinity of the village of Qosaghaly (Zhanarqa District, Karaganda Region) [Kurmankulov, Kasenova 2014: 177–178].

Subsequently, the custom of erecting stone sculptures was practiced during the period of the Turkic Khaganates (VI to VIII centuries). Turkic stone sculptures were usually placed on the eastern side of quadrangular structures, which are usually called 'enclosures' (Fig. 3) The walls of the fences were constructed using slabs that were positioned on their edges. A certain quantity of slabs has consistently been employed in the construction of walls. Several stones were thrown inside the fence. Fences can be built in a single or several fences (from 2 to 8) can be built in a row along the north-south line. The statue was facing east. Before the sculpture, a series of stone pillars were often dug in to the east. These columns are known as *balbals*. From ancient Turkic inscriptions written in runic script, we know that the Turks called *balbal* a stone, which signified

an enemy killed by a warrior. Rows of *balbals* use to extend for numerous meters. Currently, it appears that the *balbals* have fallen and not all have been preserved.

Numerous sculptures from the era of the Turkic Khaganates depict a warrior holding a vessel in his right hand. The warrior's left hand lies on the hilt of his sword. The sword is shown suspended from a belt on which small bags can also hang down. Some sculptures show clothing, such as a robe with triangular openings on the chest, jewelry (earrings, neck decoration, bracelets), and a hairstyle with several braids going down to the waist. Rarely on Turkic sculptures were the legs depicted in a crossed position, meaning that the warrior was feasting while sitting on the floor. Among the Turkic sculptures depicting warriors, there are unique ones. One of them was discovered in the Borili tract (Ulytau) [Kurmankulov, Ermolenko 2014: 25]. In the right hand of this realistic sculpture, instead of a vessel, an axe is shown, which served as a symbol of power in that era.

Besides the statues of warriors, there were also sculptures that depicted only a human head.

The tradition of stone sculptures did not interrupt with the fall of the state of the Western Turks and continued during the Qypchaq period. The main feature of the Qypchaq-type sculptures was that they no longer depicted warriors. Some sculptures depicted a human head, others showed a figure of a man with a vessel in two hands, lowered to his stomach. There are sculptures that show signs of gender, usually female. The prevalence of female sculptures may indicate the high social status of women among the Qypchaqs.

The sculptures of the Qypchaq era are associated with structures that externally resemble mounds. One or more (up to five) sculptures were installed on the eastern side or in the middle of such a 'mound'.

Excavations showed that under the embankment of some 'mounds', in the center of which the statues were erected, there was a powerful stone fence. The statues were dug inside this fence. Such monuments, called 'Qypchaq sanctuaries', have been studied in Qarqaraly (Ablay wintering), Aqtoghay (Zhinishke River) and Shet (Myrzhik Tract) districts of Karaganda Region [Ermolenko 2004]. In the sanctuary on the Zhinishke River an extraordinary female statue with a painted apron have been found.

Near Unirek village (Shet District) an unusual Qypchaq sanctuary with male statues have been discovered [Ermolenko 2004: 52]. Currently, excavations of this monument are underway, which will make it possible to find out its structure and, possibly, obtain dating material.

## Conclusion

In the Qazaq Steppe, the practice of erecting statues ceased during the 12th – 13th centuries owing to the strengthening of Islam with its prohibition against depicting individuals. Since the installation of stone sculptures in Europe (Polovtsian sculptures) and Mongolia also ceased around the same time, it can also be associated with the emergence of new cultures and changing worldviews in the High Middle Ages, because these territories had less connections with Islam. However, it is not excluded that an echo of this tradition is the construction of steles (*qayraqtas*, *qulpytas*, etc.) vaguely reminiscent of a human figure, on Qazaq graves.

On the territory of present-day Central Qazaqstan, more than 300 monuments of different times are known: more than 100 of them are *menhirs*, 30 sculptures are from the Saka era and more than 100 stone sculptures belong to the Turkic and Qypchaq periods. Unfortunately, due to the negative impact of both natural and anthropogenic factors, their numbers are decreasing every year.

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## Early History of the Formation of the Ancient Delta of the Syr Darya and its settlement (according to archaeological data till the 1<sup>st</sup> millennium AD)<sup>1</sup>

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**Keywords:** Eastern Aral Sea Region; Syr Darya; Chirikrabat archaeological culture; site; settlements; ancient settlement; mound

**Түйін сөздер:** Шығыс Арал өңірі; Сырдария; Шірікрат археологиялық мәдениеті; тұрақ; қоныс; қалашық; қорған

**Ключевые слова:** Восточное Приаралье; Сырдарья; Ширикратская археологическая культура; стоянка; поселения; городище; курган

The article discusses the history of settled agricultural cultures in the Eastern Aral Sea Region, which should be studied considering the hydrographic factor due to their close connection to the functioning of the Amu Darya and Syr Darya delta channels. In the ancient delta of the Syr Darya, four systems of channels are distinguished: the Inkar Darya, Zhana Darya, Kuvan Darya and Prakuvan Darya systems. It has been proven that the southern Inkar Darya system and the northernmost Prakuvan Darya system already functioned in the Neolithic and Bronze Ages. In the Early Iron Age, the Saka tribes inhabited the ancient Syr Darya delta. In the second half of the 1st millennium BC. the regime of flooding of the southern delta channels changed. Some sections of the watercourse in the middle reaches of the Inkar Darya died off, primarily in its southern channel, by the middle of the 1st millennium BC. At the same time, a more straightened latitudinal channel of the Zhana Darya was formed. In the southern part of the delta, on the latitudinal channels of the Zhana Darya and the oxbow lakes of the Inkar Darya, favorable conditions were created for the formation of a settled agricultural and pastoral culture, with economy based on transhumance and irrigation farming. Such was the Chirik Rabat archaeological culture, which, according to researchers, was formed on the basis of the Saka culture. At the same time, it was formed under the influence of the ancient agricultural cultures of Central Asia.

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## Сырдарияның ежелгі сағаларының қалыптасуы мен дамуы және қоныстану тарихы (б.з. I мыңжылдық басына дейін археология мәліметтері негізінде)

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Мақалада Әмудария және Сырдария сағаларымен тығыз байланысты гидрографиялық факторларды ескере отырып зерттеуді қажет ететін Шығыс Арал өңірінің отырықшы егіншілік мәдениетінің қалыптасуы мен даму тарихы

<sup>1</sup> Translation into English: Zarine A. Dzhandosova, Candidate of History, Associate Professor, Head of the Department of Central Asia and Caucasus, St. Petersburg State University.

қарастырылған. Сырдарияның көне сағасы негізгі төрт жүйеге бөлінеді: Іңкәрдария, Жаңадария, Қуаңдария және Ескідария. Зерттеу барысында ежелгі адамдар оңтүстікте Іңкәрдария мен солтүстік Ескідария жүйесін неолит пен қола дәуірінен бастап қоныстана бастағаны анықталды. Ерте темір дәуірінде ежелгі Сырдарияның сағаларына сақ тайпалары жайғасқан. Б.д.д. I мыңжылдықтың екінші жартысында Сырдарияның оңтүстік сағалары өзгере бастаған. Б.д.д. I мыңжылдықтың екінші жартысында ең алдымен Іңкәрдарияның оңтүстік арнасы, кейін орта ағысындағы кей тұстары құрғаған болуы мүмкін. Міне осы кезеңде Сырдарияның оңтүстігінде Жаңадария мен Іңкәрдария сағасында суармалы егіншілікке, отырықшы өмірге және мал шаруашылығына қолайлы жағдай қалыптаса бастаған. Зерттеушілердің пікірінше, сақ тайпаларының мәдениеті негізінде осылайша шірікрат археологиялық мәдениеті пайда болған. Бұл мәдениеттің қалыптасуына Орта Азия аумағындағы өзгеде ежелгі егіншілік мәдениеттердің ықпалы болған.

**Қаржыландыру көзі:** Жұмыс ҚР, ҒБМ қаржысымен жүргізілген (ИРН «BR20280993 Ежелгі және ортағасырдағы Қазақстан: археологиялық дереккөздерді жүйелеу және талдау»).

**Сілтеме үшін:** Өтебаев Ж.Р., Болелов С.Б. Сырдарияның ежелгі сағаларының қалыптасуы мен дамуы және қоныстану тарихы (б.з. I мыңжылдық басына дейін археология мәліметтері негізінде). *Qazaq Historical Review*. 2024. Т. 2. № 1. 34–47-бб. (ағылшынша). DOI: <https://doi.org/10.69567/3007-0236.2024.1.34.47>

## Из истории формирования и развития древней дельты Сырдарьи и ее заселения (по археологическим данным до начала I тыс. н.э.)

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В статье рассматривается история оседло-земледельческих культур Восточного Приаралья, которая требует изучения с учетом влияния гидрографического фактора из-за их тесной связи с функционированием амударьинских и сырдарьинских дельтовых протоков. В древней дельте Сырдарьи выделяются четыре системы протоков: Инкардарья, Жанадарья, Кувадарья и Пракувадарья. Установлено, что южная, Инкардарьинская система русел и самая северная – Пракувадарьинская, функционировали уже в эпоху неолита и бронзы. В раннем железном веке на территории древней Сырдарьинской дельты расселяются сакские племена. Во второй половине I тыс. до н.э. режим обводнения южных дельтовых протоков меняется. Вероятно, уже в середине I тыс. до н.э. отмирают некоторые участки водотока в среднем течении Инкардарьи, прежде всего в южном ее русле. В это же время формируется более выпрямленное широтное русло Жанадарьи. В южной части дельты, на широтных руслах Жанадарьи и старицах Инкардарьи, создаются благоприятные условия для формирования оседлой земледельческо-скотоводческой культуры, хозяйство которой основывалось на отгонном скотоводстве и ирригационном земледелии. Такой культурой явилась ширикратская археологическая культура, сложившаяся, по мнению исследователей, на основе культуры сакского населения. Наряду с этим ее формирование шло под влиянием древнеземледельческих культур Средней Азии.

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### Introduction

For many centuries, Eastern and Southeastern Aral Region has been an important territory of constant cultural contacts between the pastoralists of the Great Eurasian Steppe belt and the farmers of the southern regions of Central Asia. This region was the traditional wintering ground of pastoralist and semi-pastoralist tribes, located at the crossroads of historical people's movement routes, important migration routes, and trade routes. Favorable physical, geographical, and climatic features had helped the development of various economic and cultural species in this area. The conditions of sustainable life of various peoples were formed here, which is fully reflected in the



archaeological data [Levina 1997: 3]. This led Sergey P. Tolstov to call the Southeastern Aral Region “the Aral knot of ethnogenesis” as early as the 1940s [Tolstov 1948: 308–310].

The alluvial plain adjacent to the Aral Sea from the east and southeast, as well as the Amu Darya delta plain, were formed because of the activity of one of the two great Central Asian rivers, the Syr Darya. The delta of the Syr Darya plain exceeds the Amu Darya one and a half times in area and is a huge triangle stretched in the latitudinal direction. In the east and northeast, the plain is bounded by the modern Syr Darya River, and in the west by the Aral Sea. In the south-west, it joins the northern Akcha Darya delta of the Amu Darya. The southern boundary of the Syr Darya delta is the high bedrock sands of the Northern Kyzylkum Desert [Vainberg 1997: 28].

During the course of the numerous channels of the Syr Darya delta, alluvium accumulated in the plain section, resulting in the migration of ancient channels, and certain sections of the delta were periodically drained [Levina 1998: 42]. Up until the beginning of irrigation, the Syr Darya delta was a huge area with many lakes and swamps, with large and small channels winding among them (pic. 1). The water slowly flowed down the northwest in a very wide front. The delta plains gently dropped from east to west - the absolute height difference of just under fifty meters [Andrianov 1969: 187–188].

The main and largest archaeological sites in the lower reaches of the Syr Darya were discovered in the 1940s and 1950s during road, foot, and air routes on the ancient channels of the Zhana Darya and Inkar Darya, and on the channel channels of the Kuvan Darya and Eski-Daryalyk. Most of the objects were recorded during the air route in the fall of 1946 [Vakturskaya 1952: 631–632]. In 1957–1962, the route detachments of Sergey P. Tolstov, and the archaeological detachment of

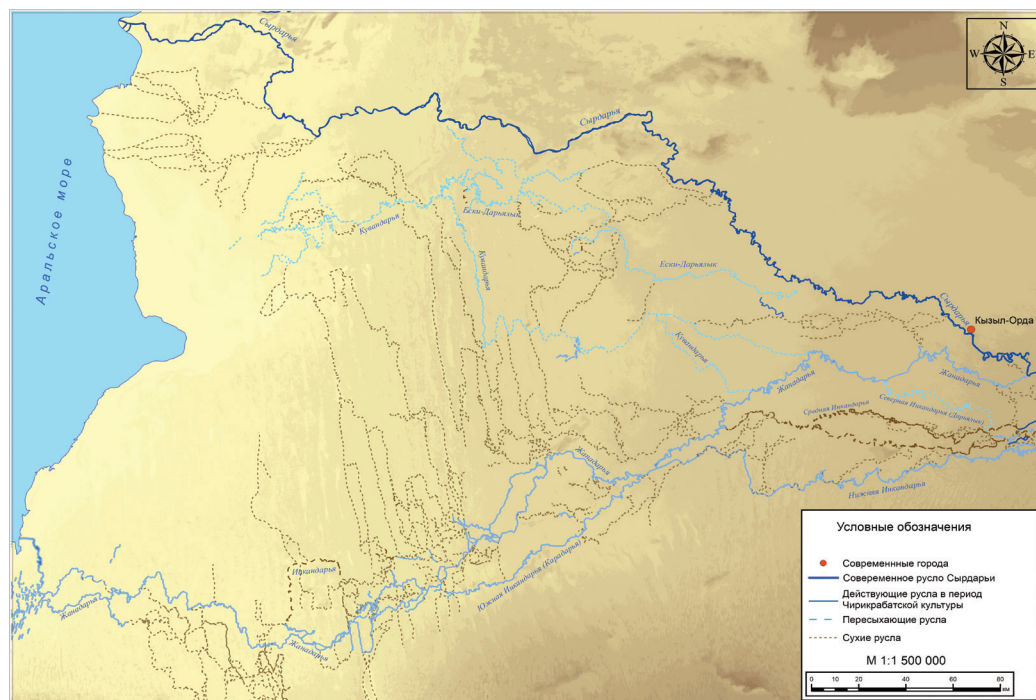


Fig. 1. Map of the Syrdarya Delta (after: E.Kazizov)  
1-сур. Сырдария сағаларының картасы (Е.Казизов бойынша)  
Рис. 1. Карта Сырдарьинской дельты (по: Е.Казизов)



Boris V. Andrianov worked in the ancient Syr Darya Lake. Excavations of the two largest sites of the ancient period in the lower reaches of the Syr Darya, i.e., the sites of Chirik Rabat and Babish-mola, began in 1957 [Tolstov, Vorobeva, Rapoport 1960: 23–61]. In 1958–1961, excavations at these sites were continued, besides the research of the Uigarak and Tagisken cemeteries, as well as the Balandy Settlement [Tolstov, Zhdanko, Itina 1963: 32–33]. In 1961–1962, the geomorphological group headed by Aleksandra S. Kes' participated in the work of the Chorasmian Expedition. At that time, they surveyed already-known sites and discovered some new ones, especially large settlements in the upper and middle reaches of Inkar Darya and Zhana Darya.

As part of this work, a topographic plan of the site as well as its plan based on a visual survey were taken. In 1966, the Syr Darya team of the Chorasmian Expedition, led by Aleksandra S. Kes', together with the staff of the Institute of Geophysics of the Academy of Sciences of the USSR, studied the sites in the middle and lower Syr Darya. In 1968, the medieval sites of the eastern Syr Darya delta (the upper and middle reaches of the Inkar Darya and Zhana Darya) were studied by a separate team of the Chorasmian Expedition led by Nina N. Vakturskaya, and a stratigraphic pile was made at the ancient Asanas Settlement. The route study of the ancient Syr Darya delta was resumed by the Chirik Rabat archaeological expedition in 2005–2010. Over the course of several years, the archaeological sites discovered in the 1950s and 1960s have been re-examined, new sites have been identified, and new objects have been discovered.

All these studies have revealed many archaeological sites from different historical periods, from the Neolithic to the late Middle Ages, in the ancient mines of the Syr Darya. The data obtained allow us to reconstruct, with a greater or lesser degree of probability, the history and dynamics of human development in the South-Eastern Aral Sea Region.

## Materials and methods

Within the ancient Syr Darya delta, there are four systems of channels: the Inkar Darya, the Zhana Darya, the Kuvan Darya, and the Prakuvan Darya (or Eski-Daryalyk), which are the subject of this study (pic. 1). They diverge radially from the Syr Darya riverbed to the south of Kyzylorda. Complex studies have shown that the southern Inkar Darya channel system and the northernmost Prakuvan Darya channel system functioned in the Neolithic and Bronze Age. The earliest archaeological sites in the Eastern Aral Sea region belong to the Paleolithic Age. The sites of that time were found north of the modern Syr Darya riverbed, but they do not relate directly to the ancient watercourses of the Syr Darya [Vinogradov 1981: 90–91]. During the Neolithic Age, groups of Celteminarians settled along the banks of the delta channels and migrated to the lower Syr Darya from the delta areas of the Amu Darya. Now, more than four dozen Stone Age sites have been discovered in the lower Syr Darya. Most of the sites are concentrated on the modern riverbed and in the basin of the ancient northern Syr Darya channels. The most famous of them are Kosmola 1-6, Talas 1 in the northern part of the Syr Darya delta. In the western part of the delta, in the Zhalpak tract, a cluster of Celteminarian sites has been recorded, and several of them, Zhalpak 1, 2, 4, and 6, have been reconnoissed and lifting material collected. In most cases, stone tools are made of quartz, which is characteristic of the Neolithic complex of the Eastern Aral Sea Region [Vinogradov 1981: 94; Tolstov 1962: 79; Vinogradov 1963: 96]. Additionally, Late Celteminarian sites were found on the northeast coast of the Aral Sea, in the vicinity of Saksaulskaya railway station [Formozov 1949]. The inhabitants of these camps were the same fishermen and hunters as their contemporaries and, presumably, the tribesmen who inhabited the lower reaches of the Amu Darya no later than the early 4th millennium B.C. The archaeological complex obtained because of the examination of these sites is identical to the Celteminarian from the excavations of Neolithic settlements in Khwarazm (Chorasmia). It may be noted that the widespread use of quartzite in the manufacture of stone microlites was a distinctive feature. The most intensive development of the old rivers of the Syr Darya refers

to the late stage of the Celteminarian culture, late 3rd–early 2<sup>nd</sup> millennia B.C., when groups of Celteminarians gradually began to master the skills of distant pastoralism [Tazhekeev 2012: 102–108].

The number of studied sites of the Bronze Age is much higher, but they were located mainly in the southern valleys of the ancient Syr Darya. The sites and settlements of the Bronze Age (mostly Late Bronze Age), such as Burly 1-3, Bayan 2,3, Yerimbet, Kok-Sengir, Marjan 1,2, Zyaket, Tas 1-3, are located both in the native sands of the Northern Kyzylkum Desert and on the banks of the channels. According to recent data, the greatest number of sites, or perhaps short-lived settlements of the Bronze Age, are concentrated in the upper and middle reaches of the Inkar Darya at the foot of the Kok-Sengir highlands, as well as around Mount Bayan [Tazhekeev 2014: 25–28]. In recent years, sites of the Bronze Age have been found on the northern meridional channel of the Inkar Darya, Yerimbet-Jag [Tazhekeev 2010: 438–400], as well as northeast of the modern mouth of the Syr Darya [Tazhekeev, Ongar, Shoraev 2013: 167–170]. Most of these sites were pastoral, but a few settlements were also found. In the Middle Inkar Darya, not far from the Tagisken cemetery, on some of these sites, which were clearly sedentary, in addition to pottery of the Late Bronze Age, sandstone grates and ceramic slags have been found. At one of the settlements (see: 6, 1961, Chorasman Archaeological and Ethnographic Expedition), the remains of sedentary dwellings and faint traces of an irrigation system taken away from a large channel that passed near are clearly traced [Tolstov 1962: 80; Andrianov 1969: 189]. The Late Bronze Age pastoral stand at Inkar Darya is apparently associated with the development of cattle-breeding groups of Amirbad from the southern Akcha Darya, where the water level began to decline sharply in the early 1<sup>st</sup> millennium B.C. As a result, some of the semi-nomadic pastoralists in the northeastern outskirts of the Far East moved north to the Syr Darya delta. In this area, cattle were provided with sufficient water as well as pasture [Itina 1977: 193; Itina 1998: 88–89]. It is very possible that the traces of irrigation identified in the Inkar Darya basin are also associated with the advance of the Amirabad population, who are known to have engaged in primitive farming on the Amu Darya channels [Vinogradov 1986: 197].

Thus, the settlement of the Syr Darya delta during the Late Bronze Age was primarily associated with the migration of the Amirabad cattle-breeding groups from Khwarazm (areas of the southern Akcha Darya delta). This movement was caused by the gradual drying up of the channels in the Akcha Darya delta. Its population remained exclusively agricultural in the deltas, but as can be supposed, due to the change in the water regime and the reduction of the areas suitable for farming, semi-nomadic pastoralists stood out in this environment. In search of new pasture lands, they rushed beyond the already developed southern Akcha Darya delta to the north and northeast, to the territory of the lower Syr Darya. This process is documented by numerous pastoral camps in the northern Akcha Darya delta and on the Inkar Darya river channels [Itina 1998: 88]. The cattlemen did not have to traverse the vast deserts; at that time, the northern Akcha Darya delta related to the broad, branching Inkar Darya delta to the northeast of the Beltau Mountains [Andrianov 1969: 187; Levina 2000: 125]. Note that the route has long been mastered by pastoralist tribes. In ancient times, the Eastern Aral Sea Region was one of the most important zones of constant cultural and ethnic contact between the farmers of Great Eurasia and the farmers of the ancient regions of Central Asia. There is every reason to believe that it was along this route, along the eastern bank of the Akcha Darya delta at the beginning of the 2<sup>nd</sup> millennium B.C., that contacts between the population of the lower Amu Darya and the pastoral population of the southern Trans-Ural took place [Itina 1998: 80]. At the same time, according to the data obtained by past and present archaeological research on the sites and long-term settlements of the Bronze Age in the Syr Darya delta, we can say that the processes were apparently more complex. In the archaeological complexes of these settlements, along with Tazabagyab and Amirabad pottery, there are enough Andronovo ceramics, mostly of Fedorovo



stage, and, to a lesser extent, Alakul pottery [Tazhekeev 2010: 439; Baipakov 2012: 114]. This indicates that the migrants were not only from the west, from the Amu Darya delta, but also from the north, that is, from the regions of present-day Central and Northeastern Qazaqstan and maybe from the southern Trans-Urals.

The most famous and investigated site of the Late Bronze Age of the lower Syr Darya is the burial site (cemetery) of the northern Tagisken (pic. 2), which is located on the radiation of the Inkar Darya riverbed in the middle part of its course. Several large funerary structures, i.e., mausoleums, have been excavated at the site, dating from the 9<sup>th</sup> to 8<sup>th</sup> centuries B.C. They were built of rectangular raw bricks - 54 x 28 x 10-12 cm; 48 x 32 x 10-11 cm. In the layout of the mausoleums, a square and a circle are quite cleverly combined. For the most part, it is a square outer contour into which is inscribed a circle formed by square brick columns connected with each other by clay-coated frame walls. As a result, there was an outer circular bypass corridor. Inside the circle was a square central chamber, which was also formed by brick columns connected by frame walls. Thus, a layout was created, including a square of outer walls and two circular corridors encompassing the square of the same central chamber. There is reason to suppose that these mausoleums were built with cylindrical brick and wood, framed by a square inner fence wall. The burial chambers performed a corpse-burial ceremony, during which the entire temple was burned. According to experts, this ritual envisaged not only the burial of the deceased in the central room, but also the creation of a fire ring around him. Researchers believe that the planning schemes of the Tagisken mausoleum can be interpreted as a microcosm, a miniature reproduction of the structure of the universe, i.e., the earth and the sky, in the form of a square and a circle with a common center. The most important component of the funeral rites by which burials were performed in the graves of the Northern Tagisken was to burn not only the body of the deceased but the entire funerary structure. This action, apparently, at the level of the microcosm reflected the great world fire called to renew existence, to return the world at the end of the centuries to its beginning [Lelekov 1976: 7–17]. According to the researchers at the site, chiefs were buried in the mausoleums. Around each of them were grouped more modest-scale constructions, which were rectangular fences also built of mud bricks. Inside the fence, there was a grave pit. The central chamber of the mausoleum, and sometimes in the bypass corridor, contained the funerary inventory - pottery, bronze implements, and bronze and gold jewelry. In the process of archaeological excavations in northern Tagisken an interesting archaeological complex of pottery was obtained. It combines the traditions of the steppe bronze cultures (Andronovo - Fedorovo variant) and then the Dandybay-Begazin archaeological cultures of present-day Central Qazaqstan and components that certainly resonate with the southern agricultural civilization (Bactria - Margiana Archaeological Complex). The collection contains numerous items typical of the Amirabad Late Bronze Age culture. In addition, some vessels and ornaments are very similar to the ceramics of Zamaraevo type and, to a lesser extent, to the dishes of Karasuk culture [Itina, Yablonskii 2001: 93–94].

In the Northern Tagisken cemetery, the final stage of the Bronze Age in the Syr Darya delta is archaeologically most vividly represented. The mixed typology of the ceramic complex is a phenomenon of the era. The reason for this is the differently directed migrations of the population groups of the Eurasian steppe zone, which intensified due to the ecological crisis that caused serious damage to the traditional economic system of the pastoral-agricultural communities at the turn of the 1<sup>st</sup> millennium B.C. The materials of the Bronze Age sites in the Southern Aral Sea Region, especially the Northern Tagisken cemetery, seem to fully illustrate the complex ethnocultural processes of interaction between different variants of steppe cultures, which took place in the Lower Syr Darya in the early 1<sup>st</sup> millennium B.C. It is necessary to assume, not without participation of ancient farmers of southern regions of Central Asia [Itina, Yablonskii 2001: 101–109]. Considering recent research, it seems possible to ask about the creation in the

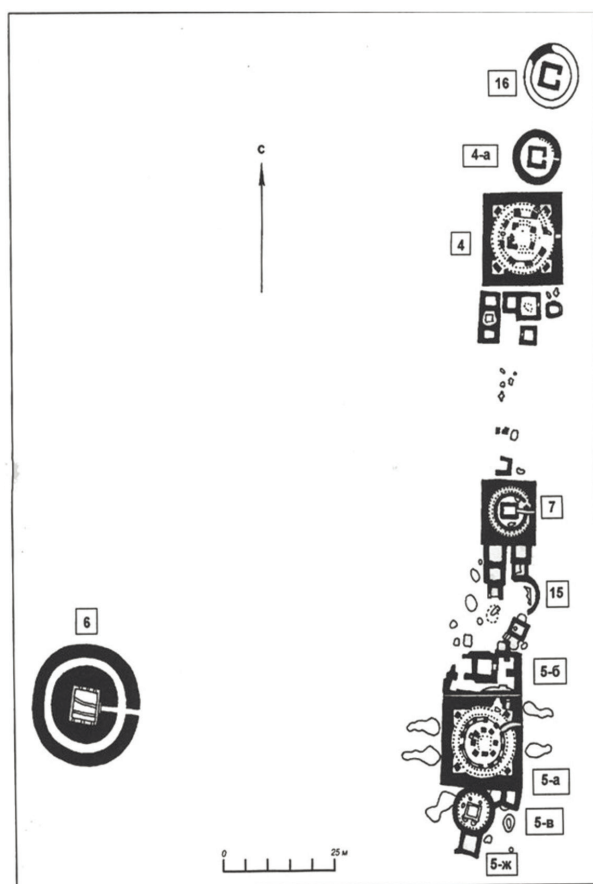


Fig. 2. Northern Tagisken cemetery.  
a) Aerial photography (after:  
Zh.Utubayeva); b) Plan of the site [Itina,  
Yablonsky 2001]

2-сур. Солтүстік Түгіскен қорымы.  
а) Аэрофото (Ж.Өтебаев бойынша);  
б) Ескерткіш жоспары [Itina, Yablonsky  
2001]

Рис. 2. Могильник Северный Таги-  
скен. а) Аэрофото (по: Ж.Утубаева);  
б) План памятника [Itina, Yablonsky  
2001]

**Б**

southern part of the ancient Syr Darya of a kind of syncretic Tagisken archaeological heritage of the Late Bronze Age. In any case, the discovery of ground burials in the hole under the barrow mound with the ceramics of Tagisken type on the Sengir-Tam hilltop gives reason to believe that besides Northern Tagisken there are other monuments of this circle in the Middle Inkar Darya area [Tazhekeev, Darmenov 2012: 240–247].

In the second quarter of the first millennium B.C., significant changes occurred in the hydrography of the Syr Darya delta; many sections of the Inkar Darya began to die off, and a more straightened channel of the Zhana Darya was formed in its place [Tazhekeev 2013: 65–67]. At the same time, the flow in the Syr Darya delta did not stop, and it was still attractive to ancient pastoralists [Itina, Yablonskii 1997: 82].

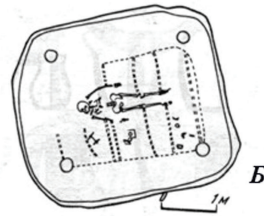
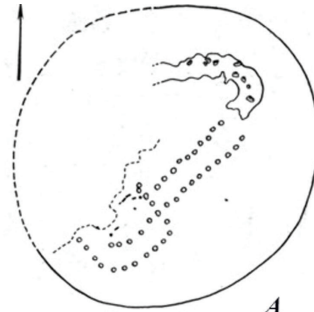
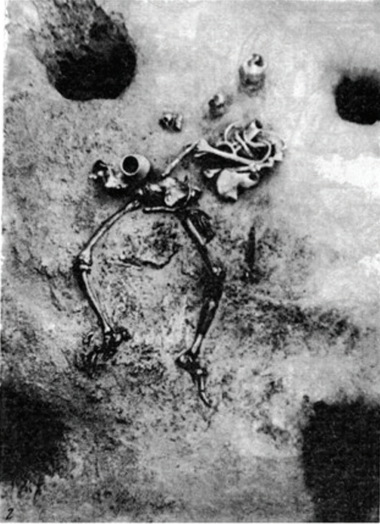
In the early Iron Age, in the 7<sup>th</sup> to 5<sup>th</sup> centuries B.C., the Saka dispersed into the territory of the ancient Syr Darya. There is no evidence of direct links between these cultures and the Late Bronze Age cultures of the Southern Aral Sea Region. To a certain extent, the continuity between the Saka of the Southern Aral Sea Region as a whole and the population of the Bronze Age can be traced in the analysis of the funerary structures and burial rites. This is especially evident in the funeral rites of the Southern Tagisken, Uigarak, Sengir-tam 2<sup>1</sup> (pic. 3) cemeteries and, partly, in the Sakar-chaq burials in the territory of the Amu Darya delta, where one can find parallels with the burial rites of the Northern Tagisken [Yablonskii 2004: 47–48].

According to archaeological materials, two related cultures of the Saka circle and two variants of the same circle culture coexisted in the Southeastern Aral Sea Region. Noting the unity of the material cultures of the studied sites, researchers conclude that in these areas, the Saka inhabitants were divided into tribes. Some Sakas burned their dead in “cinder mounds,” some made cremations in ancient horizons, and then mounds were poured over the fire; some Sakas buried their dead in graves. It is not excluded that different funeral rites reflected not so much ethnic but social differences in the Saka society [Levina 1979: 190].

More than 70 sites from the Early Iron Age can now be found in the southern region of the Syr Darya. Among them stand out very peculiar burial sites, called in the archaeological literature “slag mounds”. They are recorded in a large area (80 km downstream of Zhana Darya) from Sengir-tam in the west to the vicinity of the medieval Kum-Qala Settlement in the east [Tazhekeev, Darmenov 2012: 242]. These were rounded structures (8–10 m in diameter), the bases of which were surrounded by a ring of blocks of pottery slag. One of them was excavated, barrow №4, which is in the northeast of one of the settlements in the Middle Inkar Darya (search of 18 Chorasmian Archaeological and Ethnographic Expedition). As a result of the research, the peculiarities of the structure of the funerary structure were found. The height of the mound is 1.4 m from the level of the modern takyr, the diameter inside the cinder fence is 10 m. The slag boulders were installed pre-dugged sub-square with a depth of 20 cm and a width of 1.2 m. In the center of the structure, almost on the surface of the ancient takyr, which was 20 cm higher than the modern one, a strongly calcined spot was found with dimensions of 5 x 4 m. It seems that this is where the cadaveric burial took place. This is evidenced by numerous small cremated human bones and fragments of a small, molded vessel. The fence was built over the structure, and the space inside the fence was filled in with soil after the ritual [Tolstov, Zhdanko, Itina 1963: 48–49; Levina 1979: 180]. Settlements were discovered in the vicinity of the barrows, which were originally attributed to the same period as the slag barrows and therefore to the same archaeological culture. However, later, this assumption was not confirmed. According to the lifting material, these settlements date back to the 4<sup>th</sup> to 2<sup>nd</sup> centuries B.C., when the Chirik Rabat archaeological culture was widespread in this territory [Tazhekeev, Darmenov 2012: 246–247].

<sup>1</sup> The Sengir-tam 2 cemetery, discovered by the Chirik Rabat archaeological expedition in 2014, is located 40 km southwest of the Tagisken cemetery





B



Fig. 3. Sites of the Early Iron Age. a) Southern Tagisken [Itina, Yablonskii 1997]; b) Uigarak [Vishnevskaya 1973]; c) Sengir-tam 2 [Kurmankulov, Utebaeva 2019]  
3-сур. Ерте темір ғасырының ескерткіші. а) Оңтүстік Түгіскен [Itina, Yablonskii 1997]; б) Үйғарак [Vishnevskaya 1973]; с) Сеңгір-там 2 [Kurmankulov, Utebaeva 2019]  
Рис. 3. Памятники раннего железного века. А – Южный Тагискен [Itina, Yablonskii 1997]; Б – Уйғарак [Vishnevskaya 1973]; В – Сенгир-там 2 [Kurmankulov, Utebaeva 2019]

The most common lifting material on the sites of the “slag mounds” culture is pottery. The vast majority were locally produced. These are mostly flat-bottomed vessels with coarse hand molding and campfire firing. The outer surface of the dishes was red or red brown in color, and some fragments still show traces of a light engobe coating. Most of the pottery is undecorated. There is not much variety in the set of shapes of tableware. Most of them are pots of various sizes, hemispherical bowls, and pans. There are also small pots that have a cylindrical spout drain. All this pottery is close to Saka ceramics of various regions of Central Asia and, firstly, to materials from burial mounds of the lower reaches of Syr Darya [Vishnevskaya 1973: 74–80; Itina, Yablonskii 1997: 38–40]. Researchers of the “slag mounds” culture have no doubts about its Saka belonging; these conclusions are based on the analysis of the inventory. Indeed, the arrowheads found in the settlements, with good reason, can be attributed to the circle of Saka antiquities and find numerous analogies on a vast territory from Mongolia to the Southern Urals [Levina 1979: 181]. However, the arrows themselves, like the pottery in this case, are not ethnic indicators. The absence in the archaeological complex of the “slag mounds” culture of the “animal style” objects, horse harness, so typical for the Saka cultures of Central Asia as a whole and the Southern Aral Sea Region, attracts attention. At the same time, the appearance of the material culture (pottery, arrow set, a small amount of quartzite products) is close to the Saka culture of the lower Syr Darya, known from excavations of the cemeteries in Southern Tagisken and Uigarak.

In the next period, the second half of the first millennium B.C., the regime of the bypass of the southern channels of the delta changed again. Apparently, already in the middle of the 1<sup>st</sup> millennium B.C., some areas in the middle course of the Inkar Darya, primarily in its southern channel, died out. Part of the sections of the earlier Inkar Darya riverbed turned into oxbows and lakes [Andrianov 1969: 110; Kurmankulov, Utubaev 2017: 7–14]. This created a broader latitudinal line for the Zhana Darya. It is evident that during that period, the Syr Darya water did not reach the northern Akcha Darya delta, and the Zhana Darya flowed towards the Aral Sea via the northern meridional channels (Ashinansay, Dayrabay, Kamektinsay), where cattlemen camps and individual burial sites were discovered [Vainberg 1999: 54; Tazhekeev 2013: 65–66]

Consequently, in the southern part of the delta, particularly in the latitudinal channels of the Zhana Darya and in the old rivers of the Inkar Darya, conditions were quite suitable for the formation of a sedentary agricultural-pastoral culture, the basis of which was pastoralism and irrigated farming. Materials derived from the study of ancient sites in the Middle Zhana Darya basin cover the period from the end of the 5<sup>th</sup> to 2<sup>nd</sup> century B.C., and several essential common features are combined into one compact group, which in scholarly publications from the early 1990s was called the Chirik Rabat archeological culture [Vainberg, Levina 1992: 47].

There are about 200 known cultural sites: fortresses, fortified cities, unfortified settlements, burial grounds, or cemeteries. Undoubtedly, the Chirik Rabat culture arises from the local Saka cultures of previous periods [Vainberg 1999: 261]. Certainly, it was strongly influenced by ancient agricultural cultures of Central Asia, which is eloquently proved by archaeological materials obtained during excavations of Chirik Rabat and Babish-mola settlements and fortresses (fig. 4), as well as cemeteries [Tolstov 1962: 136–204; Vainberg, Levina 1993: 91–102; Kurmankulov, Utubaev 2017: 191–211].

## Discussion

This is the first, the earliest agricultural culture in the lower Syr Darya, as evidenced by the remains of irrigation structures identified by archaeological research of the Chorasmian Archaeological and Ethnographic Expedition. The constant flooding of the southern channels of the Syr Darya delta ended in the 2nd century B.C. By the end of this century, all the forts and settlements of the Chirik Rabat culture were abandoned and the population left these areas.





A



Fig. 4. a) the Chirik-Rabat Settlement (after: Zh.Utubaeva, E.Kazizova); b) the Babish-mola Settlement (after: Zh.Utubaeva)

4-сур. а) Шірік-Рабат қалашығы (Ж.Өтебаев, Е.Казизов бойынша); б) Бәбіш мола қалашығы (Ж.Өтебаев бойынша)

Рис. 4. а) городище Чирік-рабат (по: Ж.Утубаева, Е.Казизова); б) городище Бабиш-мола (по: Ж.Утубаева)



It should be noted that the Chirik Rabat culture was not directly continued in the Syr Darya or other regions of Central Asia. The later stages of the history and development of the Syr Darya delta associated with other areas of this region (Kuvan Darya, Eski-Daryalyk) and, as we can assume, with other ethnic groups, and therefore are beyond the scope of the proposed study.

## Conclusions

Studies show that the ancient formation and development of the hydrographic grid in the Easte Studies show that the ancient formation and development of the hydrographic grid in the Eastern Aral Sea Region are natural factors. They significantly affect the processes of birth and destruction of archaeological cultures and the type of economic activity of the bearers of their cultures. Natural preconditions for irrigation emerged in the region during the study period.

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## Sacred space of the Jochid Ulus: Saraychik and Barchinkent<sup>1</sup>

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**Keywords:** Jochid Ulus; Golden Horde; Saraychik; Barchinkent; Kyshqala; written sources; archaeological research

**Тірек сөздер:** Жошы ұлысы; Алтын Орда; Сарайшық; Барчинкент; Қышқала; жазбаша деректер; археологиялық зерттеулер

**Ключевые слова:** Улус Джучи; Золотая Орда; Сарайчик; Барчинкент; Кышқала; письменные источники; археологические исследования

The study of the history of the emergence and development of medieval cities in Kazakhstan remains one of the most difficult and important tasks of modern research. A comprehensive study of hillforts allows us to determine both the general features of urban development and the peculiarities of the formation of individual urban settlements. The cities of Saraychik on the Ural (Zhaiq) River and Barchinkent in the lower reaches of the Syr Darya River were not only large commercial and economic, but also spiritual centers of the Jochid Ulus. Having developed as cities during the Mongol period, they played an important role in the political life of the Golden Horde. The fate of Saraychik and Barchinkent is closely connected with the general course of the history of this state. Written sources and materials from many years of archaeological research indicate that the heyday of both cities coincides with the time of rising, and the beginning of decline and desolation – with the beginning of the collapse of the Golden Horde. The enthronement of khans of Berke, Janibek and other representatives of Juchids in Saraychik, and then the emergence of a necropolis where the remains of several rulers of the Golden Horde had been buried, led to the beginning of the sacralization of the place. By the 14th century, Barchinkent became famous as a city where many preachers of Islam and Sharia scholars lived, who played a significant role in spreading Islam among the population of the Jochid Ulus. Excavations in Saraychik and Barchinkent (Kyshqala hillfort) made it possible to identify the location and historical names of cities, the time of their origin and growth, as well as to determine the features of functioning as centers of international trade, crafts and culture.

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## Жошы ұлысының киелі мекендері: Сарайшық және Баршынкент

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Қазақстанның ортағасырлық қалаларының пайда болу және даму тарихын зерделеу қазіргі заманғы зерттеулердің ең күрделі және маңызды міндеттерінің бірі болып қала береді. Ескерткіштерді кешенді зерттеу қалалардың дамуының жалпы ерекшеліктерін де, жекелеген қалалық елді мекендердің қалыптасу ерекшеліктерін де анықтауға мүмкіндік береді. Сырдарияның төменгі ағысындағы Баршынкент және Жайық өзендеріндегі Сарайшық қалалары Жошы ұлысының ірі сауда-экономикалық қана емес, рухани орталықтары болды. Моңғол кезеңінде қала ретінде қалыптасқан осы қалалар Алтын Орданың саяси өмірінде маңызды рөл атқарды. Сарайшық және Барчинкент қалаларының тағдыры осы мемлекет тарихының жалпы бағытымен тығыз байланысты. Жазба деректері мен көпжылдық археологиялық зерттеулердің материалдары екі қаланың да гүлденуі уақыты мен құлдырау тағдыры Алтын Орданың құрылу және ыдырай тарихымен сәйкес келетінін көрсетеді. Берке, Жәнібек және басқа да Жошы ұлысы хандарының Сарайшықта таққа отыруы, және Алтын Орданың бірқатар билеушілерінің мазары орналасқан

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қорымның пайда болуы қаланың киелі мекенге айналуына себеп болды. Барчинкент XIV ғасырда исламды уағызшы және шарифат таратушы көптеген білгірлер өмір сүрген қала ретінде танымал болды. Олар Жошы ұлысының халқы арасында мұсылман дінінің таралуында маңызды рөл атқарды. Сарайшық пен Қышқаладағы (Барчинкент) қазба жұмыстары қалалардың орналасқан жері мен тарихи атауларын, олардың пайда болу және даму уақытын анықтауға, сондай-ақ халықаралық сауда, қолөнер және мәдениет орталықтары болғандығын анықтауға мүмкіндік берді.

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## Сакральное пространство Улуса Джучи: Сарайшык и Баршынкент

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Изучение истории возникновения и развития средневековых городов Казахстана остается одной из наиболее сложных и важных задач современных исследований. Комплексное изучение памятников позволяет определить как общие черты развития городов, так и особенности формирования отдельных городских поселений. Города Сарайчик на реке Жайык и Барчинкент в низовьях Сырдарьи являлись не только крупными торгово-экономическими, но и духовными центрами Улуса Джучи. Сложившись как города в монгольский период, они сыграли важную роль в политической жизни Золотой Орды. Судьба городов Сарайчик и Барчинкент тесно связана с общим ходом истории этого государства. Данные письменных источников и материалы многолетних археологических исследований свидетельствуют, что расцвет обоих городов совпадает со временем подъема, а начало упадка и запустения – с началом распада Золотой Орды. Интронизация в Сарайчике ханов Берке, Жанибека и других Джучидов, а затем возникновение некрополя, где упокоены останки ряда правителей Золотой Орды, обусловили начало сакрализации места. Барчинкент к XIV в. приобрел известность как город, где проживали многие проповедники ислама и знатоки шариата, сыгравшие заметную роль в распространении мусульманской религии среди населения Улуса Джучи. Раскопки в Сарайчике и городище Кышқале (Барчинкент) позволили идентифицировать местонахождение и исторические названия городов, время их возникновения и роста, а также определить особенности функционирования как центров международной торговли, ремесла и культуры.

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### Introduction

The historical literature says that the invasion of Genghis Khan's army into the territory of Central Asia and Qazaqstan not only led to political and economic decline, but also stopped the cultural, social and ethnic development of many peoples of the region for long years [Qozybaev 1998: 89; Qozybaev 1993]. Urban centers were destroyed, and urban life came to a standstill for some time. However, if we look at the information from written sources and the results of archaeological research, the cities destroyed on the territory of Qazaqstan were restored after a short time, and very soon turned not only into larger political-economic centers, but also into commercial and cultural ones. Among them are Otyrar, Sayram, Sutkent, Arkuk, Sozaq and Sygnaq.

To date, the Golden Horde cultural layer of these urban centers has not been thoroughly studied. Several cities that were part of the Jochid Ulus were quickly relocated and rebuilt. The location of medieval cities such as Sauran, Sozaq, Sutkent, and Arkuk during the Mongol invasion and the Golden Horde period was different, as demonstrated by recent archaeological studies. Thus, Sauran, destroyed by the Mongols, was located on the site of Qaratobe. The 13<sup>th</sup> century marked the end of intensive urban life here, according to archaeological research at this site. Whereas the cultural layer of the Sauran settlement, located near Qaratobe, coincides with the eras of the Golden Horde and the Qazaq Khanate [Smagulov 2010: 7–11].

The same picture is observed in Sozaq, located in the northern foothills of Qaratau. If in the pre-Mongol period this city was located on the Tarsatobe site on the northeastern outskirts of the present-day village of Sozaq, then in the Golden Horde and the Qazaq Khanate eras it was relocated to the southern outskirts of the present-day Orkakpa village [Taleev 2021: 33, 39]. It also became known that the cities Sutkent and Arkuk in the middle reaches of the Syr Darya changed their location three times in their two-thousand-year history. During the Golden Horde period they were localized in different places. The cultural layers studied here reach several meters [Taleev 2022: 61–62, 65–66]. Even though the Mongol invasion in this region slowed down the urban development, their subsequent inclusion in the empire contributed to their revival and new progress. Along with those numerous cities on the territory of Qazaqstan, which, having become part of the Jochid Ulus, changed their location and began to develop rapidly, new cities were founded, which soon turned into large trading and cultural centers. Saraychik and Barchinkent are cities that could be considered among them. These cities, which arose after the founding of the Jochid Ulus, in a short time became the major trade and cultural centers of the new state and played an important role in its history.

Our article is intended to demonstrate the significance of these two cities in the development of the Golden Horde and their role in its history. The information and results presented in the article are based on a study of primary and secondary written sources and archaeological materials on the history of Qazaqstan and the Golden Horde.

## Methods

To write an article on this topic, we have collected and analyzed some written sources. For the scientific analysis of the results of studies of medieval cities and burial places in their environs, the localization of mausoleums, their descriptions and chronology, we used comparative historical methods. When determining the locations of cities, we used information extracted from written sources. To determine the age of the medieval settlement of Qyshqala/Kyshkala (Barchinkent), archaeological excavations were carried out in 2018–23 and a special stratigraphic section was made. The use of methods included conducting archaeological exploration, recording and mapping sites, clarifying geographical coordinates, and preparing scientific photographic documentation.

## Materials

In preparing the material base of the article, a special role has been assigned to written sources. For this purpose, we divided the data from sources related to Saraychik and Barchinkent into two categories.

*The first group of sources.* Ibn Battuta (1304-1369), Mirza Muhammad Haydar (1499-1551), Ótemish Hajji (1<sup>st</sup> half of the 16<sup>th</sup> century), Qadyrgali-bek Zhalaiyr (ca. 1530-1605), Abu al-Ghazi Bahadur (1603-64), and others wrote about medieval Saraychik. Ótemish Hajji linked important political events in Ulug Ulus' history with Saraychik, such as the arrival of Berke Khan (1257-66) in the city [Utemish-khadzhi 1992: 97]. According to Mirza Muhammad Haydar:

*Buryndyq Khan lived at Saraychuk, and Qasim Khan, wishing to be far away from him, moved to the frontiers of Moghulistan. He made Qaratal his winter quarters, and, early in the spring, chose to return to his original area [Dulati 1999: 324].*

Abu al-Ghazi Bahadur wrote more about the role of medieval Saraychik. Describing the reign of Berke Khan, he says:

*Berke Khan, now a khan, arranged a grand feast, gave out many gifts, and approved the inheritances that Batu Khan had given to all his older and younger brothers. He sent great gifts to Qaan. After this, one day the Almighty God put love for Islam in the heart of Berke Khan, and he learned that his faith was untrue. It was like this: at one time Berke Khan went to the city*



*of Saraychik, founded by his elder brother. Here he saw a large caravan arriving from Bukhara* [Abilgazy 1992: 115; Abul Ghazi Baghdadur Khan 1996: 99].

Here we see that the city was presumed to be founded by Batu Khan (1209-55), and Saraychik was linked with the adoption of Islam by Berke Khan. Further, the author supplements the history of the city during the reign of the khans Toqtagu (Toqta, 1291-1312), Janibek (1342-57), and Berdibek (1357-59).

*Second group of sources.* This group contains primary sources written directly during the Golden Horde period of the existence of the cities in the lower reaches of the Syr Darya River and reporting on their location, names, and socio-political state. The source base of this article is supplemented by information from the description of Plano Carpini (1182-1252)'s journey to the Mongols in his work "History of the Mongols" [Shastina 1993: 41], as well as some data from Jamal al-Qarshi (1230-1315)'s work, who specially arrived in this region in 1273-74 to describe the history of Syr Darya cities and the local population [Jamal al-Qarshi 2005: 155], and also data from Rashid ad-Din (1247-1318), a historian of the early 14<sup>th</sup> century, about the territorial proximity of Barchanligkent and Jand [Rashid-ad-din 1952].

## Results

*Saraychik (Small Saray).* This is the only medieval site that has retained its original name to this day. The village of Sarayshyq is currently located on the place of its ruins (Fig. 1). The background of this city, which was constructed during Jochid Ulus' rule and became its main commercial and economic hub, is complex. There is a reason for this. In the 1940s, most of the city ruins were washed away by the waters of the Zhaiyq River. In the 1950s, Alkey Marghulan (1904-85) was the first archaeologist to conduct excavations in Saraychik, and even then, he recorded that only 1/3 of the settlement remained untouched by water and the central part of the cultural layer of the settlement was destroyed.

There are different opinions about the time when the city was founded. At one time, Sergey Tolstov (1907-76), who had once visited Saraychik, wrote that it was possible that Saksin, the capital of the Khazars, was located there. [Tolstov 1953: 304]. Alkey Marghulan also assumed that the city arose before the Mongol invasion [Zhumabaeva 2015: 15]. But no archaeological materials dating back to before the 13<sup>th</sup> century were found during excavations on the part of the settlement not destroyed by water. Thus, the opinion about the emergence of the city before the Mongol invasion was not confirmed.

In various sources the city is mentioned under the names Sarayjuk, Sarajuk, Saradzhik. According to Abu al-Ghazi Bahadur, the city was founded by Batu Khan's brother Berke Khan (1257-1266) [Abilgazy 1992: 115; Abul Ghazi 1996: 99].

The transcontinental caravan road connecting the West and the East passed through this city. Notes from traders and travelers about the direction of this road, a description of the goods transported and their price, and methods of transportation have been preserved to this day. For example, Hamdallah Qazwini (1281-ca.1350)'s travel notes show distances in farsakhs leading to individual points. Similar information may be found in the work of the Arab author al-Umari (1301-49) [Samashev, Kozhakov, Taleev 1998: 240].

The first mention of Saraychik is contained in the work of the Arab trader and traveler Ibn Battuta. Heading to Central Asia via Saray and Saraychik, he brought valuable information about the city. He wrote that in 'Sarayjuk' there were a bazaar, and a *zawiya* (dervish residence or "abode") for Sufi brothers, and that this city was located on the banks of the Great River (Zhaiyq), across which a pontoon bridge of boats was built, just like in Baghdad:

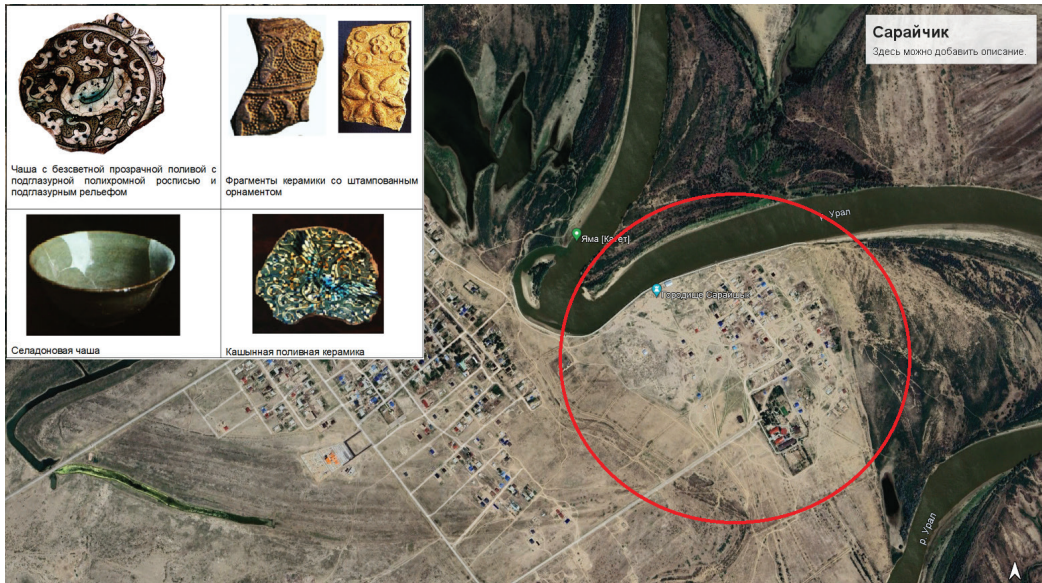


Fig. 1. Saraychik Site  
1-сур. Сарайшық қалашығы  
Рис. 1. Городище Сарайчик

*In this city there is a zawiya of a righteous Turkic elder, who is called ata, which means “father.” He entertained us in the zawiya and blessed us. We were also received by the Qadi of this city, whose name I no longer remember [Ibragimov 1988: 73].*

A Florentine merchant and politician, Francesco Pegolotti (1290–1347), in his work “Practica della mercatura” (‘Trading Practice’), written in 1338–42, reports that the journey from Saray to Saraychik by sea or river takes 8 days<sup>2</sup> [Zhumabaeva 2015: 18].

From its very foundation, Saraychik was at the epicenter of domestic and international events. Several khans of the Golden Horde were enthroned here. Berke Khan and his younger brother Tuqa Timur (13<sup>th</sup> century) made a great contribution to the rapid development of the city, especially to the increase in the number of public buildings. The active penetration of Islam, which began with the voluntary adoption of this religion by Berke Khan, during the reign of Uzbek Khan (1313–41) made Islam the state religion of the Golden Horde. This fact contributed to the spread of Muslim culture in the Qypchaq Steppe. Ötemish Hajji and Abu al-Ghazi Bahadur report that these events took place in Saraychik [Abul Ghazi 1996; Utemish-khadzhi 1992]. Here, in Saraychik, Janibek and Berke were proclaimed the khans of the Golden Horde. Information about the ruins of Saraychik can be found in the works of Johann Gustav Gerber (1690–1734), Peter Simon Pallas (1741–1811), Friedemann Göbel (1794–1851), Alexey Lyovshin (1798–1879) [Zhumabaeva 2015]. Russian historian and ethnographer Pyotr Rychkov (1712–77) writes about the burials of famous people in Saraychik:

<sup>2</sup> For relevant text fragments and a modern translation into Russian of the “Book of Description of Lands and Trade Measures” («Libro di divisamenti di paesi e di misure di mercatantie») or “Trading Practice” («La Pratica della Mercatura») by Francesco Balducci Pegolotti, see: Hautala, R. 2019. *V zemljah «Severnoj Tartarii»: Svedenija latinskih istochnikov o Zolotoj Orde v pravlenie hana Uzbeka (1313–1341) [In the Lands of “Northern Tartary”: Information from Latin Sources about the Golden Horde during the Reign of Uzbek Khan (1313–1341)].* Kazan: Marjani Institute of History of Tatarstan Academy of Sciences, 864–897 (in Russian). – (Editor’s note).

*Saraychik is the ghost of a majestic city on the Yaik River, 50 miles before reaching Guryev. There are still many tents (buildings) in the ground there to this day. There are also many tombs of famous people [Rychkov 1759: 513].*

Some Nogai beks and murzas were buried in Saraychik, as per popular folk stories and legends. According to one of the versions of the Edige epic, Toqtamysh Khan's head was buried there. The fact of the famous Qazaq khan Qasim to be buried in Saraychik is reported in the book of Qadyrgali-bek Zhalaiyr [Zhalaiyr 1997: 121]. However, the mausoleums of the khans have not survived to the day. According to Alexey Lyovshin and Nikolai Karamzin (1766-1826), in 1580, Russian Cossacks arrived in Saraychik along the Zhaiyq River, slaughtered the population of the city, plundered and destroyed the khan's graves with vandalism, and scattered bones:

*Could a place so favorable for robberies fail to lure the Cossacks? They went up the Urals in their boats, quickly attacked Saraychik, burned it down and in a frenzy not only tormented the living inhabitants, but even, tearing up the graves, stripped off the dead. This happened in 1580.*

*This was the first feat of the Cossacks on the banks of the Urals! The time and description of this case is in diplomatic acts [Levshin 1823: 10].*

*The Don Cossacks committed villainy on all roads, on all transport routes; in a quick raid they even took the capital of Nogai, the city of Saraychik, left no stone unturned there and came out with noble booty, digging up the very graves, exposing the dead [Karamzin 1842–1843: 224].*

The fact that Saraychik was a political and craft center is evidenced by numerous archaeological finds of coins and ceramic dishes. The first coin was minted in Saraychik in 761 AH/1359-60 with the name of Khizr Khan (1360-61). In total, during the excavations, which have continued since 1996, 702 coins have been found there. 647 of them have been identified. Chronologically, the earliest coin belongs to Mengu Timur Khan (1266–82) and is available in a single copy. Most of the coins found in Saraychik date back to the 14<sup>th</sup> century. The latest coins belong to Toqtamysh Khan (1376–95). These coins were minted in 94 different mints, 10 coins were minted in Saraychik [Samashev, Burnasheva, Bazykhan, Plakhov, 2006: 88–89].

*As a result of archaeological research in 1996–97 in the Saraychik settlement, numerous samples of glazed and unglazed ceramics of both local and imported origin were obtained. Among them there are genuine masterpieces of pottery art, decorated with rich floral and zoomorphic ornaments and gold painting. There are fragments of glazed ceramics with inscriptions of religious or other content. The most popular among decorations on glazed ceramics is the waterfowl motif [Samashev 1998: 139; Samashev, Kuznetsova, Plakhov 2008].*

Coins and ceramics found during excavations indicate that Saraychik was a developed city in the mid-13<sup>th</sup>–14<sup>th</sup> centuries.

Some researchers have expressed the opinion that Saraychik was founded in the 11<sup>th</sup> century. Alkey Marghulan was one of the first to express this opinion [Margulan 1950: 3] which was supported by the head of the Chorasmian archaeological and ethnographic expedition Sergey Tolstov:

*The most interesting of the results of the Ural route is the result of a survey of the Saraychik Settlement located in the lower reaches of the Ural River. This settlement is mentioned in sources of the Mongolian period and was usually attributed by researchers to the Mongolian, Golden Horde time. However, our work in 1950 showed that the lower layer of the Saraychik Settlement is pre-Mongol and that, in terms of the nature of the archaeological material, this layer does not differ significantly from the Chorasmia sites of the 11<sup>th</sup> century AD. We now have every reason to believe that the name Saraychik assigned to this site is not its original name; it is possible that this hillfort corresponds to the early medieval Saksin. The city was apparently built in the 11<sup>th</sup> century, and perhaps even in the 10<sup>th</sup> century, by Chorasmian colonists in the lower Urals, on the way to the Lower Volga region [Tolstov 1953: 304].*



However, modern archaeological excavations at the site of the ancient settlement have not found materials confirming this opinion. The head of the West Qazaqstan archaeological expedition of 1996–2000, Zainolla Samashev, based on the results obtained during the work, divided the historical development of the city into three stages:

*The first period occurs at the beginning of its construction, from the middle of the 13<sup>th</sup> century to the beginning of Uzbek Khan's reign in 1312. ... The second chronological stage of the city's life is calculated from the second quarter of the 14<sup>th</sup> century. This is the time of greatest stability and prosperity of the empire. The struggle for the throne was the focus of civil strife during the third chronological period of the city's life from 1360 to 70. ... The fourth stage... falls on the 15<sup>th</sup>–16<sup>th</sup> centuries. During this period, residential areas along Zhaiyq became empty, and the population began to concentrate on the southern part of the city, along the now dry bed of the Sorochinka River [Samashev, Burnasheva, Bazykhan, Plakhov, 2006: 12–21].*

The information from written sources and the results of archaeological excavations at the site allow us to conclude that Saraychik was a sacred place (pantheon) of the Golden Horde khans. This opinion was first expressed by Zainolla Samashev, the head of the West Qazaqstan archaeological expedition [Samashev, Kozhakov, Taleev 1998: 241]. This opinion is confirmed by the results of the ongoing archaeological excavations at the Saraychik site [Plakhov, Kalmenov, Abdigaliyev 2021; Akhmetova, Turaruly, Zhumabaev 2022].

**Barchinkent (Qyshqala).** The ruins of the medieval settlement of Qyshqala are located 30 km southwest of Qyzylorda. The settlement has been known to researchers since the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century (Fig. 2). The names of historical places Barkhim, Parchin, Barchinkent, Barchkand mentioned in written sources were one of the first to be identified with the Qyshqala Settlement by Alkey Marghulan [Margulan 1950: 76–78]. Archaeological excavations carried out at the Qyshqala Site since 2018 confirm the opinion that the city of Barchinkent was located here. It was established that most of the copper and silver coins found during the excavations were minted in

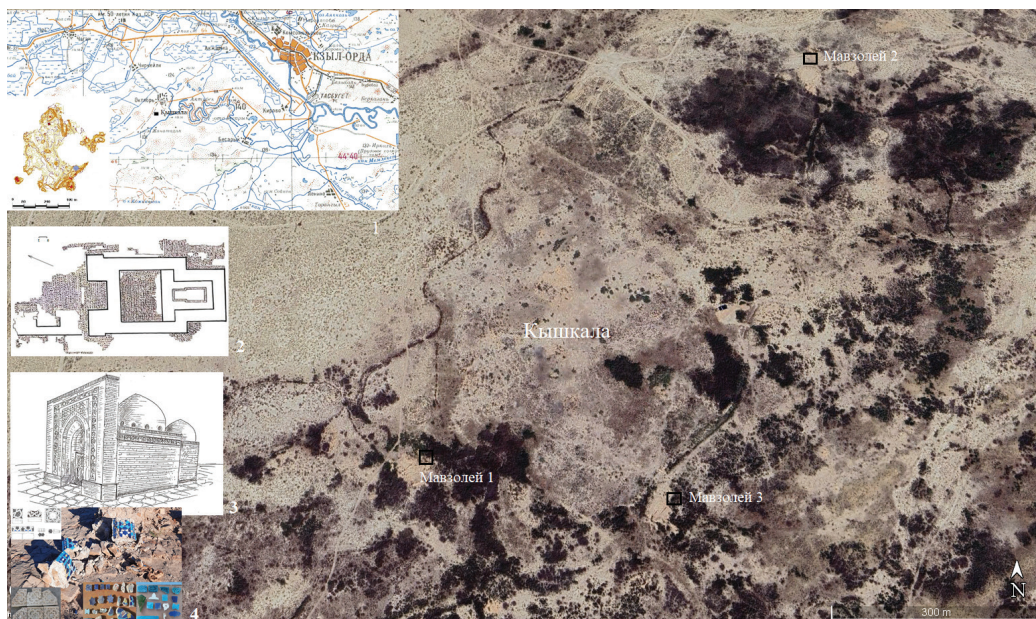


Fig. 2. Qyshqala (Kyshkala) Settlement  
2-сур. Қышқала қалшығы  
Рис. 2. Городище Кышкала



Barchinkent and this confirms that the city of Barchinkent was located on the site of the Qyshqala Settlement [Eleuov, Petrov, Taleev, Moldakhmet, 2023: 184–187].

The development of Barchinkent as a center of urban culture was facilitated by the spread of Islam throughout the Golden Horde. As noted above, Islam established itself as the state religion in the Golden Horde under Uzbek Khan. The anonymous author of the “Supplement to of the Collection of Chronicles” of Rashid ad-Din, describes this ruler as follows:

*Uzbek became sovereign on the throne of the kingdom of Jochi Khan and became a powerful ruler. Uzbek was a prince who combined all the perfections in terms of external beauty, morality and religiosity, the strengthening of Islam and a thorough knowledge of good* [Tizenhausen 1941: 141].

According to medieval records, many khans from the Golden Horde converted to Islam due to the influence of Sufi sheikhs. For example, the mentioned Berke Khan accepted Islam from the Sufi sheikh Sayf ad-Din al-Baharzi (1190-1261), and Uzbek Khan adopted Islam under the influence of the Yasaviya sheikh Sayyid Ata (14<sup>th</sup> century) from Turkestan [Saifetdinova 2012: 240–241].

The formation of a local community of theologians in Saray has been influenced significantly by traditional centers of Muslim education located south of Saray, as spoken by Qazaq orientalist Ashirbek Muminov. In the conditions of the temporary decline of Bukhara and Samarqand in the 13<sup>th</sup>–14<sup>th</sup> centuries, three such regions stand out noticeably: 1) the cities in the basin of the middle reaches of the Syr Darya on the territory of the present-day Qazaqstan (Sairam, Farab, Zarnuk, Itkan (Ikan), Sulkhan, Uzgend, Arkuk, Sygnaq, Barchinkand (Barchinligent), Jand, etc.), 2) Chorasmia (Khorezm), and 3) Khorasan. According to the Russian scholar Mark Kramarovsky, it was the influence of Islamic beliefs in Central Asia that played a decisive role in the spread of Islam among the Qypchaqs of the Golden Horde. Sufi sheikhs played a major role in this process. The spiritual teachings of Islam were conveyed to people by them [Petrov, Uskenbay, 2010: 12].

The city of Barchinkent, spelled Barchin, is mentioned twice in the work of Plano Carpini, the Pope’s ambassador to the court of the Great Khan of the Mongol Empire in 1245 [Shastina 1993: 41]. Also, ‘Parchin’ is mentioned in the records of the embassy of the Armenian king Hethum I (1226-70), who visited the capital of the Mongol Empire Qaraqorum in 1253 [Eleuov 2005: 13; Gandzaketsi 1976: 224]. A description of the city is contained in a separate chapter of “Al-Mulhaqat bi-s-Surah” (“The Supplement to the ‘Surah’”) by the 14<sup>th</sup> century Muslim scholar Jamal al-Qarshi:

*I arrived in Barskand to study with al-Allama, sadr of the sadrs, the moon in the darkness, rare among people, especially in sermons and teaching speeches, Shaykh-al-Islam Husam al-milla wa-d-din Abu-l-Mahamid Hamid ibn Asim al-Asimi al-Barchinligi, may Allah have mercy on him, and he is a great sadr and an outstanding scholar, the like of whom no one has ever seen and will never see, even if he lives forever* [Jamal al-Qarshi 2005: 155].

In 1924, during a survey of the Eski-Yurt (Eski-Zhurt) tract near Bakhchisaray in Crimea, a tombstone in the form of a high, long and narrow box (“sanduq”) with a gable high lancet top was found. On both end sides of the box there were inscriptions in Arabic, which Russian experts Evgeniy Goncharov and Ilya Zaytsev read as follows: “[This is the grave of] the late Mevlana Ahmad ibn Mahmud of Barjinlik” [Goncharov, Zaytsev 2014: 176–177]. This inscription indicates that the grave contains the remains of a learned representative of the Muslim philosophical and religious order Mavlaviya, who, judging by his nisba, came from the city of Barjin (Barchinkent).

It was already mentioned above that in every city of the Golden Horde there were special dervish residences — the so called zawiyas of Sufi orders. The famous Arab traveler Ibn Battuta wrote about this with warmth. During his travels, he widely enjoyed the hospitality of the Ahi order, staying in zawiyas, where travelers were provided with free food and shelter. Often, city rulers sent him gifts and food, considering this a “charitable deed.” Ibn Battuta each time used to

indicate which of the Sufi zawiyas he was staying at, how he was received and who sent food for “feeding”; he gives interesting evidence about the number of Sufi zawiyas in Central Asia [Ibragimov 1988: 41, 60].

During excavations at Qyshqala Site, which have been ongoing for several years, the ruins of several religious and public buildings were examined. One of them is located on the northwestern outskirts of the settlement, on a separate hill. This is Excavation 1. The remains of an unknown structure have been examined here. Apparently, it was originally built from baked bricks. A hill of sand and building materials (burnt bricks and their fragments, decorative tiles, mosaics) was formed because of the collapse of walls. Among the finds there are many rectangular fired clay slabs with patterns on the front side, and fragments of colored mosaics. The size of the main room of the building, oriented with its front part to the north-west, is 11x11 m (along the outer edge). The size of the second room, adjacent to the central part of the main room on the rear south-west side, is 7x7 m. The width of the walls is 2 m. Its plan and the basis of the architectural structure (foundation) were established during the excavation of traces of recesses. As a result of excavations of the ruins of the entire structure, the cleaning, collection and analysis of the surviving materials of the structure, comparison of the building plan with similar plans of other regions, it was established that earlier on this site there was a mausoleum (kesene), built in Muslim traditions [Taleev, Eleuov, Esenov 2018: 265–266]. Judging by the plan of the mausoleum and the found fragments of bricks, decorative tiles and colored mosaics, the mausoleum was erected over the grave of a famous representative of the Golden Horde society, perhaps an influential person or even several influential persons.

The excavated site has similar characteristics (chronology, topographic plan, architectural appearance) with other mausoleums discovered and studied in the CIS and Qazaqstan. One of these analogues is the remains of the Zhanibek-Shalqar Mausoleum (Zhanibek-Shalqar), located 100 km south of Astana and explored in 2010 by the Eurasian National University archaeological expedition led by Maral Khabdulina [Agubaeva 2020]. The mausoleum dates to the 14<sup>th</sup>–15<sup>th</sup> centuries. The similarity of his facing materials with ours is so great that it seems they were made by the same master. Similarities with the facing materials of the mausoleum at the Qyshqala Settlement are also found in the decoration of the Kerderi Mausoleum, found at the bottom of the dried-up Aral Sea. Archaeological materials found at the site of the Kerderi Mausoleum allowed to date it to the 13<sup>th</sup>–14<sup>th</sup> centuries. Qyzyloba, the Golden Horde era mausoleum in the Shokan Ualikhanov district (North Qazaqstan Region), also has a plan and architectural style like the mentioned monuments. Two silver coins were found in one of the burials of this mausoleum. According to the famous numismatist Pavel Petrov, these coins date back to the 14<sup>th</sup> century and were minted in the capital of the Golden Horde, the city of Saray al-Makhrus. On one of the coins the date, 737 AH/1336-37, is clearly readable [Berezhnaya 2022]. The mosaic design of the Golden Horde era mosque at the Konskoye Settlement (in Russian documents called Horse Waters, on Arabic maps — the Dead City, in Italian sources — Seven Mosques) near the village of Yurkovka, Zaporozhye Region of Ukraine, exactly repeats the mosaic of the mausoleum at the Qyshqala Settlement [Dombrovskii 2011].

The dimensions of the mausoleum bricks described above, of various volumes and different shapes, the mosaic decoration used for decoration, the ornament of the external facing tiles, the plan of the mausoleums, and the architectural style, all of them are very similar in the listed mausoleums and, in addition, coincide chronologically. All of them date back to the era of the Golden Horde. The decoration methods used in the design of all these mausoleums do not exclude the possibility that they were made by the same master.

## Conclusion

The material sources collected during the research in Saraychik, the identification and analysis of the coins found, allow us to conclude that this city functioned for a century and a half during the



era of the Jochid Ulus, i.e., in the first half of the 13<sup>th</sup>–early 15<sup>th</sup> centuries. There is information about the continued functioning of the settlement in the 15<sup>th</sup>–16<sup>th</sup> centuries, but the city was no longer the same as before. At the beginning of the 16<sup>th</sup> century, Saraychik was for some time the western capital of the Qazaq Khanate; the subsequent fate of the city is related to the history of the Nogai Horde.

During the excavations at the Qyshqala Site, two more mausoleums built in the Muslim style were unearthed. In size and architectural style, they are also not inferior to the previous one. Without a doubt, some Muslim nobles of the Golden Horde were buried there. During the research work (reconnaissance) carried out, several similar hills were identified in the vicinity of the ancient settlement. They have a similar diameter (20–26 m) and height (1.5–2 m). Building materials, burnt bricks and fragments of colored decorated bricks were also scattered on the surface. We suggest that there were also other Muslim mausoleums in the area, similar to the excavated earlier. Thus, we see that this the site is a group of mausoleums built over the graves of noble people of the Golden Horde era, famous in society, and professing Islam. This gives us reason to assume that the site of Qyshqala (Barchinkent) was a sacred place (pantheon) for the burial of the Golden Horde nobility and clergy. We are confident that our future excavations at the site will confirm this assumption.

Thus, if Saraychik was a sacred land (pantheon) for the khans of the Golden Horde, then Barchinkent can be considered a sacred land (pantheon) for the Muslim nobility and clergy of the Golden Horde.

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## Bronze Age Settlements of the North-East Caspian Region<sup>1</sup>

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**Тірек сөздер:** археология; қола дәуірі; Солтүстік-Шығыс Каспий; қоныс; Тоқсанбай; Айтман; Маңайсор; архитектура; тұрғын-жай

**Ключевые слова:** археология; эпоха бронзы; Северо-Восточный Прикаспий; поселение; Тоқсанбай; Айтман; Манайсор; архитектура; жилище

The article deals with the study of the Bronze Age settlements of the Ustyurt Plateau (North-Eastern Caspian region). The work provides data illustrating the stages of studying ancient history monuments on the territory of the Ustyurt Plateau. More than a thousand years have passed from the first mentions of the Ustyurt Plateau in written sources to its comprehensive study. Scientific research conducted until the middle of the 20th century primarily concerned the study of climate, soils, geological exploration, and the possibility of economic development of land. The second half of the 20th century became a defining stage in the study of archaeological sets. The beginning of the 21st century brought several Bronze Age settlements to the treasury of archaeological sites – Toksanbay, Aitman, Manaysor. The work of the West Kazakhstan Archaeological Expedition of the Margulan Institute of Archaeology under the leadership of Zainolla Samashev and with the active participation of Antonina Ermolaeva and Lev Galkin, in fact, became a launching pad for the accumulation of archaeological material of this era. Thanks to the state strategic project "Cultural Heritage" in 2004-2009, a systematic study of these settlements was carried out. To obtain complete information, an integrated approach was used, involving specialists in related natural sciences. As a result of many years of research of the structural elements of dwellings, it was possible to study in detail the building materials used, analyze the methods of erecting a dwelling, elements of structures, the shape and size of the pit, the system of arrangement of post holes in the floor of the room, roofing techniques, which made it possible to reconstruct dwelling No. 2 of the Toksanbay Settlement. The obtained materials made it possible to identify the development of handicraft production, study the ritual practices of the settlement's inhabitants, and trace the adaptation options of the population to difficult natural and climatic conditions.

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## Маңғыстау Үстіртіндегі (Солтүстік-Шығыс Каспий) қола дәуірінің қоныстары

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Мақала Маңғыстау Үстіртіне (Солтүстік-Шығыс Каспий) қола дәуірінде орныққан қоныстарға арналған. Еңбекте Үстірт аймағындағы ежелгі тарихи ескерткіштерді зерттеу сатыларын көрсететін мәліметтер келтірілген. Үстірт туралы жазба деректердегі алғашқы мағлұматтардан жан-жақты толыққанды зерттеулерге дейінгі арада мың жыл өтті. XX ғасырдың ортасына дейін жүргізілген ғылыми зерттеулер негізінен климат пен топырақ мәселесіне, геологиялық барлау және жер игеру мүмкіндіктеріне арналды. XX ғасырдың екінші жартысы археология ескерткіштерін зерттеудің жаңа сатысына айналды. XXI ғасырдың басы Тоқсанбай, Айтман, Маңайсор секілді қола дәуірінің бірнеше қоныстарын археология ескерткіштерінің тың санатына қосты. Антонина Ермолаева мен Лев Галкиннің белсе-

<sup>1</sup> Translation into English: Zarine A. Dzhandosova, Candidate of History, Associate Professor, Head of the Department of Central Asia and Caucasus, St. Petersburg State University.

не араласуымен Әлкей Марғұлан атындағы Археология институтының Зейнолла Самашев жетекшілік ететін Батыс Қазақстан археологиялық экспедициясы қола дәуірінің археологиялық материалдарын жинақтайтын старт-алаңға айналды. 2004-2009 жылдарға арналған "Мәдени мұра" мемлекеттік бағдарламаның арқасында аталған қоныстарға жоспарлы зерттеу жүргізілді. Толық ақпарат алу үшін жаратылыстану ғылымының мамандарын тартатын кешенді тәсіл қолданылды. Тұрғын-жай құрылымдарын көп жыл зерттеу нәтижесі ондағы құрылыс материалдарын, тұрғын-жай салу әдістерін, жертөле тұрпаты мен көлемін, еденге қағылған діңгектердің орын жүйесін егжей-тегжейлі анықтауға мүмкіндік берді. Мұның бәрін қалпына келтірілген №2 Тоқсанбай қонысынан көруге болады. Бұл материалдар қолөнердің даму деңгейін, қоныс тұрғындарының әдет-ғұрыптарын зерделеп, халықтың күрделі табиғи жағдайларға қалай бейімделгенін нақтырақ анықтауға ықпал етті.

**Қаржыландыру көзі:** Мақала ҚР ҒЖБМ ҒК бағдарламалық-нысаналы қаржыландыру аясында дайындалған, ЖТН BR20280993.

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## Поселения эпохи бронзы Северо-Восточного Прикаспия

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Статья посвящена исследованию поселений эпохи бронзы плато Устюрт (Северо-Восточный Прикаспий). В работе приводятся данные, иллюстрирующие этапы изучения памятников древней истории на территории плато Устюрт. От первых упоминаний о плато Устюрт в письменных источниках до его всестороннего изучения прошло более тысячи лет. Научные исследования, проводимые до середины XX века, прежде всего, касались изучения климата, почв, геологическая разведка, и возможность хозяйственного освоения земель. Вторая половина XX века стала определяющим этапом в изучении памятников археологии. Начало XXI века привнесло в копилку археологических памятников несколько поселений эпохи бронзы – Токсанбай, Айтман, Манайсор. Работы Западно-Казахстанской археологической экспедиции Института археологии имени Алькея Маргулана под руководством Зайноллы Самашева и при активном участии Антонины Ермолаевой и Льва Галкина, фактически стали стартовой площадкой для накопления археологического материала этой эпохи. Благодаря государственному стратегическому проекту «Культурное наследие» в 2004–2009 годах проводилось планомерное исследование этих поселений. Для получения полной информации применялся комплексный подход, с привлечением специалистов смежных естественно-научных дисциплин. В результате многолетних исследований конструктивных элементов жилищ, позволили детально изучить применяемые строительные материалы, проанализировать приемы возведения жилища, элементы сооружений, форму и размеры котлована, систему расположения столбовых отверстий в полу помещения, приемы возведения кровли, что сделало возможным реконструкцию жилища №2 поселения Токсанбай. Полученные материалы позволили выявить развитие ремесленного производства, исследовать ритуальные практики жителей поселения, проследить варианты адаптации населения к сложным природно-климатическим условиям.

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### Introduction

Between the Aral and Caspian seas in the extreme northwest of Central Asia lies a massive desert plateau known as Ustyurt, which is separated from the surrounding territories of the Caspian, Aral and Qaraqum deserts by a winding line of steep and abrupt ledges called 'chinks'. From a distance they resemble a chain of low mountains. Ustyurt is one of the most waterless and severe deserts with a landscape and climate typical of such Central Asian deserts as Betpakdala and Gobi. The climatic conditions of the region are severe. In the summer it is parched by heat, dust storms fly in, winters here are exceptionally cold and snowy. There is a sharp contrast between Ustyurt and the surrounding territories: the densely populated oases of the lower reaches of the Amu Darya and the climatically more humid coast of the Caspian Sea. The territories surrounding the plateau, even the vast semi-desert spaces that adjoin Ustyurt from the north, are more

populated in comparison. The geographical peculiarity of Ustyurt, which travelers imagined as a plateau with difficult to overcome cliffs, huge waterless plains, created its reputation as a gloomy, almost impassable desert.

### History of scientific study of the Ustyurt Plateau

It has been over a thousand years since the first mention of the Ustyurt Plateau in written sources to its comprehensive study. Due to its extreme conditions, Ustyurt was rarely visited by scientific expeditions and travelers. The study of geology, climate, and soils was the primary focus of scientific research conducted until the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century. Direct archaeological research began after the Second World War. The desert plateau of today was once a densely populated region, according to a paradoxical scientific fact discovered by archaeological research in the 1990s. Various archaeological sites have been found here: sites, settlements, burial mounds, temples-sanctuaries, caravanserais and ancient settlements, which date from the Stone Age to the late Middle Ages. It was the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century that became the defining stage in the study of archaeological sites, including the Eneolithic-Bronze Age of the Caspian region. The beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> century was marked by a new round of research into Bronze Age sites, for example, as many as five settlements: Toksanbay, Aitman, Manaysor I–III, discovered in the North Ustyurt region [Samashev et al. 1999: 49–69; Samashev et al. 2001a: 347–352], are dated to the second half of the 3<sup>rd</sup> – first half of the 2<sup>nd</sup> millennium BC. Research into these settlements has yielded interesting materials, allowing the discovery of a previously unknown type of archaeological culture and a unique type of human adaptation.

The work of the West Kazakhstan Archaeological Expedition of the Margulan Institute of Archaeology under the leadership of Zainolla Samashev and with the active participation of Lev Galkin and Antonina Ermolaeva marked the beginning of the period of accumulation of archaeological material from this era. The research was carried out in a comprehensive manner — with the involvement of specialists from related disciplines: soil science, palynology, zoology, traceology, ceramology and others. Science discovered a promising archaeological area where active development processes of the territory took place during the Eneolithic-Bronze Age, reflected in the historical past of the region [Loshakova 2020].

### Characteristics of the Ustyurt Plateau

Within the study region, the Ustyurt Plateau is a remnant of a stratified arid denudation plain. Groundwater horizons have appeared on the surface because of the alternation of impermeable and permeable rocks. Groundwater is the only source of water supply for the territory, both in the past and in the present. The presence of aquifers is evidenced by springs that are still active at present [Viktorov 1971]. Wild animal trails lead to them even now.

The vegetation of Ustyurt is diverse. On the plateau and the causal plain, there is a rather variegated complex vegetation cover, in which communities of black boyalich, tasbiyurgun, white-earth wormwood, kokpek (*Atriplex cana*), black saxaul (*Haloxylon aphyllum*), curly grass (*Atraphaxis replicata*), bush bindweed, medium ephedra (*Ephedra intermedia*) and others predominate. According to researchers, more than 400 species of plants have been identified on the Ustyurt plateau, growing on seasonal pastures with a reserve of edible mass. These plant communities are suitable for grazing camels, horses and small cattle. According to experts, with rational use of these lands, they can provide forage all year round for up to 4 million heads of small cattle. The conducted research of soil scientists and paleobotanists with a high degree of probability characterize the bioclimatic conditions of soil formation of the period of existence of the settlement as close to modern ones. Thus, economic, cattle-breeding activity of man has been possible on Ustyurt since ancient times.

The saiga antelope, a unique steppe antelope, and the kulan were the main hunting objects for the ancient population, as well as today. The bones of these wild animals comprise most of the osteological material found at Toksanbay Settlement. It was interesting that the fossil bones of the kulan, a wild two-humped camel, and the goitered gazelle in the territory of the North-Eastern Caspian region were found for the first time at Toksanbay. This fact allows us to clarify and expand their habitat in the territory of modern-day Qazaqstán during ancient times. There are very few finds of bones belonging to a large bull and a horse. The horse bones come from different layers, and it is not yet possible to assert whether they belong to domestic or wild animals.

Among the fossilized bone remains of animals (saiga and goitered gazelle), a significant number of primordial bones were found, formed from cartilaginous rudiments at various stages of pregnancy. This means that the inhabitants of the settlement practiced hunting pregnant females in late autumn and winter. Seasonal migrations of the saiga from the north of Ustyurt to the south and back are due to the high snow cover in the northern part of the plateau in winter and pastures in its southern part that burn out from drought in summer. Having gone to the north of Ustyurt in spring, the saiga grazes there until winter, producing offspring, and then, in the fall, returns to its southern part.

When choosing the location of the settlements, the following was taken into account: availability of fresh water (springs are noted at the foot of the remnant on which the settlement is located); the presence of a gentle slope from the plateau, which made the path to the settlement easier not only for people, but also for wild animals; this made it possible to hunt near the settlement, at watering places and on the paths leading to them. An advantage in the event of an attack from outside was achieved by having a good view of the surrounding area.

### **Bronze Age settlements Toksanbay, Aitman and Manaysor 1–3**

The Bronze Age settlements Toksanbay, Aitman and Manaysor 1-3, which will be discussed in this work, are localized in the territory of the North-Eastern Caspian region, along the edge of the chink, which stretches along the Shomishtykol sor (Beineu District, Mangistau Region) (Fig. 1). The settlements existed simultaneously in the 18<sup>th</sup> -17<sup>th</sup> centuries BC.

The Toksanbay Settlement occupies a landslide remnant on the slope of a cliff and has absolute heights of 118 m, a slope of 55–65° with a difference in height of 43 meters (Fig. 2). The Aitman Settlement is located 10 km to the south of Toksanbay and occupies a cape-shaped projection of the cliff (Fig. 3). Manaysor 1, 2, and 3 settlements are located 25 km to the north of Toksanbay, with separately located remnants (Fig. 4).

The study of settlement complexes in the North-Eastern Caspian region is the subject of several works, highlighting the results of field surveys and natural science studies, analyzing technical and technological aspects of ceramic materials, bone, and stone tools, that were recorded at settlements, ritual and sacrificial complexes, and dwelling reconstructions. [Samashev et al. 2001a: 347–352; Samashev et al. 2001b: 109–110; Samashev et al. 2004: 125–153; Samashev et al. 2007: 87–102; Shevnina, Loshakova 2017a: 216–222; Shevnina, Loshakova 2017b: 211–219; Loshakova 2022; Erzhanova, Loshakova 2022; [Loshakova, Usachuk 2023; Loshakova, Antonov 2023].

Initially, the Toksanbay Settlement, like Aitman Settlement, was located on a cape-shaped ledge of a cliff. As a result of destructive processes, the isthmus connecting the settlement with the platform disappeared, turning the cape-shaped ledge into an independent remnant-landslide. The settlements of Manaysor 1-3 were subjected to more global destruction compared to Aitman and Toksanbay. In fact, small fragments of masonry of the foundation of the walls of houses were noted in the settlements of Manaysor. However, from these insignificant remains of masonry,



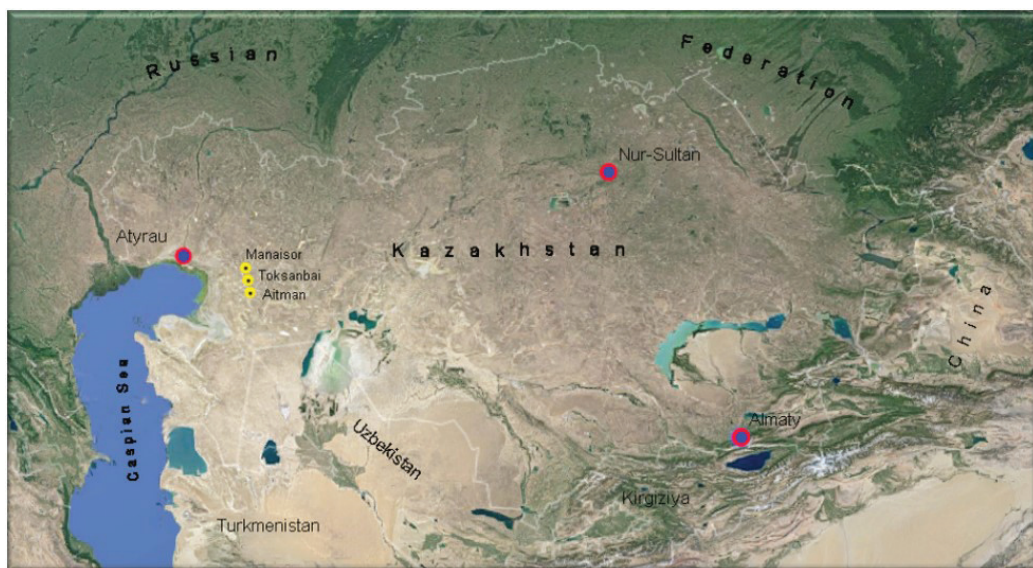


Fig. 1. Map of the location of Bronze Age settlements in North-Eastern Ustyurt. Artist: Bauyrzhan Besetayev.

1-сур. Солтүстік-Шығыс Устірттегі қола дәуірі қоныстарының картасы. Картаны салған: Бауыржан Бесетаев.

Рис. 1. Карта расположения поселений эпохи бронзы Северо-Восточного Устьюрта. Исполнитель: Бауыржан Бесетаев.



Fig. 2. Outlier on which the Toksanbai Settlement is located (view from the north). Photo: Vasily Sobolev.

2-сур. Тоқсанбай қонысы орналасқан орын (солтүстігінен қарағандағы көрінісі). Суретке түсірген: Василий Соболев.

Рис. 2. Останец, на котором расположено поселение Токсанбай (вид с севера). Фото: Василия Соболева



Fig. 3. Cape-shaped protrusion on which the Aitman Settlement is located (view from the south). Photo: Larisa Slovanovskaya.

3-сур. Айтман қонысы орналасқан шоқы (оңтүстігінен қарағандағы көрінісі). Суретке түсірген: Лариса Слованевская.

Рис. 3. Мысовидный выступ на котором расположено поселение Айтман (вид с юга). Фото: Лариса Слованевская.



Fig. 4. Outliers on which the Manaisor 1, and 2 settlements are located. Photo: Tatyana Loshakova.

4-сур. Маңайсор қонысының орыны, 1,2 суреттерді түсірген: Татьяна Лошакова.

Рис. 4. Останцы на которых расположены поселения Манайсор 1,2. Фото: Татьяна Лошакова

it can be stated that the method of erecting structures is like those noted in the settlements of Aitman and Toksanbay.

Already at the first visual inspection of the Toksanbay Settlement, in the northern part, parts of structures were distinguishable, preserved fragments of walls and floors that literally hung over the cliff, clearly representing the principle of construction of premises, a stepped arrangement of structures. Dwelling No. 2 clearly demonstrates the method of erecting residential structures in the settlement. With its northern part, the building rested against the slope, and the opposite, lost one, was facing the cliff. *In situ*, the northwestern half of the dwelling and a corridor have been preserved (Fig. 5). In ancient times, the population, settling the space of the remnant, used its natural relief. People adapted the rounded natural depressions in the remnant, only deepening or leveling the surface in places, thereby forming a pit for the dwelling. The walls were erected as follows: along the side of the pit, massive flat slabs a meter or more high were installed vertically. On top of the vertical slabs, horizontal masonry was constructed from processed shell rock slabs, laid on top of each other. The rooms were heated by a hearth built into the floor. All cleared rooms in the settlement were constructed in the same way.

The Aitman Settlement is located on a cape-shaped ledge of a cliff and suffered less from natural and climatic influences. The cleared remains of stone structures consist of slabs installed and reinforced in various ways (Fig. 6). The dwellings were constructed according to the same principle as was previously described for the buildings of the Toksanbay Settlement. The Aitman Settlement differs from the formation of the living space at the Toksanbay by the presence of paired hearths. Utility pits, sometimes quite impressive in size, are noted at both settlements. Hearths with traces of prolonged exposure to high temperatures and a thick layer of ash are also present at both sites (Fig. 7, 9).

In the settlements, utility boxes were constructed from vertically installed slabs. The joints between the slabs were coated with a special solution that included clay, reed stems, and water from a freshwater reservoir [Loshakova, Gavrillov 2014]. Judging by the location of the post holes, it can be said that the boxes were located both outside the premises and inside them, as can be seen in the Toksanbay Settlement (Fig. 8, 10). When studying the filling of the boxes, the following were recorded: remains of sacrificial animal carcasses (dwelling No. 2 in the Toksanbay Settlement), filling with ash and small coals was noted in the boxes in both settlements.

When constructing the buildings, the climate, landscape, vegetation, and the availability of various building materials was considered. For example, shell limestone, a stone with unique heat-insulating properties, which was available in large quantities around, was used everywhere. Extracting and processing it did not require much labor. The developed stone house-building traditions that emerged in the settlement were due to the general level of economic development of the population and the climatic conditions of existence.

During the clearing of Dwelling No. 2 of the Toksanbay Settlement, post holes were noted in the floor, in which the remains of wood were fixed. As a result, it becomes known that saxaul, which grows in this region to this day, was used for the posts that supported the roof, as well as for the elements of the supporting structure of the roof [Loshakova, Antonov 2023]. The roof was constructed of reeds, thickets of which are found everywhere near springs located near settlements and at the present time. In addition, the thesis on the use of this material in the construction of the roof is confirmed by the remains of reeds, which were recorded during the clearing of the burnt layer on the floor of Dwelling No. 2. In addition, fragments of ash-sandy loam formation were noted on top of the burnt layer; this allows for the assumption that there was a thin layer of clay mortar with an admixture of ash in the roof structure, which was possibly applied on top of the reeds. Based on the obtained material, a reconstruction of Dwelling No. 2 of the Toksanbay Settlement was made [Loshakova, Antonov 2023] (Fig. 11).





a



b



Fig. 5. Toksanbay Settlement. Dwelling No. 2: a – part of the wall masonry preserved *in situ* (view from the east); b – northwestern wall of the dwelling. Photo: Tatyana Loshakova.

5-сур. Тоқсанбай қонысы. № 2 тұрғын-жай: а – қаланған қабырғаның сақталған бөлігі - *in situ* (шығыстан көрінісі); б – тұрғын-жайдың солтүстік-батыс қабырғасы. Суретке түсірген: Татьяна Лошакова.

Рис. 5. Поселение Тоқсанбай. Жилище № 2: а – сохранившаяся *in situ* часть стеной кладки (вид с востока); б – северо-западная стена жилища Фото: Татьяна Лошакова.





a



b

Fig. 6. Aitman Settlement. Dwelling No. 1. a – a part of wall masonry preserved *in situ* (view from the east); b – dwelling pit with fragments of hay structure (view from the south). Photo: Tatyana Loshakova.

6-сур. Айтман қонысы. № 1 тұрғын-жай. а – қаланған қабырғаның сақталған бөлігі - *in situ* (шығыстан көрінісі); б – тұрғын-жай шұқыры (оңтүстіктен көрінісі) Суретке түсірген: Татьяна Лошакова.

Рис. 6. Поселение Айтман. Жилище № 1. а – сохранившаяся *in situ* часть стеной кладки (вид с востока); б – котлован жилища с фрагментами сеной конструкции (вид с юга) Фото: Татьяна Лошакова.







a



b



Fig. 7. Toksanbay Settlement: a – hearth in Dwelling No. 2; b – hearth in Dwelling No. 4. Photo: Tatyana Loshakova.

7-сур. Тоқсанбай қонысы: а – №2 тұрғын-жайдағы ошақ; б – №4 тұрғын-жайдағы ошақ. Суретке түсірген: Татьяна Лошакова.

Рис. 7. Поселение Токсанбай: а – очаг в жилище № 2; б – очаг в жилище №4. Фото: Татьяна Лошакова



Fig. 8. Toksanbay Settlement: a – utility box in Dwelling No. 2; b – utility box in Dwelling No. 3.  
Photo: Tatyana Loshakova.

8-сур. Тоқсанбай қонысы: а – №2 тұрғын-жайдағы тұрмыстық жәшік; б – №3 тұрғын-жайдағы тұрмыстық жәшік. Суретке түсірген: Татьяна Лошакова.

Рис. 8. Поселение Тоқсанбай: а – хозяйственный ящик в жилище №2; б – хозяйственный ящик в жилище №3. Фото: Татьяна Лошакова.







a



b



Fig. 9. Aitman Settlement: a – hearth in Dwelling No. 1; b – hearth in Dwelling No. 2. Photo: Tatyana Loshakova.

9-сур. Айтман қонысы: а – №1 тұрғын-жайдағы ошақ; б – №2 тұрғын-жайдағы ошақ. Суретке түсірген: Татьяна Лошакова.

Рис. 9. Поселение Айтман: а – очаг в жилище № 1; б – очаг в жилище №2. Фото: Татьяна Лошакова





Fig. 10. Aitman Settlement. Dwelling No. 3. Utility boxes. Photo: Tatyana Loshakova.  
10-сур. Айтман қонысы. №3 тұрғын-жай. Тұрмыстық жәшіктер. Суретке түсірген: Татьяна Лошакова.  
Рис. 10. Поселение Айтман. Жилище №3. Хозяйственные ящики. Фото: Татьяна Лошакова.



Craft production occupied significant niches in the production of leather goods, bone, stone, metal, etc.

The fact that metal products were actively cast in the settlement is evidenced by numerous traces of metallurgical production: metallurgical slag in the form of shapeless lumps, pieces and ingots of copper in the form of balls, droplets and cakes, fragments of crucibles (Fig. 12), pestles and mortars for crushing ore (Fig. 13), metal products were found in different parts of the settlement. In addition, on the northwestern slope, a dwelling is distinct because of the industrial nature of the material, which indicates metalworking. Fragments of clay crucibles and a smelter, a broken stone casting mold and a mortar found here indicate that copper products were cast and remelted in this dwelling. The inventory of bronze products is diverse. Among them are knives, awls, puncturers, and a punch. Of the three known flat double-edged knives, the most original form is that of a knife with a spatula-shaped blade and an oval point, which has been preserved almost completely. The handle of this knife is short and wide, expanding and rounded at the end, and flat in cross-section. The total length of this knife is 9.6 cm. Such identical knives of archaic form, except for Central Asia, are noted in sites of the European Steppe Bronze — the Yamna, Poltavka, and Catacomb cultures. It is known that knives of this type were widespread at the end of the 3<sup>rd</sup> - first half of the 2<sup>nd</sup> millennium BC, and by the middle of the 2<sup>nd</sup> millennium BC they fell out of use (Fig. 14).

The awls are of two types. The first type consisted of two double-edged awls, rectangular and square in cross-section with two working ends. The second, more complicated type is represented by two awls with one working end and a flattened handle. Both have a round working end and



Fig. 11. Three-dimensional reconstruction of the Toksanbay premises. View from the southeast. Computer processing by Mikhail Antonov.

11-сур. Тоқсанбай ғимаратының үш өлшемді реконструкциясы. Оңтүстік-Шығыстан қарағандағы көрінісі. Компьютермен өңдеген: Михаил Антонов.

Рис. 11. Трехмерная реконструкция помещения Токсанбай. Вид с юго-востока. Компьютерная обработка Михаил Антонов.

a square rod. The total length of the awl is 10 cm. The second awl, deformed, was 5.8 cm long. Four-sided awls with a flattened handle were common among the steppe tribes of Eurasia in the Andronovo period.

The punch has a massive four-sided rod, 9.6 cm long, tapering downwards (the end is broken off). In the upper part there is a wedge-shaped opening-sleeve, into which, apparently, a wooden handle was inserted [Samashev et al., 2001a: 109–110] (Fig. 15).

Despite the development of metallurgical production, flint tools and weapons: dart and arrowheads, drills, adzes, scrapers, were still widely used in the economy. The bulk of the tips were made using a complex technique of pressing retouching. This technique arose in the Mesolithic era. Chalcedonolites and quartzites were used as raw materials for making tools. Tools, and especially weapons, are characterized by perfect processing and manufacturing techniques. Judging by the quantity and quality of stone products, the stone industry in the settlement was mastered to perfection. During this period, the production of stone arrowheads and darts acquired a mass character (Fig. 16).

Limestone, shell limestone and sandstone were used to make “irons”, abrasive tiles, pestles, graters of various shapes, balls and chopping tools [Erzhanova, Loshakova 2022: 227–235] (Fig. 17).

Among the stone products, a grater stands out, one of the sides of which is decorated with a zoomorphic image, of a ram’s head, according to our assumption. In plan, the object is oval-shaped, one of the end faces of which is narrowed. The product has been preserved only halfway.





Fig. 12. Toksanbay Settlement. Crucible. Clay. Photo: Oleg Belyalov.

12-сур. Тоқсанбай қонысы. Тигель. Саз. Суретке түсірген: Олег Белялов.

Рис. 12. Поселение Токсанбай. Тигель. Глина. Фото: Олег Белялов.



Fig. 13. Toksanbay Settlement. Axe-hammer. Photo: Oleg Belyalov.

13-сур. Тоқсанбай қонысы. Балта-балға. Суретке түсірген: Олег Белялов.

Рис. 13. Поселение Токсанбай. Топор-молот. Фото: Олег Белялов.







Fig. 14. Toksanbay Settlement. Metal knives. Photo: Oleg Belyalov.  
14-сур. Тоқсанбай қонысы. Металл пышақтар. Суретке түсірген: Олег Белялов.  
Рис. 14. Поселение Токсанбай. Металлические ножи. Фото: Олег Белялов.



Fig. 15. Toksanbay Settlement. Metal punctures. Photo: Oleg Belyalov.  
15-сур. Тоқсанбай қонысы. Металл біз. Суретке түсірген: Олег Белялов.  
Рис. 15. Поселение Токсанбай. Проколки из металла. Фото: Олег Белялов.





Fig. 16. Toksanbay Settlement. Weapons and tools made of flint: 1–10 – arrowhead; 11–15 – knife; 16–17 – scraper. Photo: Oleg Belyalov.

16-сур. Тоқсанбай қонысы. Кремнийден жасалған қару мен еңбек құралы: 1–10 – жебе ұшы; 11–15 – пышақ; 16–17 – қырғыш. Суретке түсірген: Олег Белялов.

Рис. 16. Поселение Токсанбай. Оружие и орудие труда из кремния: 1–10 – наконечник стрелы; 11–15 – нож; 16–17 – скребок. Фото: Олег Белялов.



Fig. 17. Toksanbay Settlement. "Iron". Photo: Oleg Belyalov.

17-сур. Тоқсанбай қонысы. Суретке түсірген: Олег Белялов.

Рис. 17. Поселение Токсанбай. «Утюжок». Фото: Олег Белялов.





Fig. 18. Toksanbay Settlement. Grater. Photo: Oleg Belyalov.  
18-сур. Тоқсанбай қонысы. Теркі. Суретке түсірген: Олег Белялов.  
Рис. 18. Поселение Токсанбай. Терка. Фото: Олег Белялов.

The surface of the grater is well polished. According to the trace expert's conclusion<sup>2</sup>, the product was not used for long, and soft substances, probably cereals or ocher, were ground on it. Similar objects, with a sculptural image of a ram's head, are well known in Eurasia and were often used in ritual practice [Chenchenkova 2004] (Fig. 18).

The huge amount of osteological material deposited in the multi-meter cultural layers of the settlement indicates that pastoral cattle breeding and hunting associated with the seasonal migration of game animals formed the basis of the economic activity of the Ustyurt population in the Bronze Age. The osteological material from the settlement is dominated by game fauna. The inhabitants of the settlement ate the meat of wild animals — camel, saiga, kulan, Ustyurt mouflon, goitered gazelle; bones of wolves, foxes, corsac foxes, rodents, and birds have been noted [Makarova, Nurumov 1999: 70-79]. The paleozoological material includes bones of cattle, horses, camels, and small cattle, with the latter predominating. The paleozoological collection obtained from the settlement is enormous and is currently being studied.

Hunting and commercial activities contributed to the accumulation of bone raw materials, which were used to make tools. The collection of bone products included: chisels, dead ends, awl-piercers, burnishers, spatulas, stamps, scrapers, as well as blanks with traces of processing (cuts, chips). Processed astragals of small cattle were widely used as burnishers. Burnishers were used in ceramic and leather production. In the same industries of home production, spatulas were used, among which there are shovel-shaped ones, with a narrow handle, made from fragments of flat bones. Stamps and stamp-spatulas were made from fragments of various bones, they were used to apply ornaments and smooth the surface of clay vessels. During the period of research,

<sup>2</sup> Traceological study of the items was carried out by candidate of historical sciences Anatoly Pleshakov and PhD Dr. Albina Erzhanova.



significant material illustrating the tradition of processing animal bones has been accumulated and technological features of the manufacture and use of products have been determined. As a raw material, animal bone was subjected to cutting, splitting, and chipping, which was less common. In addition to traces of cutting with a metal blade, traces of chopping with both metal and stone axes, sawing-grinding with a metal blade, and occasionally scraping, which was rarely used in the Late Bronze Age, are recorded on the tools. The following categories of products are distinguished: dead ends, piercers, burnishers, drills and others. Bone tools were used mainly in leather processing, less often in the manufacture of vessels (Fig. 19, 20).

The discovery of two shield cheek-pieces at the Toksanbay Settlement is currently the only one for this region (Fig. 21). Cheek-pieces are a part of a horse bridle, intended for rigid control of a horse. The types of shield cheek-pieces, to which the Toksanbay samples belong, were in use in the 18<sup>th</sup> – 16<sup>th</sup> centuries BC. According to the zoologist<sup>3</sup>, both cheek-pieces were made from the pelvic bone of a horse or a wild camel. The identical sizes of the items, down to the smallest details, and similar manufacturing techniques indicate that they were most likely made by the same craftsman<sup>4</sup>. One of the cheek-pieces has two monolithic tenons carved into it, while the other has no tenons, but has two additional holes in the shield, where small insert tenons could have been placed later. Traces of wear suggest that the fastening to the strap bars was quite rigid [Usachuk, Loshakova 2011: 9–13]. The wear of the central hole on the cheekpiece with monolithic tenons indicates that it was the right one in the Toksanbay pair. On the pegless cheekpiece, the wear marks are arranged in a mirror image to the same marks on the cheekpiece with tenons, which corresponds to the left cheekpieces in the harness.

Bone tools and objects of great importance in people's lives were used in rituals. This is evidenced by the psalms and a human burial found in the cult-oriented premises, accompanied by bone tools for processing leather, as well as fragments of animal bones. Very interesting data were obtained during the processing of ceramic material. Judging by the material remains, the cultural strata of the settlement contain artifacts with both local technological traditions and numerous signs of foreign ethnic influences brought in because of waves of migration processes. The technical and technological study of both whole vessels and fragments of ceramics made it possible to identify the general and characteristic features of ceramic production<sup>5</sup>.

As a raw material, Ustyurt potters used ferruginous clays with a natural admixture of limestone and sand. Petrographic analysis allowed us to record two recipes for the molding mass, with the absolute predominance of the first: clay + gruss (organogenic limestone + organic matter (manure), clay + fireclay + organic matter (manure). When studying the vessel bases, several design programs were recorded: bottom, bottom-capacitive and capacitive (with a noticeable predominance of the first). In all cases, a ring-shaped molding was used. In all three programs, the junction of the bottom and the body is often processed from the inside with a hard tool with a rounded working edge. Some of the vessels were molded using a ribbon-ring molding. The relief of the ribbons of some vessels is clearly visible on the surface. The width of the ribbons ranges from 2–4 cm. The ribbons were connected to each other “overlapping”. Bundles 1 cm wide were also recorded. A patchwork-ring molding is noted sporadically. In addition, the modeling of the vessel was recorded on a hard template.

The ceramics collection is dominated by vessels with straight or weakly profiled walls. The rim cut was often flattened, less often beveled inward or outward. When analyzing the upper parts

<sup>3</sup> Definition made by Pavel Kosintsev.

<sup>4</sup> The traceological study of the cheek-piece complex was carried out by Anatoly Usachuk, a candidate of historical sciences and a research fellow at the Donetsk Regional Museum of Local History (Ukraine).

<sup>5</sup> Technological research of ceramics was started in 1998 by Tatyana Teplovodskaya, a research fellow of the Institute of Archaeology, and later continued by research fellow of the laboratory of archaeological research of Irina Shevnina from Kostanay State University, who also conducted a petrographic study of ceramic materials of the settlement.



Fig. 19. Toksanbay Settlement. Bone items – “dead ends”. Photo: Oleg Belyalov.  
19-сур. Тоқсанбай қонысы. Сүйек бұйым. Суретке түсірген: Олег Белялов.  
Рис. 19. Поселение Токсанбай. Изделия из кости – «тупики». Фото: Олег Белялов.



Fig. 20. Toksanbay Settlement. Bone items. Photo: Oleg Belyalov.  
20-сур. Тоқсанбай қонысы. Сүйек бұйым. Суретке түсірген: Олег Белялов.  
Рис. 20. Поселение Токсанбай. Изделия из кости. Фото: Олег Белялов.

of the vessels, it was noted that most rims had traces of a hard tool or pebble. Apparently, this is because during the process of making the vessel, processing its outer surface and drying, the product was in the position on the "mouth" for a long time. Almost all large and medium-sized vessels have a neck slightly thicker than the walls of the vessel, since under the rim cut, another strip was applied on top, apparently to strengthen the "mouth" of the vessel. At the same time, "ugly" build-ups formed on the outer and inner edges of the rims, which were then removed with the tools described above; wavy rims formed by the potter's fingers were also noted. Further shaping was done by beating the vessel walls with a mallet or a pebble with a smooth working edge, and in one case, traces of beating with a mallet through fabric were recorded. Smoothing techniques were used to process the surface of the vessels using a serrated stamp, a hard tool (wooden?), pieces of leather, bone and chips; washing and coating were also done (the outer and, in some places, the inner surface of some vessels is covered with a light thin layer of clay coating, 0.05 to 0.2 mm thick). In addition, the surface of the vessels was polished and smoothed, and in some cases covered with ochre. Drying of the vessels took place in a rational mode. All the vessels have traces of fire firing: layered fracture (dark gray or black center of the fracture with light edge areas). Reducing firing, up to 700° [Shevnina, Loshakova 2008: 270–278].

When studying the ceramic collection of the settlement, it was revealed that it is incomparable with the ceramic complexes of some specific sites of both the Neolithic and Eneolithic cultures and the Bronze Age cultures. In publications of the site materials, the authors have already noted vestiges of the Neolithic and Eneolithic features in the stone and ceramic materials of Toksanbay, parallels of metal products with the metal of the Poltavka-Catacomb circle, and even possible interaction with the cultures of the southwestern Poltavka-Catacomb circle [Samashev et al. 2004: 125–153; Samashev et al. 2002: 66–179; Samashev et al. 2007: 87–102]. The archaic nature of the settlement's products, as we see it, is not so much the result of the isolation of the population in the hard-to-reach regions of Ustyurt, but rather the manifestation of traces of the surviving culture of the population that came here from the western regions and interacted with local tribes.

Toksanbay ceramics are characterized by a variety of analogues in the complexes of the Neo-Eneolithic cultures, the Early and Middle Bronze Age. But at the same time, it is impossible to conduct direct comparisons with any specific culture or specific site. The shape of the vessels, the modeling of the rims and necks, the ornament, are characterized by extreme diversity and originality, but according to technical and typological features, the ceramic collection represents a single cultural complex. Unity is manifested in the combination of methods of applying the ornament, in the uniformity of the ornamental compositions, in the manufacturing technology.

In typological terms, the most expressive and culture-defining vessels were those with the so-called collar-shaped top. In the obtained ceramic collection, fragments of the upper part of the vessels in most cases indicate non-profiled and weakly profiled forms. The group of ceramics with archaic features includes fragments of non-profiled vessels with a characteristic Neolithic ridge-burst on the inner wall, with an inward bevel of the rim cut, with a continuous filling of the ornamental field with a uniform or simple ornament.

The group of Eneolithic-type dishes with a collar-shaped top is more numerous, characterized by a wide variety of forms and ornamental compositions. The collar does not have a stable shape, it is formed in different ways. Two forms are defined – flat and wide (up to 3 cm) and narrow relief, or roller-shaped (up to 1 cm). Roller-shaped collars are a smooth relief strip around the rim, rectangular or round in cross-section. Among the ceramics of this group, fragments from large cauldron-shaped vessels stand out. The upper part was designed as a flat wide collar, and a roller-shaped collar with a thickening or cornice (edge), a flat or pointed cut, a straight or concave wall.





Fig. 21. Toksanbay Settlement. Shield disc-shaped cheekpieces. Photo: Oleg Belyalov.  
21-сур. Тоқсанбай қонысы. Ауыздықтың дөңгелек шығыршығы. Суретке түсірген:  
Олег Белялов.

Рис. 21. Поселение Токсанбай. Щитковые дисковидные псалии. Фото: Олег Белялов.

Another group of vessels with varying degrees of profiling and bent necks and expanding walls was identified based on morphological features. All fragments of the bottom parts were from flat-bottomed vessels, the concave bottom part of which was sometimes ornamented with a continuous vertical zigzag, made with smooth and fine-toothed stamps.

The technique of applying a pattern to vessels combines pricked-comb stamps and incised ornamentation. The most common of the pricked ornamentation were triangular and angular pricks, which formed different compositional structures, in combination with meanders. A significant number of patterns were made with a comb stamp with teeth of different sizes, set at different angles. Fragments of vessels with ornamentation in the form of large pricks with a two- to four-toothed stamp and impressions of a figured stamp - stream-shaped and in the form of a snake - were isolated. Narrow and wide incised lines on ceramics often served as a divider between ornamental zones. Ornamental compositions of geometric figures made with incised lines and bordered with a “fringe” of various types of indentations and pricks, as well as herringbone ornaments and horizontal and vertical zigzags were quite common [Loshakova 2001: 72–76].

A wide range of ornamentation methods characterized the mixed tradition of vessel decoration in the ceramic complex. The pricked and pricked-recessed techniques, including those in the form of triangles and sharp pricks, had been in use since the Neolithic era at Northern Caspian sites, while the comb ornament was typical of the population of the forested Trans-Urals region. Analogies to the main body of ceramics of the so-called Toksanbay type are found in the materials of the Volsk-Lbishchenskaya culture [Vasiliev 1999: 66–78] in the Middle Volga region, which is also characterized by a variety of rim shapes with collars and thickenings, outward beveling, pointed edges, similar ornamental motifs, and the admixture of shell in

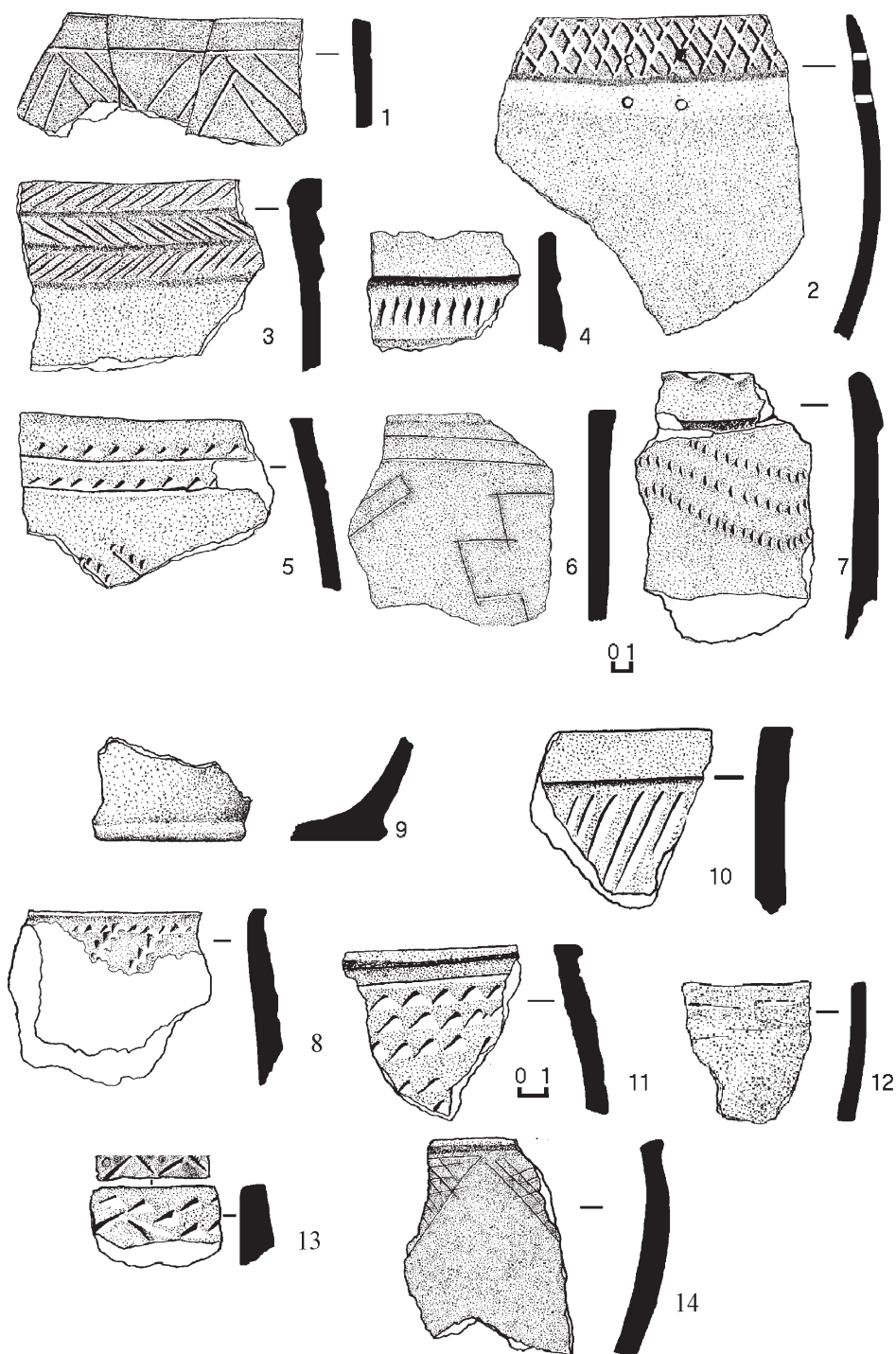


Fig. 22. Toksanbay Settlement. Ceramic fragments. Drawing by Vasily Sobolev.  
22-сур. Тоқсанбай қонысы. Керамика сынықтары. Суретті салған Василий Соболев.  
Рис. 22. Поселение Токсанбай. Фрагменты керамики. Рисунок Василия Соболева.



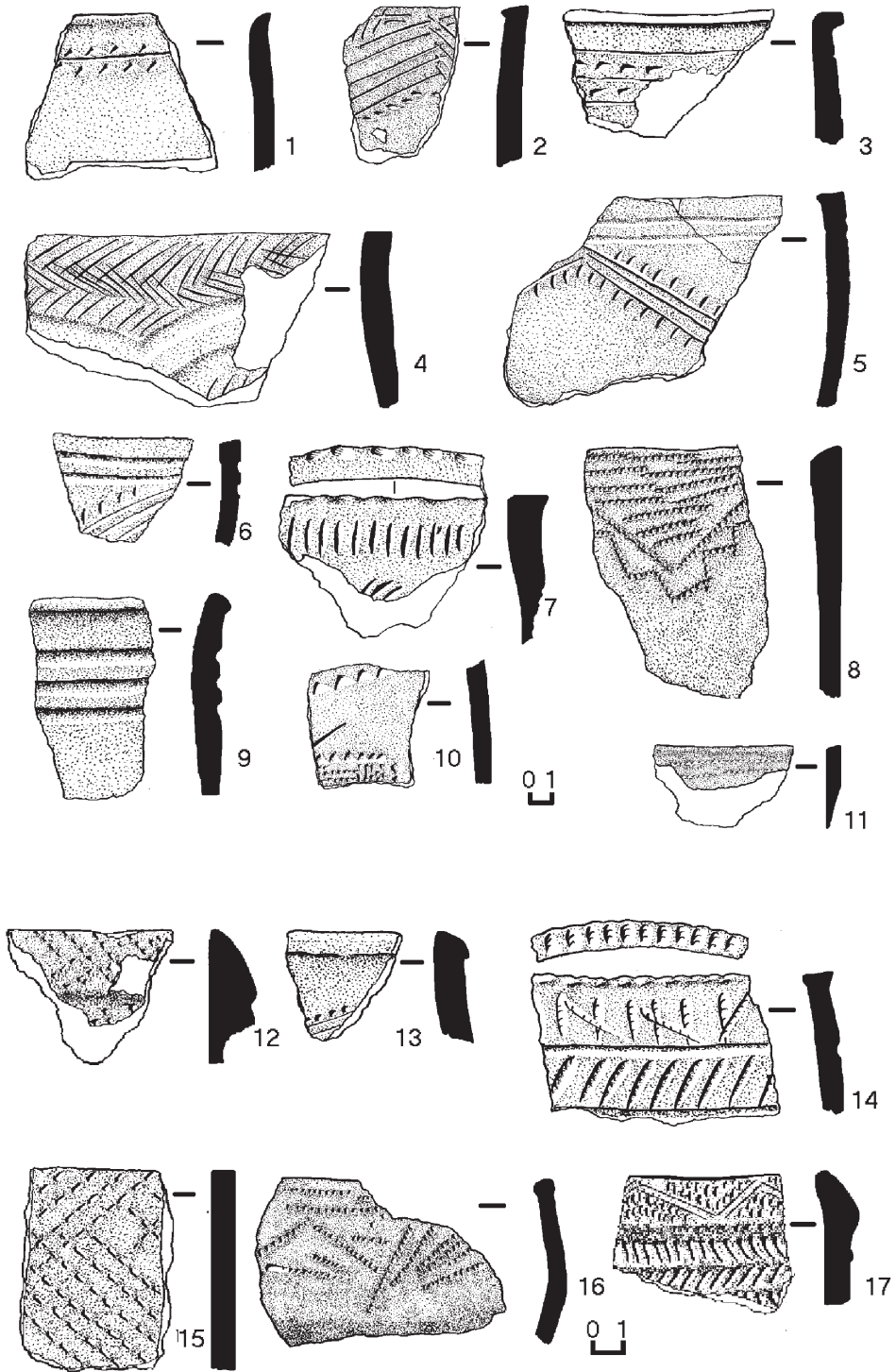


Fig. 23. Toksanbay Settlement. Ceramic fragments. Drawing by Vasily Sobolev.  
 23-сур. Тоқсанбай қонысы. Керамика сынықтары. Суретті салған Василий Соболев.  
 Рис. 23. Поселение Токсанбай. Фрагменты керамики. Рисунок Василия Соболева.





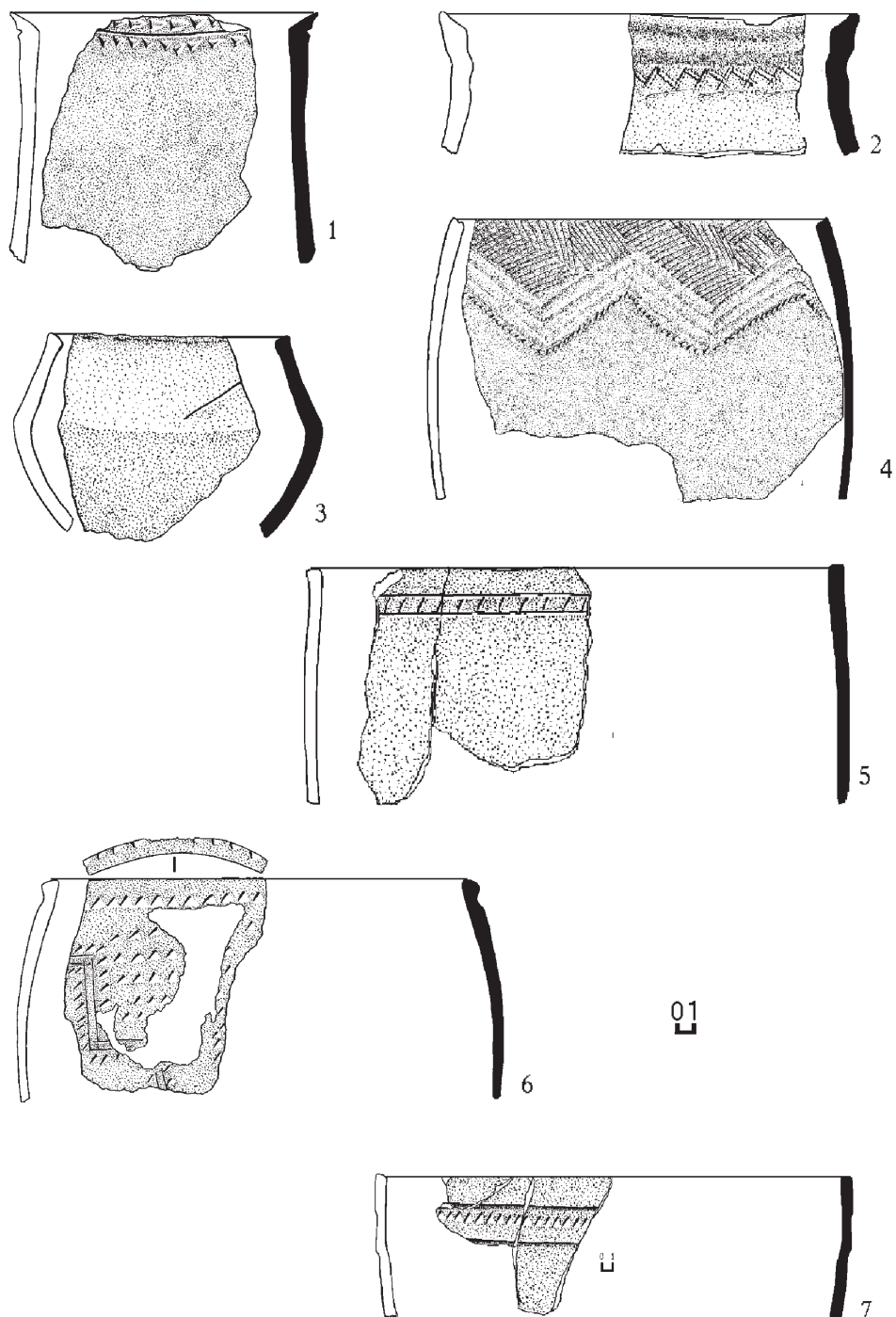


Fig. 24. Toksanbay Settlement. Settlement ceramics. Reconstructed vessels. Drawing by Vasily Sobolev.

24-сур. Тоқсанбай қонысы. Қоныс керамикасы. Қалпына келтірілген ыдыстар. Суретті салған Василий Соболев.

Рис. 24. Поселение Токсанбай. Керамика поселения. Реконструированные сосуды. Рисунком Василия Соболева.



the dough [Samashev et al. 2002: 166–179; Samashev et al. 2004: 125–153]. Similar ceramics have been found at sites in the Lower Volga region, the Northern Caspian region, and Western Qazaqstan [Vasiliev et al. 1986: 110–115].

In addition to the archaic features, Toksanbay ceramics are distinguished by their syncretic appearance. This syncretic nature is not manifested in the mechanical mixing of materials from different cultures, but in the presence of features inherent in different cultural traditions on the same vessels. The multi-component nature of the materials of the site reflects the complexity of the processes associated with the formation of antiquities of the Toksanbay type, and the alien nature of the population that left it [Samashev et al. 2009: 159–167] (Fig. 22–24).

Traces of ritual actions have been recorded at the settlement. For example, the deposition of certain parts of the human body has been noted; in both cases, only fragments of the lower limbs, pelvic bones, and ribs have been noted. Two such burials were discovered in different years of field research at the Toksanbay Settlement (Fig. 25). Both burials were discovered at the settlement during the study of residential structures. The location of the burials and the accompanying inventory confidently allow us to attribute the burials to sacrificial complexes, which are a type of certain cult actions. For this territory, these are the first burials of this kind.

In the first case, the burial was located under the outer wall of the premises located on the western slope of the settlement (Fig. 26). The builders of the dwelling, having filled in the buildings of the lower tier, turned their walls into a kind of foundation. It had walls of a standard design: with a base of a double row of vertical slabs and horizontal masonry of stone slabs on top, with a total height of over 1.5 m. The industrial nature of the material obtained from the dwelling

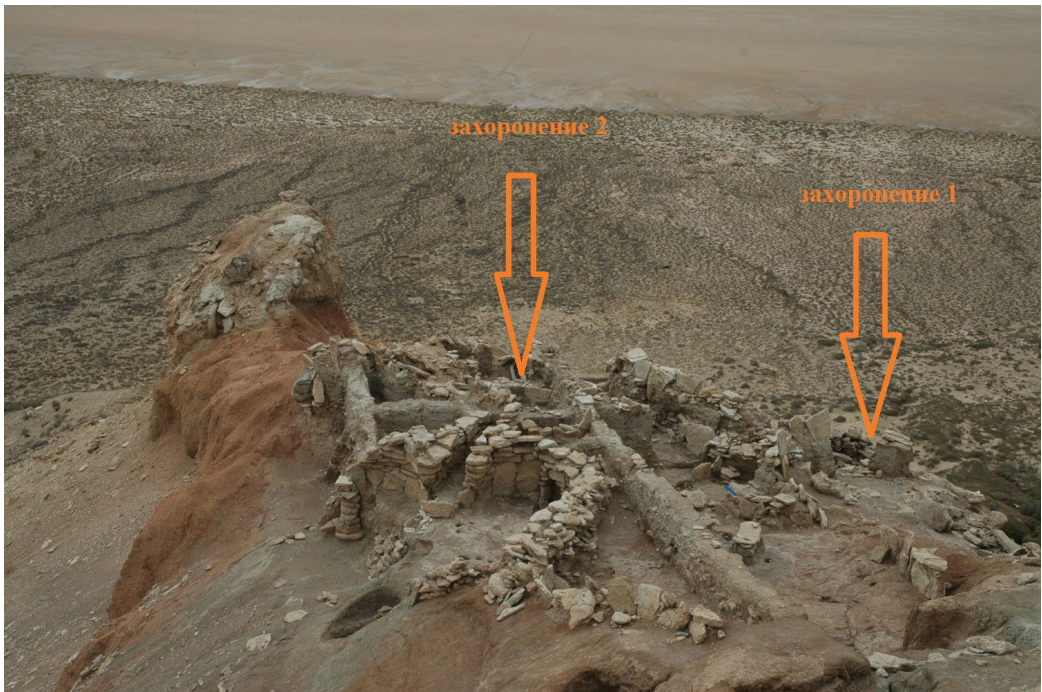


Fig. 25. Toksanbay Settlement. General view of the settlement from the north-eastern side. Arrows indicate the places of ritual burials of people. Photo: Tatyana Loshakova.

25-сур. Тоқсанбай қонысы. Солтүстік-шығыстан қарағандағы қоныстың жалпы көрінісі. Адам жерленген ғұрыптық орын таяқшамен көрсетілген. Суретке түсірген: Татьяна Лошакова.  
Рис. 25. Поселение Токсанбай. Общий вид на поселение с северо-восточной стороны. Стрелками указаны места ритуальных захоронений человека Фото: Татьяна Лошакова.





Fig. 26. Ritual burial No. 1. Photo: Tatyana Loshakova.  
26-сур. №1 ғұрыптық жерлеу орыны. Суретке түсірген: Татьяна Лошакова.  
Рис. 26. Ритуальное погребение № 1. Фото: Татьяна Лошакова.



Fig. 27. Ritual burial No. 2 Photo: Tatyana Loshakova.  
27-сур. №2 ғұрыптық жерлеу орыны. Суретке түсірген: Татьяна Лошакова.  
Рис. 27. Ритуальное погребение № 2 Фото: Татьяна Лошакова.





indicates metalworking. Fragments of clay crucibles and a smelter, a broken stone casting mold and mortar found here indicate that copper items were cast and remelted in this dwelling.

The human remains are represented by fragments of pelvic bones, ribs and several vertebrae. The anatomical order is not observed. The pelvic bones with vertebrae are elongated along the northwest – southeast line. Apparently, the burial had a ritual character, as it was accompanied by stone tools and bone products intended for leather processing, as well as fragments of animal bones. A second burial of human skeletal parts was noted during the study of a room in the central part of the settlement. Fragments of a human skeleton were found under the masonry of the foundation of the wall (Fig. 27). Bones of the lower limbs were recorded here; several fragments of a human cranium and part of a pelvic bone were noted. Accompanying inventory is missing.

In other parts of the excavation, scattered small fragments of a human skeleton were also found; these were fragments of a skull and ribs. Several fragments of a human skeleton were noted in an ash pit, or more precisely in a bone layer, in the northern part of the settlement. No burials were recorded at other known Bronze Age settlements of the North-East Caspian region – Aitman Settlement, and the Manaysor group of settlements. We presume that the burials with a broken human skeleton from the Toksanbay Settlement belong to the category of construction sacrifices. Both burials were located at the base of the wall of the room. The dwelling on the north-western slope, at the base of which a partial burial with accompanying inventory was placed, is the place where the metalworking process took place. Such ritual actions are found in burial complexes

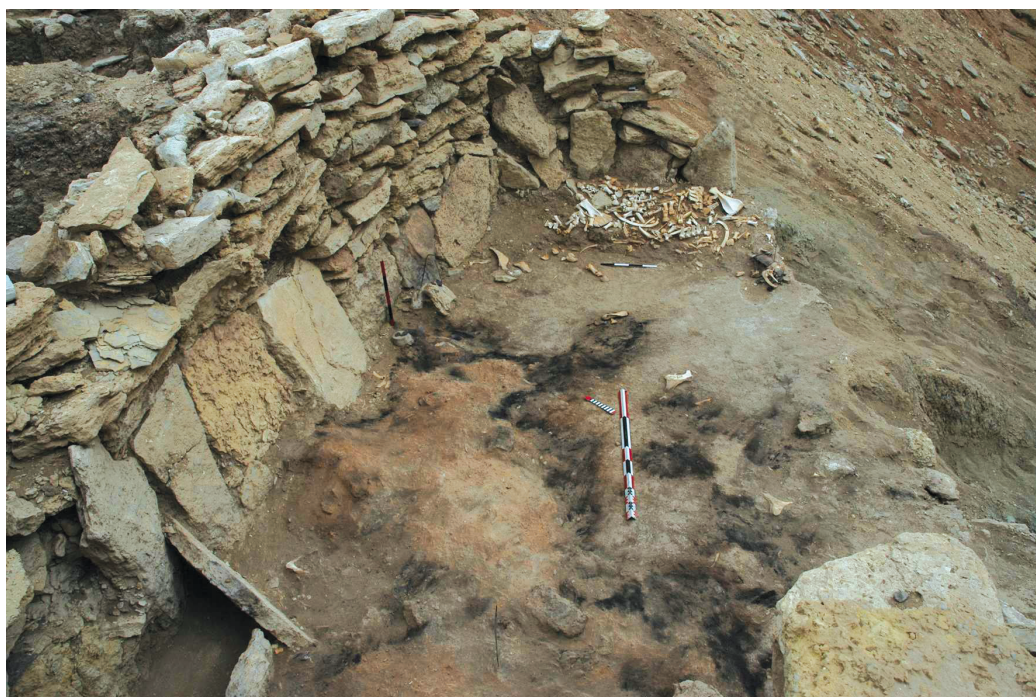


Fig. 28. Toksanbay Settlement. A room on the south-eastern slope of the remnant. On the floor there is calcined loam with a burnt layer from the fallen roof. On the left in the lower corner there is a sacrificial box, under the eastern wall there is a second sacrificial box. Photo: Tatyana Loshakova.

28-сур. Тоқсанбай қонысы. Оңтүстік-шығыс беткейдегі қоныс орыны. Еденде құлаған шатырдың күйген қабаты. Сол жақ төменгі бұрышта - құрбандық жәшігі, шығыс қабырғада - екінші құрбандық жәшігі. Суретке түсірген: Татьяна Лошакова.

Рис. 28. Поселение Тоқсанбай. Помещение на юго-восточном склоне останца. На полу прокаленный сгорелым слоем от упавшей кровли. Слева в нижнем углу ящик-жертвенник, под восточной стенкой – второй жертвенник. Фото: Татьяна Лошакова.

from the Pit Grave culture to the Final Bronze Age culture over a vast territory of the Eurasian space [Formozov 1984: 23].

Another ritual was recorded in room No. 2 (ritual dwelling) (Fig. 28). On the floor of the room, covered with felt and, apparently, animal skins, of which melted parts were preserved, ceramic vessels, a wooden bowl (?) with a copper plate-rim, a wooden dish (?) with an article made of horn on it were laid out, and trepals, chariot harness, of which two shield cheekpieces were preserved, as well as sacrificial food in the form of individual pieces of meat and parts of animal carcasses were laid out. The dwelling was undoubtedly intended for the performance of cult actions, including those associated with the cult of fire, and, possibly, was a kind of sanctuary in the settlement. Analysis of the entire set of materials suggests that it was deliberately set on fire before the forced abandonment of the settlement. After this departure, the dwelling ceased to function forever, although people returned here and, apparently, more than once, as evidenced by the sacrifices made after the fire. Two altars - one of the parts of animal carcasses laid out under the eastern wall in the area cleared from the fire, and the second in a box near the niche under the northern wall have a different character and different ritual actions. The investigated dwelling provided valuable information for the reconstruction of not only the everyday and economic aspects of the life of the inhabitants of the settlement, but also its worldview.

## Conclusion

To sum up, we can say that the settlement materials indicate a complex heterogeneous nature of the culture of the population that inhabited them. This unique type of culture existed here for a long time. It was distinguished by a unique adaptation to the extreme natural and geographical conditions of this hard-to-reach and desert region. The settlements concentrated in a small area can be considered as traces of an exclusively selective adaptation of the hunting and pastoral population, focused on exceptional, relatively favorable loci of space. The relief of Ustyurt, the alternation of stripes with vegetation of different vegetative development, created favorable conditions for seasonal migrations of cattle from the Qaraqum to the Southern Urals. And this made economic and pastoral activity of man possible in Ustyurt since ancient times. Considering these data, Ustyurt appears as one of the centers of the formation of a nomadic pastoral economy. The study of the Bronze Age settlements began to fill the chronological vacuum in the studies of this territory and signifies a breakthrough in the study of the ancient past of Ustyurt. At that time, the desert and semi-desert areas of the Eastern Caspian region and Ustyurt were the territory of contacts between the world of the Eurasian steppes and settled agricultural civilizations. It is already becoming clear that the obtained archaeological materials confirm the complexity of the historical and cultural processes in this part of the world and make it possible to re-evaluate the role of the cultures of the Eneolithic-Bronze Age in the study of the mechanism of migrations and processes of cultural mutual influences.

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