

**ANCIENT CITIES OF EASTERN ARAL SEA REGION**  
**Kurmankulov Zh.<sup>1</sup>, Utubayev Zh.<sup>2</sup> (Republic of Kazakhstan)**  
**Email: Kurmankulov331@scientifictext.ru**

<sup>1</sup>*Kurmankulov Zholdasbek - Candidate of Historical Sciences;*

<sup>2</sup>*Utubayev Zhanbolat - Master of Historical sciences,  
Institute of Archeology named after A.H. Margulana,  
Almaty, Republic of Kazakhstan*

**Abstract:** *on the territory of the ancient delta of the Syr Darya (Kyzylorda region, Kazakhstan), a chirikrabat culture is being formed, dating back to the IV-II centuries. BC. descendants of the Central Asian Scythians - "Sakov". Where, continuity is clearly manifested not only in material culture, but also funeral rites and rituals of the population of the late bronze period of the lower reaches of the Syr Darya. The most developed part of the Chirikrabat area is characterized by an oasis concentration of settlements, some of which have a strengthened character. Their culture is characterized by fortifications, the construction of urban settlements, powerful fortresses and rural settlements, as well as the construction of irrigation systems. The largest monuments of the urban type - the fortresses in the region include Chirik-Rabat, Babish-mullah, Balandy 1 (Bulanda), Kabyl, Alyb, etc.*

*Among them, two early centers - Chirik-Rabat and Babish-mullah - can be distinguished. The first is considered to be the refuge and residence of the leaders. The second center - Babish-mullah - is the center of a large agricultural oasis whose paleoeconomic system was based on irrigation farming.*

**Keywords:** *urbanization, culture, ancient cities.*

**АНТИЧНЫЕ ГОРОДИЩА ВОСТОЧНОГО ПРИАРАЛЬЯ**  
**Курманкулов Ж.<sup>1</sup>, Утубаев Ж.<sup>2</sup> (Республика Казахстан)**

<sup>1</sup>*Курманкулов Жолдасбек - кандидат исторических наук, главный научный сотрудник;*

<sup>2</sup>*Утубаев Жанболат - магистр исторических наук, старший научный сотрудник,  
Институт археологии им. А.Х. Маргулана,  
г. Алматы, Республика Казахстан*

**Аннотация:** *на территории древней дельты Сырдарьи (Кызылординская область, Казахстан) формируется чирикратская культура, датируемая IV-II вв. до н.э., потомков среднеазиатских скифов – «Саков». Где четко проявляется преемственность не только в материальной культуре, но и в погребальных обрядах и ритуалах населения позднебронзового периода низовья Сырдарьи. Для наиболее развитой части чирикратского ареала характерна оазисная концентрация поселений, часть которых имеет укрепленный характер. Их культура характеризуется фортификационными сооружениями, строительством поселений городского типа, мощными крепостями и сельскими поселениями, а также сооружением оросительных систем. К наиболее крупным памятникам городского типа – крепостям - в области относятся Чирик-рабат, Бабиш-мулла, Баланды 1 (Буланды), Кабыл, Алыб и т.д. Среди них можно выделить два раннегородских центра - Чирик-рабат и Бабиш-мулла. Первый считается убежищем и резиденцией вождей. Второй центр - Бабиш-мулла является центром крупного земледельческого оазиса, палеоэкономическая система которого была основана на ирригационном земледелии.*

**Ключевые слова:** *урбанизация, культура, городища.*

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The lower reaches of the Syrdarya are the most saturated territory of archaeological monuments. The natural features of the Eastern Priaralye contributed to the development of early farming here, beginning with the Bronze Age. At the same time, this area is of special interest as a zone of direct contacts between traditional farmers and pastoralists by the interconnection between nomadic and sedentary peoples of the Central Asian-Kazakhstan region. Here the processes of cultural genesis proceeded in such natural and ecological conditions that contributed to the development of both agriculture and cattle breeding in ancient times. The region was an intermediate buffer zone between the southern agricultural oases of the early urban civilization and the world of mobile nomadic pastoralists of Eurasia.

A brilliant manifestation of these links can be traced on archaeological monuments of bronze eneolith, in particular on the materials of the mausoleum of Northern Tagisken (Kyzylorda region, Kazakhstan), which was noted by its predecessors. Elements of cultural influence can be traced in a rectangular layout, not characteristic of pastoralists, buildings using rectangular bricks, in the facts of involvement in the cult of fire [7, p. 200 – 204; 3, p. 295].

During the conducted field research from 1960 to 63 in the technique of construction of Tagisken mausoleums, a building material – brick was discovered. It is unconventional for steppe cultures of the Bronze Age. At the same time, the layout of the mausoleum itself undoubtedly reflects the local, established traditions of building monumental buildings in the form of a circle. So, in the internal design of the mausoleums, wooden elements were widely used here – pillars and poles coated with clay, i.e. those elements that are well known from the materials of settlements and burial grounds of the Andronov type. These facts show that the mausoleums of Northern Tagisken carry in themselves planning structures that combine the traditions of the Andronov circle culture and components that are undoubtedly associated with the southern influence of agricultural culture, which M.A. Itina considers the ancient Bactrian [4, p. 36].

Available now archaeological materials allows to distinguish three stages of development of early urbanization in the lower reaches of the Syrdarya. The first period is pre-urban: the X-end of the 5th century BC, studied mainly on the funerary monuments of Northern and Southern Tagisken and Uigarak. The second period – the initial urbanization: IV – I centuries BC, when the first urban-type settlements appear (Chirikrabat culture). The third period is a developed urbanization: I-VI centuries AD – the emergence of urban culture, the urban type of the emergence of settlements.

At the first stage, groups of the population appeared in the lower reaches of the Syrdarya, firmly settled on the ground, for which irrigation-based agriculture became a priority occupation, combined with cattle breeding.

Further urbanization was received in the second half of the first millennium BC, when the traditions developed by the agricultural cultures of the south of Central Asia appeared on the territory of the Aral Sea area.

At this time, the ancient Khorezm culture is formed in the Prisarakamysh delta and the oldest fortress of Kuzeli-gyr (Khorezm region, Uzbekistan) associated with it. Excavations have shown that the fortress survived two construction periods. For the early period of the construction of the fortress Kuzeli-gyr, the use of rectangular brick with a ratio of 1: 2 (50x25x10 cm), which is not typical for the subsequent classical antique period of Khorezm, where large square bricks (40x40x10 cm) was used, is typical. The lower layer was dated to the VI – beginnings of the Vth cc. BC, and the upper construction horizon of Kuzeli-gyr, refers to the end of V in BC. E. [7, p. 96 – 109].

On the territory of the ancient delta of the Syrdarya, in the Kyzylorda region of Kazakhstan, at this time a Chirikrabat culture is being formed. In this culture continuity is manifested not only in material culture, but also funeral rituals and rituals with the culture of the late Bronze Age of the lower Syrdarya. A part of the Chirikrabat culture is characterized by the concentration of long-term settlements by groups. Among them there is a strengthened nature. There are two early centers: Chirik-Rabat and Babish-mullah. The first is considered to be the refuge and residence of the leaders, the second has the right square layout, a defensive wall with a powerful gateway to the donjon, with a complex planned, inside the so-called Great House, which was supposedly the residence of the Achaemenid satrap of the 4th century. BC [2, p. 32-33].

Excavations of the Sak burial grounds and fortifications of the Chirikrabat culture in the last century were intensively conducted by the detachments of the Khorezm archaeological and ethnographic expedition. In our time since 2004, excavations are continued by the Chirikrabat archaeological expedition led by Zh. Kurmankulov [5, p. 216-217].

**Chirik-Rabat ancient city.** The monument is located 300 km south-west of the Kyzyl-Orda city, on the left bank of the dry riverbed of Zhanadarya. The settlement occupies the entire area of a natural hill measuring 850x600m stretched from north to south. The settlement is fortified with a powerful fortification system. At the base of the hill, a ditch with a width of up to 40 m was dug, a depth up to 4.5 m from the ditch outcrops was built a powerful outer shaft. The present height of it is up to 3m. The ditch is encircled with a shaft from the inside. In addition, the uppermost part of the hill is surrounded by a third shaft.

It should be noted that the ancient city was settling several times. The oldest part of it is the northern, it is the higher part of the hill, there are two large mounds and three ring-shaped structures with high walls. Apart from that, in this part, the space between the barrows, as it turned out in 2014, was filled with rectangular and oval gravestones. Thereby, originally on the high part of the hill was a burial ground. Perhaps simultaneously in the southern part of the hill there were temporary residential buildings surrounded by a rectangular defensive shaft. At this time, a new powerful adobe wall is built on the outer rampart, with a height of up to 4 m and a width of up to 4.5 m with a shooting gallery of up to 1.8 m wide. It is reinforced with towers of rectangular and oval shape, which protruded from the walls for 6 m and were communicated from the inside with a shooting gallery. The fortress wall and the towers have arrow-shaped loopholes. Entrance to the fortress is visually traced in three places: in the western wall, on the south wall and in the north-eastern wall of the monument in the form of the L-shaped pre-maze.

In 2004, at the new stage of the study of ancient settlements of the Aral Sea, the main object of study was the Chirik-Rabat settlement. Excavations were laid in the northern part of the ancient settlement, inside the area of the third defensive wall, between the royal burial mounds [6, p. 249-251].

Currently, it is difficult to explain the reason for the erection of shafts around funerary monuments. However, one must take into account that in the vicinity of Chirik-Rabat there are ramp-shaped fences located on the Sengir-tam and Tagisken funeral complexes. At the Sengir-s burial ground, we tracked six fences, and on

Tagisken - two. Fences in most cases had a meridional direction. Near the fence there are chains of mounds. Our studies have shown that the present time can be called into question the claim that the Chirik-Rabat settlement is a residential settlement. In any case, no living quarters or major structures of raw materials were found on the monument. It should be assumed that the site was used as a burial place for nobles and tribal chiefs who inhabited the neighborhood.

**Babish-mullah ancient city.** It is located between the two side channels of Zhanadarya, 40 km to the SSV from Chirik-Rabat.

For the first time the ruins of Babish-mullah were examined by the reconnaissance detachment of the expedition in 1946 [8, p. 57]. At the same time, a large ancient settlement Babish-mullah 1 and a separate building Babish-mullah 2 were plotted on the map, a plan of the fortress was removed and the lifting material was collected. Additional survey of Babish-mullah was carried out in 1948, 1949 and 1957. With a detailed survey in the last century and by us in 2004 of the entire oasis area, several unfortified settlements stretched along the irrigation canal, to the west of Babish-mullah 1 and 2, connecting the side channels of Zhanadarya, were discovered.

The center of the whole complex was Babish-mullah1, a large fortress with irregular outlines, surrounded by a thick, eroded brick wall (5.3 m thick) erected on a pahovite basement. The outer wall is protected by semicircular towers; on the inner perimeter is observed the construction of the fort. In the northern part of it there is a square citadel (100x100 m), surrounded by a wall with towers with arrow-shaped embrasures.

During the excavations, it was found that the fortress has several construction periods, but not beyond the chronological limits of the IY - II centuries. BC. Analysis of ceramics from excavations allows us to speak of the belonging of all three horizons to one historical period.

On the site of ancient settlement, except for ceramics, triangular bronze arrowheads of Scythian time were found, Y - IY cc. BC, numerous fragments of rough tools and quartzite teas, a biconic bead of blue clear glass [7, p. 154-165, pic. 87, 89].

**Conclusion.** Summarizing the brief survey of the monuments of the 1st millennium BC on the monuments of the Eastern Aral Sea region, the following can be summarized: the addition of urban culture was influenced by the Central Asian states, and the role of a repeater was performed by the settled-agricultural civilization of the ancient Khorezm and Bactria, which appeared on the verge of the 7th-16th centuries BC.

Among the ancient settlements summarized above, Babish-mullah is clearly distinguished as the center of a relatively large irrigation area. The urban features of this monument are manifested, first of all, in the size of the fortress itself, which was enclosed by a fortified wall with towers. It also should be noted, a strong, fortified, square in terms of the citadel with a powerful defensive fortification-the "donjon" and a central monumental building-the "Big House", which can rightly be considered as a palace. In addition, there was an agricultural district around Babish-mullah, on the territory of which traces of handicraft production were fixed and which should be treated as a suburb. Hereby, on this monument all the signs of the tripartite urban settlement are realized, which gives grounds to consider Babish-mullah a city, possibly the capital of the state or a tribal association.

The town of Chirik-Rabat with the Sak burial ground stands apart. We are interested in the question of comparing the Sak burial ground of Chirik-Rabat with the geros of Herodotus. In written sources, there is an indication of the location of the Early Scythian (Saks) necropolises in a remote, hard-to-reach, hidden from outside eyes area. It can be assumed that by some parameters the Chirik-Rabat settlement is similar to a sacred, sacral burial place.

Thus, according to the ancient Iranian tradition, recorded by M. Boyce, the sacred place where religious rituals were performed (later called Zoroastrians "pavi", that is, "clean place") was arranged quite simply, which corresponded to the life of the semi-nomadic people. It represented a flat plot of land, the Iranians had a rectangle marked by prayers with furrows (in order to avoid the influence of all evil forces). To mark the sacred place, the outlined territory was sprinkled with clean water and once again consecrated with prayers. The priest sat in front of the fire, which was placed in a small vessel, with his legs crossed, on the ground. Obviously, these actions and "protective fences of earth and stones around her burials (burial mounds) were characteristic" and in other territories of the Scythian-Sak world. All these features are characteristic of the modern Zoroastrian ritual, and parallels to them exist in the everyday life of Brahmanism [1].

Chirik-Rabat, at least at the early stage of its existence, was primarily a huge necropolis and a cult center associated with the funerary cult now seems to be beyond doubt.

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