



On The Settlement Agricultural Culture Of Ustrushana In The Archaic And Ancient Periods

Pardaev Sherzod Muhtorkulovich¹

¹Agency for Cultural Heritage Junior Researcher, Samarkand Institute of Archaeology named after Ya. Gulamov, and email : pardaev_sherzod@mail.ru

Abstract

This article describes the local characteristics of the sedentary farming culture that emerged in the central part of "Ancient Ustrushona" in the 7th-6th centuries BC, developed from antiquity and reached a high level in the future, the influence of the Fergana and Sughd agrarian economy, the occurrence of settlement processes in the initial rural areas, the emergence of the Nurtepa culture and its spread to the foothills and lower reaches of relatively fast water sources such as Khojamushkentsay and Shorbulaksay, and new information is provided about the cities that emerged in the western regions of the country in antiquity.

Keywords: "Ancient Ustrushona", farming culture, "Nurtepa culture", Kiropol, Kurukada, Old Khavos, Saganaktepa, steppe bronze, Kairoukum, Khantepa, Syrdarya, Shahriston, Khojamushkentsay, Mugtepa.

1. Introduction

According to historical sources and samples of archaeological material culture, from the end of the 3rd century AD to the beginning of the 4th century AD, the Kushan Empire, which played a significant role in the ancient history of the Turan-Turkestan land, began to disintegrate, and in the future, the cultural oases between the two rivers of Central Asia were divided into administrative divisions based on their natural geographical location. Over time, local "khokimiyats" with independent governance were formed in these areas, and in the 4th-6th centuries, relatively small states based on agrarian farms, engaged in settled farming, appeared on the political map of the region. During this period, along with such well-known states as Sogd, Bactria, Tokharistan, Fergana, Choch-Ilok, and Khorezm, there was also the state of Ustrushona.

Ustrushona is located in a geographical region of great economic and military strategic importance in the history of the peoples of Central Asia, in the "triangle" formed by Fergana to the east, Choch-Ilok to the north, and Central Sogd to the west, and has long served as a "relay" for these historical lands, especially the pastoral peoples of the Middle Syr Darya. V.V. Bartold interprets the name of this region in his works as "Strushona" or "Ostrushona", A.G. Malyavkin, based on early medieval Chinese sources, calls it "Shuaidushona", "Suduysushona", "Sudushina", "Tzebuzyuna" ("Tzebudana"). The famous Ustrushona scholar N.N. This name,

*Corresponding author
Article history

: pardaev_sherzod@mail.ru

: submitted; 2025/9/15 revised; 2025/10/23 accepted; 2025/11/10 published; 2025/12/10



interpreted by Negmatov as “Ustrushona”, was later proven by “Ustrushona” based on documents found in the Mug cave [1].

V.A. Livshits to be

Since the existence of the term Ustrushona in ancient written sources is still unknown and ambiguous, the use of the term “Ancient Ustrushona” in quotation marks in the coverage of issues related to the history and material culture of the early Iron and Antique periods is currently accepted among relevant specialists. It is worth recognizing that this case is similar in content, meaning, and methodology when applying it to the expression “Great Khorezm”.

2. Research Method

Thus, like all historical regions of Central Asia, ancient Ustrushona has always been considered a region with many geographical advantages for human habitation and activity. The abundance of irrigated and arable land for agriculture and gardening, the favorable conditions of the foothills and steppe pastures for cattle breeding, and in general, the abundance of such natural climatic opportunities and factors led to the beginning of the semi-sedentary and sedentary life of the population, the history of rural and urban construction, and culture in Ustrushona and its surroundings from a very early date.

The ancient Ustrushona region was not left out of the historical processes of the early Iron Age that took place in a number of cultural regions of Central Asia, the names of which were mentioned above. As a result of constant research conducted in the territory of “Ancient Ustrushona”, to date, 30 archaeological monuments of the ancient period of the region have been identified, of which excavations and prospecting studies have been conducted in 11.

3. Result

The territory of “Ancient Ustrushona” is divided into north-eastern and south-western economic zones, depending on the geographical location of archaeological monuments. The main part of these monuments consists of several groups gathered around large running water sources.

Seven military fortresses of the Early Iron Age are recorded in “Ancient Ustrushona”. These settlements were built during the Achaemenid era to protect the northern borders of this empire, and later cities arose on the foundations of these fortresses and around them. The oldest of these is the Nurtepa monument [2].

Main part. Nurtepa is the largest monument in the territory of “Ancient Ustrushona”, it is located in the area called Khovatog in the Oratepa district, on a hill in the middle part of a low mountain range extending from southeast to northwest on the left bank of the Nizhonisay River, extending into the interior of Mirzachul. The total area of the monument is 18 hectares, extending from south to north. It has a semi-oval shape, consists of two parts - an arch and a city. The Nurtepa monument was discovered in 1979, and research was carried out on it in 1980-86. This monument dates back to the 7th-6th centuries BC. Also, written sources express a number of interesting and at the same time controversial ideas about another city of ancient Ustrushona, mentioned in Kuruka (Kiresht, Kiropol). The above-mentioned sources report on Kurukada-Kiropol, which is believed to be located on the site of Mugtepa, which had a total area of 6 hectares, located on a natural hill in the present-day city of Uratepa. According to this information, the city was surrounded by a not very high raised wall (earthen mound). The shahristan also had a separate defensive wall. According to archaeological sources, life in

Mugtepa began in the 5th century BC (Koshelenko, 1985. C. 200). On the banks of the Syrdarya on the borders of Ustrushona and Fergana, in the territory of the present-day city of Khujand, another settlement was discovered, founded in the 6th-5th centuries BC. The remains of defensive fortifications, walls, and architectural structures here have been studied from an archaeological point of view. Studies show that this city was later conquered by Alexander the Great and in the 10th century BC. It was conquered in 329, and Alexandria Eshkata was built on the site of the city [3].

In Northern Ustrushona, the archaic sites of Khontep, Eski Khavos and Saganaktepa I, II, discovered in recent years, complement the system of ancient monuments of the oasis in terms of natural and geographical features and provide historical continuity in terms of the period of construction and operation (6th-5th centuries BC).

Khontep is an ancient monument in the Khodzhamushkentsoy small oasis, located on the right bank of the Khodzhamushkentsoy, 1.5 km northwest of the village of Savat. The monument was studied by A. Gritsina in 1985-1987. The hill is a quadrangular (70-80 m) oval-shaped hill with a height of 4 m and a total area of about 1 hectare. The monument is two-layered, the lower layer is a large rural settlement dating back to the 5th-4th centuries BC, and the upper layer is a large rural settlement dating back to the 4th-3rd centuries [4].

Eski Khovos is an ancient monument in the small oasis of Shakhristansoy. Its city is located near the railway station, on the right bank of the Shorbulaksoy. The monument consists of an arch and two adjacent hills. The total area of the monument is more than 10 hectares, of which the arch occupies about 2 hectares. The arch is located in the northwestern part of the monument, has a square shape (140x130 m), and its height is 13 m. The monument was first studied in 1935 by M.E. Masson, and later in 1980 by A.I. Bilolov. In 1984, 1988-89, it was studied by the Syrdarya group led by A.A. Gritsina and M.H. Pardaev. Based on the materials obtained as a result of excavations, the lower layers of the monument date back to the 10th century BC. It dates back to the 1st - 2nd centuries AD. Due to the fact that water drained from the pits during the excavation, the research was not completed. Random finds recorded near the monument indicate that it was also active in archaic times.

Saganaktepa I - is located on the right bank of Khojamushkentsoy, 400 m south of the Hontepa monument. The monument was studied by A. Gritsina in 1988. The monument consists of two hills located opposite each other, one of which has a triangular shape, the second extends from northwest to southeast. The height of the first hill is 1.5 m, the total area is 42x10 m, the height of the second hill is 2 m, the total area is 32x16 m. The monument dates back to the 1st century BC. It is dated to the 4th-3rd centuries [5].

Saganaktepa II - located 450 m south of the Saganaktepa I monument, it also consists of an oval-shaped hill extending from northwest to southeast. The height of the hill is about 2 m, the total area is 31x8 m. The monument is single-layered, its cultural layer is 1 m. Saganaktepa II was studied by A. Gritsina in 1988 and is dated to the 4th-3rd centuries BC.

Currently, all of the above-mentioned ancient Ustrushona settlements are associated with certain archaeological monuments. These are Nurtepa in Khovatog, Shirin in Kurkat, Mugtepa in Oratepa, a settlement in Khujand and the monuments of Khantepa, Saganaktepa I, II in Savat (northern Ustrushona), and Old Ustrushona in Khovas.

As a result of excavations, the chronological date of the samples of material culture obtained from the above monuments was relatively dated based on the materials of Fergana (Eilaton culture), Tashkent oasis (Burguluk culture), Northern Bactria and Margiana monuments of the first half and middle of the 1st millennium BC, and the materials of the Kairakkum culture belonging to the steppe culture. The culture that spread in the territory of

ancient Ustrushona attracted researchers more, in particular, with the discovery and study of the Nurtepa monument.

A unique “Nurtepa culture” spread in the area that includes the left bank of the Syrdarya, Ustrushona, Shahristan in the south and the settlements near Savat in the west (Khontepa, Saganaktepa I, II). By the way, it should be noted that in the middle of the 1st millennium BC. BC. the Eilaton culture, which arose in the western provinces of the Fergana Valley as a direct continuation of the Chust farming culture, had its cultural impact on the monuments of the Nurtepa culture. The Eilaton culture actively influenced not only the border areas of ancient Ustrushona, such as the Fergana and Khojabakirgansoy valleys, but also its northern borders. This can be seen in the pottery vessels found at the sites of Hontepa and Saganaktepa I, II. These ceramic vessels are very similar to the materials of Eilaton and Nurtepa, and on this basis, the Eilaton and Nurtepa cultures of the 1st millennium BC. BC. It dates back to the VI-V centuries [6]. To date, 8 material monuments belonging to the most ancient period of the region, the Nurtepa culture (VII-IV centuries BC), have been identified.

The Nurtepa culture embodies all the monuments of the most ancient period in the Ustrushona region. The Nurtepa culture plays an important role as a starting point in studying the chronological periodicity of the oldest material monuments of the ancient Ustrushona region, its material and spiritual culture, and its connections. At the same time, these monuments also provide information about the political history of the region, in particular, about the routes of A. Macedonsky and his successors to the Yaksart River. At the same time, they clarify some concepts in the spiritual life of the Ustrushona people of the most ancient period, including fire worship and the introduction of Zoroastrianism here.

From this it can be concluded that the formation of the first agricultural culture in Ustrushona is closely connected with the history of the nomadic Scythian tribes settled in Nurtepa and its surroundings. The Nurtepa culture, which formed in central Ustrushona, later spread to the northern and northwestern borders of this region as the initial basis of settled agriculture.

In the territory of “Ancient Ustrushona” 17 monuments dating back to the 4th-1st centuries BC have been identified, the main part of which dates back to the early antique period. As the causes and consequences of the next stage of urban and rural construction in Ustrushona, we can cite the conquest of Alexander the Great and the political events associated with it in subsequent periods. During this period, cities began to emerge as centers of trade and crafts, the population grew, magnificent architectural buildings - palaces and houses of the rulers - were built, and the construction plan became more complex. As a logical result of population growth and these processes, the construction of rural areas also developed. In the 1st centuries of the new era, special attention began to be paid to the development of the border areas of Ustrushona. During this period, city-type fortresses such as Munchoktepa were built. These structures functioned as the center of several strongholds that formed a chain of defenses on the border (Pardayev, 1994. p. 68). Urban monuments such as Urdatepa (Zomin), Kaliyatepa (Jizzakh), Kurgantepa (Gallaorol) appear. Apparently, at the turn of the 3rd-2nd centuries BC, the movement of nomadic tribes from the Yaksart region led to the cessation of life in a number of “ancient Ustrushona” settlements. This period coincides with the period of rising living standards in the largest monument in the region, Nurtepa. During this period, no major changes were observed in the material culture of the monuments of the “Nurtepa culture” [7]. Thus, the 7th-6th centuries BC can be recognized as the first stage of the construction of settlements (fortresses, cities) in ancient Ustrushona. The development of the material culture of the ancient period of the region can be traced in several directions - architecture, crafts, art monuments.

The most ancient period of the urban planning of the "Ustrushona" region is studied mainly on the basis of materials from the Nurtepa and Khujand monuments, but unfortunately they do not yet provide sufficient information for the classification of urban planning of this period. In Nurtepa, relatively large (5x3.5 m) residential basements of this period, closed with light barriers, were discovered. In addition, the monument may have also contained light above-ground structures of the frame type. In general, the architecture of Nurtepa made extensive use of the microrelief and natural conditions of the local area. In the construction of the outer wall of the monument in the 7th-6th centuries BC, a natural loess embankment with a width of 4.25 m and a height of 1.2-1.5 m was used. A 2.1 m wide mud wall was built parallel to the inner side of the loess embankment, resulting in a narrow passage 1.4 m wide between them. In the initial stages of construction of Nurtepa, mud bricks were mainly used, and later, from the 4th century BC, two different sizes of mud bricks were used. Mud bricks were cast in square (33x33x11 cm) and rectangular (40x28x10; 43x33x11 cm) molds [8]. Mud bricks were also widely used in the construction of ancient Khujand. In particular, in the construction of the defensive walls of Khujand dating back to the 5th century BC, raw bricks with dimensions of 42x43x32x14-15; 46x26-28x13 cm were used. Bricks of this type are characteristic of the constructions of the Archaic period of Central Asia.

The construction characteristics of administrative architectural structures of monuments of the ancient period have not yet been fully studied [9]. Although several rooms of luxurious buildings built of raw bricks and pakhsa have been excavated and studied in Nurtepa city, the architectural data obtained from them are still not sufficient to draw conclusions about the internal, external views, and architectural plans of administrative buildings dating back to the 6th-5th centuries BC. Architectural structures dating back to the 5th-3rd centuries BC have been identified in the monuments of Khontepa, Saganaktepa I, II, which are part of the Nurtepa culture. Basements and semi-basements were used for living in Khontep, and pakhsa houses with stones dug into the ground in Saganaktepe.

The most common finds during the research are pottery samples. Ceramic vessels serve as the main source for determining the chronological period of life in the monument, after numismatics [10]. In particular, the service of the pottery complex is of great importance in determining the date of the ancient period, when there were no monetary units. The field of pottery, in addition to determining the period to which the monuments belong, is of great importance in determining the social standard of living of the peoples who lived in this region, their daily life activities, the development of material culture, their material and cultural relations with neighboring regions, and in solving many other socio-economic problems.

The complex of pottery vessels from the Nurtepa monument provides relatively detailed information about the pottery craftsmanship of ancient Ustrushona in the 7th-4th centuries BC. Nurtepa pottery is divided into two groups - hand-made and wheel-made [11]. The complex of handmade pottery vessels mainly consists of date pots, bowls, cauldrons and pans. The bowls and date pots were made of high-quality clay, well-seasoned, a small amount of fine sand was added to the clay composition and baked evenly in a kiln. The upper side of the vessels was smoothed and painted with a white, reddish or dark brown glaze. Special attention was paid to the surface decoration of the bowls, which were polished to a shine [12]. Their curvature was straight or curved inward. The rim of the dates is slightly turned outward, its low neck is connected to the ovoid body, and the body is flat, flat bottom. The body of the cauldrons is round, the rim is straight or slightly turned outward. In most cases, uneven fabric and mold marks remain on the bottom of the cauldrons. The vessels are smoothed on the sides, inside and outside. On the rim of the cauldrons, or slightly below it, "ghurra"-like ears are protruding from the shoulder [13]. The inside of the cauldrons is smoothed, the rim and side walls are vertically flat. In most cases, their rim and bottom have the same dimensions.

According to the structure and manufacturing technique, the handmade ceramic vessels of the Nurtepa monument are close to the ceramic vessel complexes of the cities of the Kairakkum, Burguluk Steppe Bronze and the Early Iron Age of Northern Bactria [14].

The pottery complex made on the pottery wheel is usually covered with red, white or pink engobe. Large-shaped vessels - humms and humchas - have a thickened upper part that is turned outward. The base of humms is round, and there are also traces of fabric molding on them. The rim diameter of the bowls is wide, the base is flat, smooth. Deep bowls are round and have a flat bottom, the bottom is slightly turned inward. On the outside, they are sometimes decorated with horizontal lines. Large cups with a one-sided handle on the neck are also found. In addition, small and narrow-bottomed, round-shaped bodies, straight-sided cups, and high-bottomed vases have been found at Nurtepa. This Nurtepa pottery complex, made on a fast-rotating pottery wheel, is close to the North Bactrian pottery complexes of the same period [15].

4. Conclusion and Recommendation

Archaeological research shows that agriculture based on artificial irrigation systems is one of the most important discoveries made at a certain period in the historical destiny of mankind. Because irrigated agriculture accelerated the development of society, created the initial division of labor, and became the basis for the formation of the first political systems - states.

Thus, research shows that the center of the first settled agricultural culture in Ustrushana was formed in the area of the hills and lowlands to the west of the present-day city of Urtepa, in the Nizhonisay basin, formed by the confluence of several large and small springs originating from the Turkestan mountains, in the 7th century BC. At the same time, as a result of the search and excavation studies conducted in this cultural oasis, dozens of archaic, antique and medieval monuments have been recorded around the villages of Nizhoni, Yukari Sarmich, Pastki Sarmich, Changovul, Balandchakir, Pastkichakir, Savat, Khojamushkent... This testifies to the fact that the culture of sedentary peasant farms actively operated in this wonderful cultural oasis from the archaic period to the late Middle Ages. 90% of the above-mentioned villages are currently located in Uzbekistan. This is a very important and huge source for studying the history of the beginning, development and end of the Nurtepa culture. Its study is one of the most urgent tasks of modern anthropology.

5. References

- [1] Belyaeva T. V. The Nurtepa Settlement. AO. Moscow. 1986. p. 478.
- [2] Belyaeva T. V. Research of Nurtepa in 1982. ART. Issue XXII. Dushanbe. 1990. pp. 23 to 33.
- [3] Buryakov Yu. F., Gritsina A. A. Maverannahr on the Great Silk Road. Samarkand and Bishkek. 2006. p. 111.
- [4] Gritsina A. A. Archaeological Monuments of the Syrdarya Region. Tashkent. 1992. p. 15.
- [5] Ancient Zaamin. Tashkent. 1994. p. 35.
- [6] Koshelenko G. A. Ustrushana. The Most Ancient States of the Caucasus and Central Asia. Moscow. 1985. p. 200.
- [7] Negmatov N. N. Khujand. The Main Stages of History. Dushanbe. 1986. p. 7.

- [8] Negmatov N. N., Belyaeva T. V. Research of Nur Tepe in 1981. ART. Issue XXI. Dushanbe. 1988. pp. 19 to 31. Negmatov N. N., Belyaeva T. V. Research of Nur Tepe in 1981. ART. Issue XXI. Dushanbe. 1988. pp. 19 to 31.
- [9] Pardaev M. H., Tuychiboev B. B. Ustrushona in ancient and early Middle Ages. Tashkent. 2017. pp. 3 to 4.
- [10] Mukhamedjanov A. R. Agriculture and settlement systems of Central Asia in the early Iron Age. Fan Publishing. Tashkent. 1981. pp. 102 to 119.
- [11] Grenet F. Central Asian rural economy in the pre Islamic period. Presses Universitaires de France. Paris. 1995. pp. 54 to 68.
- [12] Sagdullaev A. S. Early agricultural culture of the upper Zeravshan and Ustrushana regions. Samarkand State University Press. Samarkand. 1990. pp. 88 to 96.
- [13] Rahimov K. Ancient irrigation networks and rural settlements of Ustrushana. Institute of Archaeology. Tashkent. 2003. pp. 140 to 152.
- [14] Pardaev M. Kh. Dizak, a Trading Post on the Great Silk Road. Interaction of Nomadic and Sedentary Cultures on the Great Silk Road. TD. Alma Ata. 1991. p. 45.
- [15] Pardaev M. H. Material and cultural ties of ancient Fergana and Ustrushona. Fergana in ancient and early Middle Ages. Samarkand. 1994. pp. 67 to 68.