

ANCIENT MONUMENTS OF NORTHERN BACTRIA: PORT CITIES AND CULTURAL CONNECTIONS

Nishonov Jamshid

Asian University of Technologies of
the Republic of Uzbekistan

Lecturer of the Department of Social
Humanitarian and Digital Technologies

Annotation: This article describes the study of ancient port cities and defensive structures in Northern Bactria based on historical sources.

Key words: Termez, Ayritom, Greco-Bactrian Kingdom, Kushan Empire, Buddhism, defensive fortresses, Amu Darya, Sogdiana, artificial irrigation.

Introduction: Approximately 30 monuments dating back to the 4th century BC have been identified in the region of Northern Bactria. The majority of these are located along waterways, primarily in the Amu Darya basin. Port cities, built in the area of the Amu Darya crossings, were of significant importance in the territory of Bactria. The port cities of Kampirtepa, Ayritom, Old Termez (Tarmita), and Ai Khanoum were built along the Amu Darya basin. These port cities made a significant contribution to the development of international trade, economic, and cultural relations.

Main part

During the Achaemenid period, the crossing point on the Amu Darya was in the Shurob area, and the Shurobtepa fortress served as a port city. By the time of Alexander the Great and the Seleucids, Kampirtepa had become the main fortress in the crossing area. During the Kushan period, the number of crossing points increased even further: crossing routes were also established in the areas of Chushka-Guzar, Kara-Kamar, and Kelif. People lived on both banks of the crossing areas.

In the late 3rd century BC and the first half of the 2nd century BC, the Greco-Bactrian Kingdom existed in the territory of ancient Bactria. During the rule of the

Greco-Bactrian Kingdom, Hellenistic culture further developed in Bactria. Greek influence was strong in urban construction and the social life of society. During this period, traces of Hellenistic culture were clearly evident in the cities of Kampirtepa and Ayritom in Northern Bactria, and in the cities of Ai Khanoum, Dilbarjin, and Jigatepa in Southern Bactria.

The Kampirtepa monument is one of the largest cities in the Northern Bactria region, dating back to the late 4th century BC – mid-2nd century AD. The monument is located on the right bank of the Amu Darya, 0.6 km west of the village of Shurob in the Muzrabod district of the Surkhandarya region. The monument has been studied since 1972 by an archaeological expedition led by Academician E.V. Rtveladze. The city is located along the coast from west to east for a length of 400 meters, covering an area of 5 hectares. The fortress consists of two parts: the citadel and the "lower city." It has a strong defense system. The citadel is defended by a 5-meter-wide defensive wall and a moat. During the excavation of Kampirtepa, streets, a temple, a city treasury, and craft workshops were found.

Recent studies suggest that the monument was originally established as a Greek phrourium, that is, a defensive point or a city serving as a port. Researchers have identified traces of a convenient bay for ships, a pier, and a port lighthouse here. E.V. Rtveladze, in his research, compares the results of written sources and archaeological research and argues that Kampirtepa is the Alexandria on the Oxus. The most developed period of Kampirtepa dates back to the 1st–2nd centuries AD, and during this period the city (during the Kushan period) further developed and became a city performing functions such as customs and control of waterways related to major trade operations. A Buddhist temple was discovered near the gate of the city citadel. Temples related to Zoroastrianism, Buddhism, and local religious beliefs have been found in the city.

Another of the largest cities in the Northern Bactria region was Termez, or Tarmita, which is today considered the Old Termez monument. It was built at the Amu Darya crossing, at the intersection of local and international trade routes. V.

Tomaschek indicated that the word "Termez" was taken from the Bactrian language, meaning "settlement on the other side of the river." The city is located 7 km northwest of the current city of Termez. The city was originally built on a natural hill on the right bank of the Amu Darya. The citadel is rectangular in shape and covers an area of 10 hectares.

In the second half of the 20th century, researchers suggested that Old Termez might be Alexandria on the Oxus. However, later studies did not confirm this. The most developed period of the city was during the Greco-Bactrian and Kushan rule. In the 3rd–2nd centuries BC, the city was called "Demetria," and during the Kushan period, it was called "Tarmida." During the Kushan period, the Fayaztepa and Karatepa Buddhist monasteries were built, and the region also became a major Buddhist religious and political center of the Kushan Empire.

One of the major ancient cities of Bactria is Ayritam. It was built in the 2nd century BC as a port city on the right bank of the Amu Darya, 18 km east of Termez, on the Amu Darya crossing. The city was studied in the 1930s by the Termez Archaeological Expedition led by M.Ye. Masson, and in the 1960s by scientists from the Uzbekistan Art Studies Expedition. The port city stretches 3 km from north to south and is located on an area of 90 hectares. The city was defended by a three-sided defensive wall. During the Kushan period, a large Buddhist monastery was built here. In 1933, V.M. Masson found a cache with embossed images of Buddhist statues, musicians, and women carrying garlands. Pottery kilns were discovered around the city. In the second half of the 3rd century AD, Ayritam was destroyed and not rebuilt.

During the rule of the Greco-Bactrian kingdom, from the second half of the 3rd century BC, special attention was paid to the protection of state borders. Defensive fortresses were built in the mountainous areas where it was possible to enter Bactria from Sogdiana. Especially during the reign of Euthydemus I (235–200 BC), defensive fortresses were built in convenient mountain gorges and in places where the passage of mountain ranges connecting the two regions was difficult. The defensive fortresses in the villages of Kurganzol, Uzundara, Kapchigaytepa, Machaytepa, and Kurgancha

played an important role in protecting the borders of Bactria. Water supply to Kurganzol and other defensive fortresses was one of the important issues. Water was brought here on the basis of artificial irrigation. For this reason, these defensive fortresses operated only during periods that were important for the state.

In conclusion, the city of Termez was called "Demetria" and "Tarmida" during the Greco-Bactrian and Kushan periods and developed as a Buddhist religious center. Ayritam, on the other hand, was a port city located on the right bank of the Amu Darya, built in the 2nd century BC and destroyed in the 3rd century AD. There were also defensive fortresses built to protect the borders of the Greco-Bactrian period. Kurganzol and other fortresses played an important role in controlling access to Bactria from Sogdiana and were supplied with an artificial irrigation system.

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