

## STUDY OF KUYISAY CULTURE AND MONUMENTS OF THE EARLY SAKS (ANCIENT KHOREZM)

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**Abstract.** *This article analyzes the historical and cultural heritage of ancient Khorezm. Primitive cultures of the peoples of Central Asia are consecrated on the example of archaeological and ethnographic examples.*

**Keywords:** *Khorezm, Aral Sea, Kuyusai, historical and cultural heritage.*

In the 8<sup>th</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup> centuries B.C., people of Amirabad and later the representatives of Kuyisay culture and the early Saks, who had been busy with cattle breeding around the banks of Sarigamyshbuyi and Upper Uzbay, came and settled at the result of the flow of the left riverbed of the Amu Darya River – Davdan channel into the Sarigamysh Lake.

In 1970, the monument Kangakala II was discovered on the bank of Lower Davdan channel (North Turkmenistan)[1]. At first, Kangakala II was marked with the 7<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> centuries B.C. and there appeared a conclusion that the location had been ruined at the result of the ancient Persians' attack (the attacks of Kir II were supposed) [2].

It was noted that the monument was considered as a “shelter of nomadic livestock breeders” because it is located on a hill of 20 meters high. At the result of the archeological researches in Kangakala, ceramic bottles of Amirabad culture were discovered in its lower cultural part, as well as the ruins of houses in the form of half dug-out and with lattice walls. Researchers point out that the location was built by livestock farmers. They were mainly small cattle-breeders and many fish bones were found in the archeological excavations. The grave-strongholds of livestock breeders were investigated on the shores of Uzboy, which began from the Sarigamysh lake [3].

The concept of “Kuyisay culture” was derived from the name of the monument Kuyisay II, which belonged to the early Iron Age and situated to 20 km south-west of Kuzaligir. The total area of the site is about 12 hectares and at the result of the archeological researches began in 1971, there were discovered the remains of cellars and ruins of

houses with lattice walls, pottery, handmade ceramics, iron knives, stone instruments, bronze arrowheads, corals made of turquoise, ruby and white stone. It is worth noting that ceramic dishes were imported from South-West Turkmenistan (Margiana, Parfia, Dagistan) due to the economic and cultural communications.

There appeared an issue based on the preliminary results of archaeological researches that from the 7<sup>th</sup> by the 4<sup>th</sup> century B.C. there was a culture developed belonging to a separate ethnic group in the surrounding area of Sarikamish.

Monuments of Kuyisay culture were discovered and studied by B.I. Weinberg. The results of the research are described in a number of scientific studies [4].

According to B. Weinberg's opinion, in the early 7<sup>th</sup> century B.C., the lands near the Lower Amu Darya and Sarikamishbuyi (southern and southwestern sides) was mastered by a new group of people. The inhabitants of this population were livestock breeders. The very productive pasture, covering the Sarikamish River basin (Davdan and Daryolik river-beds), created an opportunity providing cattle with foodstuffs.

Archaeological materials included into the composition of Kuyisay culture were found in the location of ancient settlement Kuyisay II – Tumekkichijik and Tarimkaya cemeteries. The monument Kuyisay II belonging to Kuyisay culture was the only settlement where population lived and there were not identified the remains of houses built of wattle and adobes. There were found no traces of ancient artificial irrigation systems during the archeological excavations surrounding

Kuyisay II and during air-picturing the southern coasts of Davdan River-bed [4].

Kuyisay II was not surrounded by defensive walls. Residential and commercial buildings consisted of houses made up lattice cellars and walls. It was discovered that there had existed fireplaces in homes. Scientists of ancient times acquired a great many archaeological stuffs just surrounding fireplaces. Examples of these include animal bones, ceramic bottles, iron knives, bronze items, ceramic horns, trunks and other findings. They are mostly home-made products.

Bronze arrow ends and pottery made of ceramics belonging to Yoz II period in Margiana were of great importance in the determination of the relative date of Kuyisay culture. Bronze arrowheads of the type of Kuyisay culture was common in Central Asia monuments of the 7<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> centuries B.C., which were related to settled farmers and nomadic livestock cultures. According to B.I. Weinberg, the economics of Kuyisay people was based on settled and half settled livestock breeding and dry-land farming [5]. Based on the results of the preliminary research, it was concluded that the Kuyisay culture was related to the culture of Saks according to common form and leading traditions.

However, in the later editions this conclusion has sharply changed. According to B.I. Weinberg, the Saks living in the southern Aral Sea region came across an Iranian-speaking livestock breeders living in the shores of the Turkmen-Khurasan plains during their attack to the eastern part of Midia. Their handicraft production was developed at that time. The Saks transmitted those livestock breeders ("Khorasmians" mentioned in writings according to B.I. Weinberg) to the territories of the Lower Amu-Darya either of their own accord or by force and they formed new ethnic groups (population of Kuyisay) in the Sarikamish valley. The ethnographic group of this population was kept in Khorezm til the 4<sup>th</sup> century B.C.. The results of the 1970's and 1980's Study of Kuyisay culture were examined in a special study [6].

The views of B.I. Weinberg on the fact that the tribes residing in Kuyisay II were not native, but were moved from the south, quite similar to the conclusion that was reported by

S.P. Tolstov about the migration of the representatives of Suvyorgan culture from the South. However, both conclusions have not been proved yet.

Specificity of the feature of Kuyisay culture was well-documented by W. Weinberg, but why should these representatives of culture be strangers? The problem has not enough scientific proofs and no solution till the present.

According to chronological view point Kuyisay culture is similar to the Saks' culture, which developed in the Sarikamish region in the 7<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> centuries B.C., especially there are similarities in the forms of handmade pottery. This is the case which B.I. Vineberg does not deny, however, according to the researcher's assumption, generally, Kuyisay culture is unquestionably different from the culture of Saks [4].

Considering this situation, M.A. Itina concluded that there are signs of Saks' culture in the Kuyisay culture. L.T. Yablonsky wrote that the people of Kuyisay had come from northeastern Iran in the provinces where they first lived, with archaeological evidence from these "Iranian" livestock breeders [6].

According to A.A. Askarov, the Kuysisay tribes were the representatives of the local population of Khorezm oasis. Having paid attention to this conclusion, Q. Sobirov noted that it is better to connect the people of Kuyisay with the local people, especially, with the people of Amirabad rather than with the people who had settled in the Sarikamish basin in the southern part of Turkmenistan and Northern Iran. The researcher wrote that "if this tribe had come and settled from southern Turkmenistan, it would have had the opportunity to build architecture using building and construction skills" [7]. The construction of residential buildings by using wattle and daub and adobe bricks is meant by building architecture. According to the writings of V.M. Masson, B.I. Weinberg described the culture of Kuyisay as a peculiar diverse culture, being based on reliable arguments, first of all the traditions of culture in the cellars and handmade ceramic bottles reflect the Saks' tradition and secondly, ceramic bottles made with spinning wheels found in Sarikamissbuyi monuments prove the exist-

ence of cultural ties between the owners of Kuyisay culture with Gyrkany province of Margiana and Caspian Sea.

In our opinion, in the 7<sup>th</sup> century B.C., complex ethnic processes took place in the southern Aral Sea region, which requires a special analysis. Earthenware crockery, bronze arrow edges and cellars used as the main housings belonging to the culture of livestock breeders, found in Kanga II and Kuyisay II monuments, indicate that the population was engaged in cattle breeding. There was a good opportunity for livestock development around the Sarikamish basin and in the sandy desert Unguzarti. However, it is difficult to describe the people of Kuyisay as the people migrated from the south, because their cultural life was not replaced by a systematic, cultural system based on a southern region. On the contrary, the connection between the culture of Kuyisay and the culture of steppe livestock breeders prevails over according to the basic criteria. In our opinion, the tribes of Khorezm oasis belonging to the early Iron Age, known as “people of Kuyisay”, were represented as aboriginal population. They were the heirs of tribes that created the culture of Amirabad. According to the basic archaeological signs, half cellars, huts, handmade ceramic dishes express livestock breeding lifestyle and partly agriculture traditions in the development of Kuyisay culture.

The remains of mausoleums belonging to the 10<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> or 9<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> centuries B.C., built of adobe bricks on the place of the northern Tagizken fortress, were discovered. They have a complex architectural plan and are rectangular, ring-shaped tombs [8]. The largest tomb (mausoleum #6) is ring-shaped and consists of an inner rectangular structure built for burial purposes. The outer and inner parts are separated by a corridor with 2 meter width. The thickness of the walls of the tower was 4 meters in ancient times and its height was about 6-8 meters. Pits were dugged in some of them in order to set wooden columns. In Tagisken mausoleums tribal leaders of early nomadic people and kin heads were buried.

According to S.P. Tolstov, archaeological evidence indicates that the burials were buried in the mausoleums, namely, the burial of

crematoria. M.P. Gryaznov objected to this conclusion and came to the conclusion that the traces of fire in the Tagisken mausoleums were the remains of ancient fires due to unknown reasons. According to the researcher, there are no examples in the ethnography to erect a large mausoleum[9].

However, there were found traces of funeral burial at the result of excavations in the grave fortresses belonging to the 7<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> centuries situated on the banks of the Inkardarya coast.

In the Early Iron Age cemetery Uygarak, 70 burials were opened during 1961-1965. They consisted of the following graves:

1. Right angle wide holes, dead bodies were set into graves with shoes and clothes. The graves were not filled with soil; they were covered with stalks, reed and branches.

2. Hovel shaped graves with wooden columns and lattice walls; the bodies were put onto the ground.

3. Wooden pillars set into holes in two rows, walls were covered with wooden graves, covered with hills and reed and the tombs burned. This burial was believed to have been accompanied by the burial of the nomadic people of the Sun, with the help of fire, the souls of the deceased, flying to the Sun – inextinguishable fire in the sky. It should be noted that the structure of the gravestones of Uygarak repeats the cellars and hut houses of cattle breeders as the “houses of the deceased”.

In 1981, the excavation works were started in the tombstones of the early Saks, located in the Sacarchaga Hills on the banks of the Sarikamish River Davdan river-bed under the leadership of L.T. Yablonsky, a Khorezm archaeological expedition employee. Through the ongoing research of 1988, historians gained new information belonging to the history of the early Saks. The results of these studies were described in various publications [10].

Funeral ceremonies based on the structure and archaeological data of the Sakarchaga graves are as follows:

1. Depth is 1.8 - 2.6 m. large rectangular graves, surrounded by lime-stones and bodies were placed on reed beds.

2. The fence of the grave was collected with lime-stones and was not so deep.

3. A round grave surrounded by two limestone lines on the surface of the earth, buried body in the central part of it and a grave lifting contains soil.

4. Rectangle surrounded the holes of the grave containing those holes for setting wooden pillars.

5. A hovel shaped grave, there are one or two lines of wood on the ground, its place contains holes, lattice walls (lattice with pillars) and the dead were placed in the center.

6. The special stage surrounded by limestone, the bodies burned in the central part of it and branches were used as fuel for the funeral gear.

7. Tombstones with round balconies surrounded by limestone, round shaped lattice-pillar graves including burned bodies. There is a lift of soil made on the place of fire.

8. The dead were buried alongside, in special places and the ash of the body was buried in graves [8].

In the above verse, the author pointed out that there were reed beds under the tomb of Uygarak and Sakarchaga. Herodotus noted this tradition in the coverage of the funeral ceremonies of Skiffs: "A large rectangle is fired on the earth. The dead body was laid on a reed bed; the surface of the grave was covered with pillars, mats and branches".

According to archaeological data, the tradition illustrated by Herodotus was similar to the funeral ceremonies of the Saks. It is noteworthy that the bodies were burned in separate stages in Sakarchaga, comparable to that in the Surkhan oasis at the Bustan 6 cemetery in the last Bronze Age; the bodies were buried in special burial places, poured into sacks and digged in graves. Burial funerals of bodies also belonged to the steppe tribes of the Bronze Age Andronovo culture.

Graves were described as "houses of the deceased" by the oldest livestock population. According to L.T.Yablonsky, some of the sacred graves of Sarikamish, including large rectangular tombs and colonnaded tombs, resemble Amirabad's Yakka-parson houses (half-cellars, houses with lattice-pillars).

There are funeral facilities met in the graves of livestock desert tribes. Their quanti-

ties and types are related to the sex, age, sociable place (activity, knowledge, experience) of the deceased. Usually, during the archeological excavations of the Saks' graves, ceramics, ceramic items, household goods, labor weights, jewelry, tools, horse utensils and belief related products are found in the graves.

Important archaeological materials were discovered at the result of studying the North Tagisken mausoleums, the South Tagisken, Uygarak and Sacarchaga cemeteries. They serve as a basic source for the study of the history of the Aral Sea livestock tribes. Most importantly, researchers systematized the meaning and nature of funeral ceremonies and revealed their ethnic and cultural characteristics. Also, the main signs of funeral ceremonies reflect the social structure of society. V.M. Masson writes that the peculiarity of funeral ceremony was related to the property status and social status of the deceased.

The funeral equipment found in the cemetery of Sakarchaga consists of various items. Ceramic dishes exist in the graves of men and women. The dishes were put next to the head of the deceased. Similarly, such tradition was found out in the South Tagisken cemeteries, but in Uygarak the utensils were mainly located near the foot of the bodies [10].

The found ceramic products contain hand made dishes and made by spinning wheel. The first group of ceramic dishes (in the form of pots, flower-pots, pitchers, pans) was made in hand in the tape method and baked in bonfire. They resemble those dishes of the Kuyisay culture. The second group of vessels belonged to the period of Yoz II and made of ceramics and brought from Margiana to Khorezm oasis by trade. It should be noted that Yoz II cylinder – cone shaped dishes were found in Kuyisay II monument, Tagisken and Uygarak cemeteries either.

Other archeological objects identified in the area of Sakarchaga include decorations, household goods and weapons, items related to belief, horse utensils, tools and equipment. Ornaments include semi-precious stones, gold earrings and iron bracelets. Knives were made of bronze and iron. Grinders were found in the graves of ladies.

Bronze arrowheads belong to the 7<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> centuries B.C. and the ruins of the bullets of 30 and 66 bullets were found in two graves. Their hooks were made of stone, bone, bronze and wood [10].

Bronze items which decorated horses were considered as a separate group of findings. They include images of birds and animals and pigs, and are associated with archeology with the art of working with animal skins.

Summarizing the main results of archaeological researches, the following conclusions can be made:

1. In the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the study of the culture of Saks inhabiting the Lower Amu Darya and Lower Syr Darya regions of the Aral Sea region became a problem.

2. The history of the Aral Sea is well-known in the history of the ancient Persians and Greek historians, belonging to the Sak-Massaget. However, in the written sources, there is limited information on the relationships and external relations of nomadic tribes, with little information about their migratory, the ways of strengthening, and the location in different regions.

3. At the early Iron Age (7<sup>th</sup> century B.C.) the left bank territories of the Lower Amu Darya (Sarikamish River Davdan river-bed) was more intensively mastered by the inhabitants in comparison with the right bank (Akcha Darya river-bed oasis).

4. The representatives of the Kuyisay culture and the Lower Syr Darya reservoir were

settled around the Sarikamis delta of the Lower Amu Darya, There were complex ethnic processes on the lands mastered by them.

5. We think that it is not expedient to define only the Lower Syr Darya boundaries as the basic location of the early Saks, according to information available in scientific literature, for example, massagets lived originally in large territories, including the eastern Urals on the banks of the river Yayik (Daik) together with the Dah (Diys) tribes. Large groups of Dahs moved to the Lower Uzbay and East Caspian region. And massagets were settled around Sarikamishbuyi Uzbay river-bed in the 6<sup>th</sup> century.

6. Grave fortresses of Saks near the Lower Syr Darya (the Inkadarya river-bed) and in Sarikamish region, funeral ceremonies, material culture (ceramics, labor weapon, equipment, articles of beliefs) have been studied sufficiently from archeological view point.. They serve as an important material resource for the study of the history of socio-economic relations of Saks.

However, the most various important problems i.e. the essence of sak-massaget tribes of Aralbuyi in the cultural field of steppe nomadic people, the meaning of their communication with settled people busy with agriculture, the place of sak-massagets in the ethnic processes in Khorezm oasis and political history were not sufficiently learned and they are considered as important scientific issues; archeological and written sources require comparisons and analysis of information.

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### **ИССЛЕДОВАНИЕ КУЮСАЙСКОЙ КУЛЬТУРЫ И ПАМЯТНИКОВ РАННЕГО САКА (ДРЕВНИЙ ХОРЕЗМ)**

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*Аннотация.* В данной научной статье анализируется историко-культурное наследия древнего Хорезма. На примере археологических и этнографических примеров освящается первобытные культуры народов Центральной Азии.

*Ключевые слова:* Хорезм, Аральское море, Кююсай, историко-культурные наследия.