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## The work at Burgut Kurgan and other Iron Age sites in Kayrit Oasis

Johanna Lhuillier, Shapulat Shaydullaev, Ladislav Stančo

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ЎЗБЕКИСТОН РЕСПУБЛИКАСИ  
ОЛИЙ ВА ЎРТА МАХСУС ТАЪЛИМ ВАЗИРЛИГИ  
МИРЗО УЛУГБЕК НОМИДАГИ  
ЎЗБЕКИСТОН МИЛЛИЙ УНИВЕРСИТЕТИ

МИНИСТЕРСТВО ВЫСШЕГО И СРЕДНЕГО СПЕЦИАЛЬНОГО  
ОБРАЗОВАНИЯ РЕСПУБЛИКИ УЗБЕКИСТАН  
НАЦИОНАЛЬНЫЙ УНИВЕРСИТЕТ УЗБЕКИСТАНА  
ИМЕНИ МИРЗО УЛУГБЕКА

THE MINISTRY OF HIGHER AND SECONDARY SPECIALIZED  
EDUCATION OF UZBEKISTAN  
NATIONAL UNIVERSITY OF UZBEKISTAN  
NAMED AFTER MIRZO ULUGHBEK

МАРКАЗИЙ ОСИЁДА ТАРИХИЙ-МАДАНИЙ  
ВИЛОЯТЛАРИНИНГ ШАКЛЛАНИШИ ВА  
ЭТНИК ГЕОГРАФИЯСИ МУАММОЛАРИ  
*ХАЛҚАРО ИЛМИЙ АНЖУМАН*

*МЕЖДУНАРОДНАЯ НАУЧНАЯ КОНФЕРЕНЦИЯ*  
ФОРМИРОВАНИЕ ИСТОРИКО-КУЛЬТУРНЫХ  
ОБЛАСТЕЙ В ЦЕНТРАЛЬНОЙ АЗИИ  
И ПРОБЛЕМЫ ЭТНИЧЕСКОЙ ГЕОГРАФИИ

*INTERNATIONAL SCIENTIFIC CONFERENCE*  
FORMATION OF HISTORICAL-CULTURAL  
AREAS IN CENTRAL ASIA AND PROBLEMS  
OF ETHNIC GEOGRAPHY

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ТЕЗИСЫ МЕЖДУНАРОДНОЙ НАУЧНОЙ КОНФЕРЕНЦИИ  
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AND PROBLEMS OF ETHNIC GEOGRAPHY”

**Тахрир хайъати:** Э.В.Ртвеладзе, А.С.Сагдуллаев, Р.Х.Сулейманов,  
Ш.Б.Шайдуллаев, Л.Станчо, Ж.Луиллиер, М.-Ш.Кдырнийазов,  
А.Ш.Шайдуллаев, Ж.Э.Тогаев.

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А.Ш.Шайдуллаев, Ж.Э.Тогаев.

**Editorial board:** E.V.Rtveladze, A.S.Sagdullaev, R.H.Suleymanov,  
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шаклланиши ва этник география муаммолари” номли фундаментал лойиҳа  
доирасида бажарилди.

Все они дают возможность для дальнейших исследований, археологических раскопок, поскольку они не перекрыты какими-либо структурами или растительностью, учитывая тот факт, что культурные слои указанных поселений относятся к одному периоду. То же самое можно сказать эллинистическом поселении Искандартепа около селения Лойлаган. Дальнейшие исследования в предгорьях Кугитанга и предварительные раскопки отдельных из упомянутых памятников, запланированы Чешско-узбекской экспедицией в сотрудничестве с археологами Франции.

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## **THE WORK AT BURGUT KURGAN AND OTHER IRON AGE SITES IN KAYRIT OASIS**

**Lhuillier J.**

*CNRS*

**Shaydullaev Sh.**

*Termez state university*

**Stančo L.**

*Charles university, Prague*

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The joint Uzbek-French archaeological mission in Protohistoric Bactria aims at studying the settlement dynamics in a unique area, the Kayrit Oasis in the Pashkurt Valley (Sherabad district, Surkhan-Darya Province), during the Early Iron Age (second half of the 2<sup>nd</sup> mill. BC). Kayrit Oasis is located in the Maydan Say basin, in a triangle formed by the modern villages of Maydan, Karabag and Zarabag in the Kugitang Tau foothills.

This area was chosen after the discovery in 2014 by the Uzbek-Czech archaeological mission (dir. Ladislav Stančo and Sh. Shaydullaev) of the first site of this period, Burgut Kurgan (Stančo et al. 2016). Since 2015, researches led by a joint Uzbek-Czech-French team has led promising results, shedding a new light on an original occupation of Kayrit Oasis. For the first time, Early Iron Age sites are attested in a mountainous area, while other sites known up to date are located in the lower valley and plains (Lhuillier 2013). These sites are occupied only during the Early Iron Age, allowing a precise characterization of the Handmade painted ware Cultures, also known as Yaz I or Kuchuk I cultures, without fear of chronological disturbances, which constitutes another exceptional configuration in Central Asia. Up to now, several contemporaneous sites have been identified during the surveys led by the Uzbek-Czech mission (mainly by the team of A. Augustinová and L. Stančo, see Stančo 2016; Augustinová et al. 2017), on which

we favour a multiple approach, combining excavations, geophysical survey, and material culture studies.

The best-known site for now is Burgut Kurgan, a site the Academician A. A. Askarov described as a “national treasury of Uzbekistan” when he visited it in June 2018. Since 2015, the outlines of the general planning of the site, which is surrounded by a stone wall, have been defined (Stančo et al. 2016; Kysela et al. 2017). Inside the settlement, structures concentrate against the stone wall; they include rooms with mud bricks walls, smaller benches-like stone structures, fireplaces of various kinds, and associated occupation layers. Grinding tools are numerous. Pottery constitutes the bulk of the archaeological material. All kinds of ceramics known among the Handmade painted ware Cultures of the Early Iron Age are represented here, including of course a majority of handmade pottery, some of which with painted ornaments, but also with a large proportion of incised ornaments. Wheel-fashioned pottery (first coil-made, then shaped on a potter’s wheel), wheel-made pottery, and moulded pottery with textile imprints is also represented (Lhuillier 2016).

In 2018, the Uzbek-French team opened two new trenches, allowing to identify at least three successive occupation of the site during the Iron Age, interrupted by short abandonment levels, evidencing a long occupation of the settlement. In the south-western part of the site, we identified the gate to the site, which includes an interruption of the surrounding stone wall – about 2.20 m large – and some internal installations abutting the stone wall. In the northern part of the site, we excavated a group of several rooms, one of which stands out by its typical features. This room is limited by the stone wall on the northern side, and by mud brick walls on the eastern and southern sides; its western limit is probably out of the trench. The floor of this room and part of the walls are completely covered by potsherds, of Yaz I type, purposely lying flat. A similar room has already been discovered at Burgut Kurgan in 2016 (Шайдуллаев/Хамидов 2017). No entrance has been found to these rooms. Their function remains intriguing, although we can maintain that this unusual layout was made in order to isolate the rooms, where it was most probably not possible to walk. A storage function seems very likely, presumably for dry products, as a cistern would be recognizable by water traces. Another hypothesis favours a ritual function, for the keeping of the corpses in a *kata*.

In parallel to the excavations, in 2017-2018 we led a geophysical survey, using the magnetic method, which measures the local variations of the magnetic field of the earth due to the presence of iron oxide in the soils and in the archaeological structures. At Burgut Kurgan, the magnetic survey confirmed the presence of the stone wall on the entire periphery of the site. It also revealed that

the occupation is not limited *intra muros*, but extends outside the surrounding wall. South of the site, an anomaly extends in line on about 15m, which might have been linked to the entrance to the settlement. North-Northeast of the site, we have obtained the complete outline of a large set of magnetic anomalies that extends on approximately 12 x 10m but which is not visible in the surface topography. Considering its location overhanging the small valley where other sites are located, from which it is possible to see the larger site of Gaza Kutan, it might be some kind of watch structure.

Similar magnetic survey has been led at other identified Early Iron Age sites. In Kayrit Tepa, where the team directed by Shaydullaev and Khamidov has already excavated almost half of the site, it has been limited to the non-excavated, northern half of the site. It delivered some information on the layout of the area still to be excavated, suggesting the architectural remains are located on both sides of two main streets, about 2m large, one oriented roughly East/West, the other North/South.

The largest identified site for now is Gaza Kutan, where a surrounding stone wall is visible in the topography. The information acquired through the magnetic survey confirms the existence of this wall all around the site and allows identifying what appears to be its entrance on the southern side, formed by a chicane opening of 20m in length. Inside the site, the observation of numerous anomalies, some of which seem to be aligned and other extend to 6 to 18 sqm, seems to confirm the traces of an occupation.

Beside these large sites with stone walls, the pedestrian survey had allowed inventory other small sites without any architectural remains at the surface, identified by scattered potsherds only. Two of these sites have been chosen to led magnetic survey because of their location down below Burgut Kurgan, Kayrit VIII and Kayrit IX, including the area between them. Only weak anomalies are identified in the southern part of Kayrit VIII, on a small area of 0.2 ha, suggesting that if archaeological remains are preserved, they are of minor importance, what we intend to test during the following seasons of work.

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## **NEWLY EXCAVATED EARLY IRON AGE KURGANS IN THE EASTERN KUGITANG PIEDMONTS**

**Havlik J.**

*Charles University, Prague*

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Since 2014 Czech-Uzbekistani Archaeological mission has focused on research on the cultural landscape in the northern part of Paskhurt valley (Surkhandarya province, Sherobod district). Besides a considerable number of settlement sites dated predominantly to Yaz I period (ca. 1500–1000 B.C.), in the vicinity of nowadays villages of Kayrit, Zarabag and Karabag, there were detected 122 simple stone structures in total, occurring isolated or in clusters of five to fifteen features. These cairns were tentatively interpreted as kurgans, burial mounds commonly associated with nomadic peoples inhabiting Eurasian steppe zone. For their examination, there were employed predominantly non-destructive methods, however eight of them were excavated in the seasons 2014–2017. Three of them were dated to Yaz I period.

Kurgans in question – diverse in their size and distribution – are situated at three principal locations: 1. to the north-west of the Kayrit village; 2. in the plain

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