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CHORASMIA I. ARCHAEOLOGY AND PRE-ISLAMIC HISTORY
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i. Archaeology and Pre-Islamic History

Prehistory. At the turn of the 3rd millennium B.C.E. the Neolithic Kel'teminar culture flourished in the Chorasmian oasis (Vinogradov, 1968; idem, 1981). Remains of the Bronze Age Suyargan (beginning of the 2nd millennium B.C.E.), Tazabag'yab (middle and late 2nd millennium B.C.E.), and Amirabad (10th-8th centuries B.C.E.) cultures have also been identified there (Itina, 1977), the latter two showing links with the Timber Frame and Andronovo cultures of the European steppes to the northwest. The settlement at Kuyusaĭ 2 in the Oxus delta has been dated to the 12th-11th centuries B.C.E. by the presence of so-called "Scythian" (Saka) arrowhead (for a different dating of this material, see Muscarella, pp. 107-08); some scholars have argued that the Iranian Scythians were descended from these northern peoples and that Chorasmia was one early arena for their emergence as a distinct people. Beside local molded pottery a substantial number of wheel-made vessels were also found at the site, clearly brought from the area of southern Turkmenia and probably also from northeastern Iran (Vaĭnberg, 1979, pp. 15, 48). Discoveries in nearby kurgans suggest that the inhabitants' contacts with their southern neighbors were not peaceful. The burials frequently contained, together with Kuyusaĭ and southern vessels, objects characteristic of Scythian mounted soldiers: sets

of arrows, horse harness, and objects decorated in the “animal style” (Yablonskiĭ). It is probable that the range of southern imports defines the invasion zone of the Chorasmian Sakas; Ctesias’s later report on the struggle between the Sakas and the Medes for possession of Parthia seems, despite its legendary character, to confirm this observation (Jacoby, *Fragmente* p. 5 no. 25; cf. Diodorus Siculus, 2.34.1-2). It is significant, too, that Strabo linked the Chorasmians with the Massagetae (11.8.8).

Median and Achaemenid periods. The name Chorasmia was first mentioned in the Avesta (*Yt.* 10.14) and the Bīsotūn inscription of Darius I (521-486 B.C.E.). It is also possible that the Orthocorybants, whom Herodotus (3.92) linked with Media in the tenth satrapy, were part of the Central Asian Scythians. In the legend that the Akes (modern Harīrūd) river valley, bordering on the Hyrcanians, Parthians, Sarangians, Thamaneans, and Chorasmians, had been ruled by the last-named group before it came under the control of the Persians (Herodotus 3.117) some scholars have recognized the memory of a brief period of Chorasmian Scythian rule in the southeastern Caspian region. This story, together with mention by Hecateus of Miletus (apud Atheneus, II, p. 70A-B; Jacoby, *Fragmente* I, p. 38) of Chorasmians living “toward the sunrise” from the Parthians, has given rise to a hypothesis about the existence in pre-Achaemenid times of a powerful kingdom conventionally called Greater Chorasmia. Its confines are supposed to have corresponded to the later sixteenth satrapy, which included Parthians, Sogdians, Chorasmians, and Arians (Herodotus 3.93), with its center in the district of present-day Mary (Merv) and Herat (Markwart, *Ērānšahr*, pp. 9ff.; Tolstov, 1948a, pp. 20, 341; Henning, 1951, p. 42). The same accounts may have engendered theories that Chorasmians from the south were resettled on the lower Oxus only in the Achaemenid period (P’yankov,1972, p. 20). The discovery of an early Scythian culture in the Chorasmian oasis and demonstration of its southern connections seem, however, to obviate the necessity for complex hypotheses about a Greater Chorasmia.

Until recently there has been general agreement that the homeland of the Zoroastrian religion, Airyanəm Vaējah (see ērānvēj), was located in Chorasmia (see, e.g., Benveniste, p. 265-74; Gershevitch, p. 14; Hinz, p. 27; Abaev, p. 320). Airyanəm Vaējah appears first in a list of Zoroastrian lands ordered from the northwest to the southeast (Vd. 1); conversely, in a survey of the countries of the Arians ordered from the southeast to the northwest Chorasmia is mentioned last (*Yt.* 10.13-14). Both were said to be adjacent to Sogdia.

Airyanəm Vaēǰah was considered the coldest of the countries listed, with only two summer months (Vd. 1); later Zoroastrian tradition, however, more closely reflected the realities of the Chorasmian climate, where there are seven summer and five winter months (SBE IV, p. 5 n. 5). According to the *Bundahišn* (17.5), the sacred fire of Yima (Ādur Xwarrah "sacred fire": see ādur farnbāg; cf. "Selections of Zâd-Spram" 11.9) was at first located in Chorasmia and later transferred to Fārs (or Kābolestān; cf. Masʿūdī, *Morūj*, ed. Pellat, XI, p. 399; Tirmidhi, p. 279). Gherardo Gnoli, on the other hand, has devoted an entire chapter (pp. 91-127) to a refutation of the identification of Airyanəm Vaēǰah with Chorasmia.

W. B. Henning called attention to a number of correspondences between the language of the Avesta and linguistic material recorded in medieval Chorasmia (1951, p. 44-45; cf. Humbach, p. 330; MacKenzie, 1988, pp. 81ff.). The kingdom of Chorasmia was founded at about the beginning of the 6th century B.C.E. The rapid social and economic development of the country was largely owing to a desire to emulate the comforts of the higher civilization observed in the nearby agricultural states. The salient features of the "archaic" culture of Chorasmia in the 6th and 5th centuries B.C.E. were the digging of the first large canals, which reached 10-15 km in length (Andrianov, pp. 116-24, 151-58); the introduction of mud-brick construction; and the use of the potter's wheel. Despite the idiosyncrasies of Chorasmian "cylindro-conical" ware, there are clear links with the assemblages from southern Turkmenia and early Bactria, which had been evolving since the Bronze Age. Migration of some craftsmen and even farmers from those areas to Chorasmia cannot be ruled out, especially as a fairly intensive irrigated agriculture, combined with livestock breeding, became firmly rooted in the fertile loess plains of this "Central Asian Egypt."

About 400 settlements of the archaic period have been recorded within the confines of ancient Chorasmia, but only at Kyuzeli-gyr, on the left bank of the Oxus, have ruins of a fortified town been excavated. It flourished throughout the 6th century and the first half of the 5th century B.C.E. The hill site encompasses more than 25 ha, and the circumference of the fortification walls was about 3 km (Tolstov, 1962, pp. 96-104). The lower part of the fortress was not built up and probably served as a refuge for inhabitants of the surrounding territory in times of danger and as an enclosure for cattle. Higher up in the town dwellings were arrayed along the walls. The palace, covering an area of 1 ha, was also located in the upper town; about twenty dwellings

and courtyards were excavated there. One spacious hall with six piers and several large fireplaces had been carefully rebuilt several times; it was clearly used for ceremonials and banquets. Nearby were storage areas with dozens of jars and grain bins. In the southern part of the palace was an open parade courtyard (800 m^2), its walls lined with broad benches, the most prominent of which was clearly the place of the throne. Opposite it, outside the courtyard, there was a brick platform (4 x 5 m), which must have been about 3 m high; its top was accessible by means of a flight of steps at right angles to the platform. Large accumulations of cinders and white ash around the base of the platform suggest that a fire altar was situated on top. In the final phase of the walled town a temple was erected and beside it three tower-like structures with small chambers inside. These chambers were too small to contain human burials, and in fact not a single archaic burial has so far been found in Chorasmia; clearly the practice of interment had already ceased there by the 6th century B.C.E., probably in conformity with Zoroastrian prescriptions.

Chorasmia was conquered by Cyrus the Great (559-29 B.C.E.) with other countries of Central Asia, probably not long before his fatal march against the Massagetai in 530 B.C.E. Ctesias (*Persica* 29.8-14) reported that, as he lay dying, Cyrus appointed his younger son, Tanyoxares (see bardiya), ruler of the Bactrians, Choramnians (Chorasmians), Parthians, and Carmanians (ap. Photius, 8; Jacoby, *Fragmente*, III, fr. 9); at any rate relative order had been established on the northeastern frontiers of the empire before Cyrus's successor, Cambyses (529-22 B.C.E.), marched on Egypt in 525. The original fortifications at Kyuzeli-gyr were destroyed by fire, possibly during the Persian conquest. The town and the palace were still inhabited in Achaemenid times, and it may be that Kyuzeli-gyr is to be identified with the city of Chorasmia, mentioned by Hecateus of Miletus (*Pauly-Wissowa* III/2, col. 2406). In the Bīsotūn inscription Chorasmia is mentioned as one of the twenty-three countries that Darius I (521-486 B.C.E.) had inherited from his predecessors. It may have served as a Persian base in the campaign against the *Sakā tigraxaudā* (Scythians with pointed caps) in 519 (Harmatta, p. 23). In another of Darius's inscriptions Chorasmia is mentioned as the source for the turquoise used to decorate his new palace at Susa (Kent, *Old Persian*, pp. 142-44 DSf). Although some scholars have assumed that it was actually the turquoise mines at Nīšāpūr that were meant and have thus claimed the support of this inscription for the theory of a Greater Chorasmia, many ancient sources of turquoise have been discovered in the fertile lowlands of Chorasmia, in the Sultanuizdag hills, and in the adjacent districts of the

Kyzylkum desert (Vinogradov et al., p. 114; Manylov, p. 53). In medieval Armenian “the stone ḵolozmik” was said to come from Chorasmia (Markwart, *Ērānšahr*, pp. 141, 155). Herodotus (3.93), in his list of satrapies established by Darius, included the Chorasmians with the Parthians, Sogdians, and Arians in the sixteenth satrapy.

When Xerxes I (486-65 B.C.E.) marched on Greece the Persian Artabazus commanded an army of 40 thousand Parthians and Chorasmians (Herodotus, 9.41). “They wintered in Thessaly and Macedonia; after the battle of Platea, in which they did not participate, they retreated via Byzantium to the Hellespont. The name of a Chorasmian soldier who served in Upper Egypt is preserved on a document of 464 B.C.E. (Dandamaev and Lukonin, pp. 139, 281, 302). Chorasmian workmen participated in the construction of Persepolis and labored on the docks of Memphis in Egypt. Chorasmians are also portrayed among the tribute bearers carved in relief on the eastern staircase of the Apadana at Persepolis (groups 11 and 17). In addition, inscriptions permit identification of Chorasmians in the reliefs on two tombs near Persepolis; their clothing is similar to that of the Saka (Walser, pl. I fig. 8).

At about the beginning of the 4th century B.C.E. Aramaic script was introduced in Chorasmia, probably through the mediation of Achaemenid scribes (Livshits and Mambetullaev, p. 42). Much information about the everyday life of the rural population of the province in the Achaemenid period can be gleaned from study of the finds at Dingil’dzhe (Vorob’eva, 1973). The last mention of Chorasmians in a Persian inscription is on a tomb attributed to Artaxerxes II (405-359 B.C.E.; Kent, *Old Persian*, pp. 155-56 A?P). By that time the Chorasmians were no longer subjects but allies of the Persian ruler (Dandamaev, p. 248). It is now possible to reconstruct with some precision the circumstances under which they gained their independence. I. V. P’yankov concluded from a study of Ctesias that already by the end of the 5th century B.C.E. Chorasmia had become a separate satrapy (1965, p. 42). Archeological investigations in level I at the site of Kalaly-gyr have shown that Achaemenid rule there ended shortly after the beginning of the 4th century (Tolstov, 1958, p. 167; Rapoport and Lapirov-Skoblo, p. 151; Rapoport, 1987, p. 140). A rectangular area 1,000 x 600 m was surrounded by a defensive wall 15 m thick. In the middle of each side was a strongly fortified gate (100 x 50 m). All these constructions were left unfinished; the only building inside the enclosure wall was the palace, which was in the process of decoration when work stopped. Its basic plan was an 80 m square. In addition to two inner

courts surrounded by rooms and halls, there was a sanctuary with an altar and steps, similar in form and size to the stone altar found in a fire temple near Persepolis. An alabaster mold in the shape of a griffin's head was also found; it had been used for the manufacture of protomes to decorate wooden column capitals. The style of the carving is very similar to that of the griffin protomes from the audience hall at Persepolis. The relatively accomplished architecture of the Kalaly-gur palace and its grand scale suggest that it was intended as the seat of the newly established Chorasmian satrapy, but the unfinished state of the stone column bases, abandoned molds, and layers of silt and deposits on the floors are evidence that the satrap never took up residence there. The Persians' departure from Chorasmia is thus clear from the archeological record; furthermore, it appears that no Chorasmian contingent fought in the army with which Darius III (336-31 B.C.E.) confronted Alexander the Great in 334-31.

During Alexander's campaigns in Central Asia Chorasmia was at first allied with those who resisted; at least the satrap of Bactria, Bessos, who took the title Artaxerxes V, counted on help from the Chorasmians, Saka, and Dahai (Quintus Curtius, 8.4.6). After Bessos was forced to retreat his intransigent lieutenant Spitamenes went into hiding among the Chorasmians (Strabo, 11.8.8). Once the outcome of the struggle became clear, however, several Central Asian embassies waited on Alexander at Maracanda in the spring of 328. The accounts of Arrian (*Anabasis* 4.15.4) and Quintus Curtius Rufus (8.1.8) differ somewhat. Arrian mentioned the arrival of Pharasmanes, king of the Chorasmians, with a cavalry force of some fifteen hundred men. Pharasmanes offered to guide Alexander to the Black Sea should he wish to campaign there; though the conqueror declined the offer, he did conclude a "friendly pact" with Pharasmanes. Quintus Curtius gave the name of the Chorasmian king as Phrataphernes, who joined with the Massagetai and Dacians in sending people to assure the king of his submission. From this account it appears that he did not personally travel to Alexander's headquarters and incidentally that he enjoyed a certain degree of hegemony over his nomadic neighbors. In fact Pharasmanes was Phrataphernes's son (*Pauly-Wissowa* XX/1, col. 739, s.v. Phradasmanes), probably designated king by Arrian in order to glorify Alexander.

The post-Achaemenid interlude and the nomad invasions. In the 4th-3rd centuries B.C.E. Chorasmia experienced a great economic and cultural upsurge, possibly owing to liberation from the tax burden imposed by the

Achaemenids. Already in the first half of the 4th century Chorasmia was home to what S. P. Tolstov (1948a; 1948b) labeled, rather inappropriately, the “Kang-qu” culture (see below), a fusion of local and borrowed components. The irrigation network was radically rebuilt: On the right bank of the Oxus the length of the trunk canals increased two or threefold, sometimes reaching 300 km. There was also intensive construction of settlements, towns, and fortifications. On virtually every elevation above the flood plain archeologists find constructions from this period. The mausoleum temple at Koĭ-Krylgan-kala has been fully excavated and published (Tolstov and Vaĭnberg). The central element of the complex was a squat round two-story tower 10 m high, with a diameter of 45 m and an outer wall 7 m thick. There were eight vaulted rooms in the lower story and an archers’ gallery above. An external fortification wall encircled this tower at a distance of 15 m. In the zone between a series of smaller structures radiated from the tower. Those on the western side were burial chambers, which were included in the original plan. On the eastern side chambers on the second floor were used for storage of temple utensils and performance of funerary rites. There are grounds for believing that priests used the tower as an astronomical observatory.

Contemporary ceramics, often painted, were of particularly high quality; among painted motifs the spiral predominates, and the shoulders of vessels are often ringed with red triangles. A type of jar with a lion head at the juncture of handle and rim was particularly common; there were also many rhytons comparable to Achaemenid examples. On the other hand, large flasks decorated in low relief, often with mythological themes, appear unique to Chorasmia (Vorob’eva, 1959, pp. 84-124; Rapoport, 1977, p. 58-71). Pot burials of clean bones began about the beginning of the 4th century B.C.E. This type of ossuary (*astōdān*) predominated in the province for the next thirteen centuries (Rapoport, 1971). Particularly noteworthy are ceramic statue ossuaries, popular until the 2nd century c.e. Inscriptions on ossuary chests called (*tpnkwk* (as opposed to *prwrtyk* “vaults”), probably of the early 8th century c.e., leave no doubt that they belonged to Zoroastrians (Tolstov and Livshits; Gudkova; Henning, 1965; Gudkova and Livshits).

The entire complex was destroyed by fire in the 2nd century B.C.E., along with many other Chorasmian strongholds and settlements, probably during the mass migration of steppe tribes that is known to have caused the collapse of the Greco-Bactrian state and to have brought Parthia to the brink of destruction. It was probably the Apa-Sakas (“Water Sakas”; Pasians, Attasians;

Debevoise, p. 13) from the Oxus and Jaxartes deltas who invaded Chorasmia. In the last third of the 2nd century B.C.E. the Chinese came to know of Kang-qu (see central asia iii. in pre-islamic times), a large nomadic state with its capital on the Jaxartes. Among the Central Asian countries subject to Kang-qu in the 1st century B.C.E. was Yue-xian, which scholars generally identify with Urgench, the main Chorasmian city on the left bank of the Oxus. In the *Tang-shu* (Old Tang History, ch. 221) the state of Kholi-si-mi is identified with the territory belonging to Yue-xian, which had formerly belonged to Kang-qu. The invasions of the 2nd century B.C.E. were followed by a certain "barbarization" of Chorasmian civilization, though some traditional administrative elements continued. A fortified settlement was constructed on the site of Koĭ-Krylgan-kala; it remained inhabited until the end of the 2nd century c.e. The first Chorasmian coins were struck about the turn of the 1st century B.C.E., in imitation of the tetradrachms of Eucratides, the last Graeco-Bactrian king (ca. 175-55 B.C.E.; Vaĭnberg, 1977, pp. 13, 50, 64).

It has quite recently been established that the "Chorasmian era" began in the 30s (Livshits, 1984, p. 253) or 40s (Vaĭnberg,1977, p. 79) of the 1st century c.e.; the Chorasmian calendar, derived from the Zoroastrian calendar (see calendars i. pre-islamic calendars), then remained in use for about eight centuries (Livshits, 1970, pp. 164-65). The latest known mention of a date in the Chorasmian calendae, year 753, is inscribed on one of the ossuaries from the necropolis of Tok-kala. Its introduction was clearly linked with liberation from Kang-qu and establishment of an independent dynasty. Theories that Chorasmia was incorporated into the Kushan empire are refuted by the numismatic evidence; there was no interruption in the local minting of silver coins, and many Kushan coins bear Chorasmian overstrikes, often obliterating the rulers' portraits. In the middle of the 1st century substantial changes began to appear on Chorasmian coins, particularly the adoption of Aramaic script in place of the barely readable Greek characters previously in use. Unfortunately, the name of the king who initiated this practice has not been preserved on the coins.

The second king of the dynasty was Artav (*'rt'w* "the just"; Vaĭnberg, 1977, p. 52). He appears to have begun construction of a new capital, the ruins of which were discovered by Tolstov in 1938 at Toprak-kala in the Ellikkalin district of the Karakalpak Autonomous S.S.R. Like the adoption of the new era construction of this vast complex in a previously uninhabited locality must have marked the ascent of a new and independent royal house. An expedition

from the Institute of Ethnography of the Soviet Academy of Sciences conducted excavations at the site for twenty-eight seasons (Tolstov, 1948b, pp. 164-90; Nerazik and Rapoport). Five main areas were identified: the town, the citadel, the upper palace, an extramural palace-temple complex, and a large walled enclosure connected with the latter. The city, covering an area of only 500 x 300 m, was well fortified. It was divided into ten rectangular quarters by a principal axial street and several lateral lanes. One quarter belonged to the main temple; the others were residential, each with between three and six housing complexes. E. E. Nerazik estimated the total number of inhabitants at about 2,500 and concluded that a large proportion of them were engaged in the defense and service of the palaces. The northwestern portion of the city was separated from the rest by an inner fortification wall. Inside this citadel the foundations of a fire temple could be traced. In the northwestern corner of the citadel the upper palace, covering an area 80 m^2, stood on a man-made platform 15 m high. More than 100 chambers have been excavated in the palace, including the throne hall and five sanctuaries intended for various aspects of the royal cult. The walls of most of the smaller chambers were decorated with polychrome paintings, those of the larger halls with molded reliefs. The southeastern part of the palace consisted of a complex of undecorated rooms; remains of the archive and arsenal were found there. Next to this palace three additions had been built on plinths 25 m high. Outside the city wall north of the high palace there was an ensemble of twelve palace and temple structures on relatively low platforms spread over a total area of 9 ha. Two of the temples were connected by long walls to a walled rectangle (1,250 x 1,000 m) on the west. No trace of buildings or irrigation works was found in this enclosure, which appears to have served as a racecourse and a fairground or parade ground.

Among the documents found in the upper palace were tablets containing lists of soldiers supplied by the heads of Chorasmian households (the latter indicated by the Aramaic ideogram *BYT*'); some names are marked "present for the first time." The majority of the soldiers seem to have been slaves; the ratios of slaves to free men in four households were 17:4, 12:3, 15:2, and 3:1 respectively. The owner of each slave was carefully recorded, whether the master of the house, his wife, or one of the children. These lists confirm Pompeius Trogus's report of slaves in the Parthian army (Justin, 41.2.5-6). In the documents the word "slave" is rendered by the ideogram *ʿBDn*; the full alphabetical rendering of Iranian *bntk* was already attested on a Chorasmian ostracon of the 4th-3rd centuries. Other administrative documents from the

palace archive were written on leather. They include records of delivery of foodstuffs and other provisions. Some are dated by the Chorasmian calendar (between 188 and 252 c.e.), with the months and days of the Zoroastrian calendar. In two especially important documents the recipient of offerings is designated as *ʾLHY*. Although in the singular the ideogram *ʾLH* can mean "king," V. A. Livshits (1984, p. 264) has noted that the plural *ʾHY* would be very strange in such a context, unless it referred to sovereigns worshiped posthumously as gods (Livshits, 1984, p. 264; cf. Grenet, 1986, p. 134). Another explanation of the plural is also possible: Two kings could have reigned simultaneously from two palace complexes. A. M. Hocart, in his classic study of the institution of double kingship, called such corulers the "law king" and the "war king" (pp. 158-74). The high palace could have been the secluded residence of the sacred king, while the actual ruler inhabited the more open palaces outside the city.

The Afrighid period. All the palaces of Toprak-kala were abandoned at the same time, probably in connection with the founding in 305 c.e. of the Afrighid dynasty (see āl-e afrīḡ; the first king, Afrīḡ, is said to have built a fortress at Fīr (Fīl) beside the Chorasmian capital, Kāṭ, about 40 km south of Toprak-kala (Bīrūnī, *Āṯāral-bāqīa*, p. 35). The Toprak-kala palaces remained vacant, though the city was inhabited until the 6th century c.e. Because not all the twenty-one Afrighid kings listed by Bīrūnī have been named on coins, B. I. Vaĭnberg (1977, p. 82) has suggested that the Afrighid dynasty was legendary. The later rulers (1st-4th/8th-10th centuries) are known from coins, however, and some other explanation is therefore required. Archeological materials from the 4th-8th centuries provide evidence of considerable cultural change in this period, particularly the latter two centuries. The irrigation network shrank, construction techniques changed, and ceramics were cruder and usually molded, rather than wheel-made. The predominant settlement types were the rural homestead and slightly later also the fortified settlement with defensive tower (Nerazik, 1966; idem, 1976). The causes of these changes are to be sought, not only in internal social and economic processes, but also in the invasion of Chorasmia by tribes from the region of the Jaxartes. Nevertheless, initial investigations of the palace complex at Ayaz-kala have confirmed that traditions of monumental architecture and wall painting remained vital in the 5th-7th centuries. Furthermore, Chorasmian silver vessels of the 6th-8th centuries attest to the continued high level of craftsmanship in the region (Azarpay, pp. 2-3; Darkevich, pp. 103ff.).

Little is known about the Arab conquest of Chorasmia (see ii, below), which was carried out by Qotayba b. Moslem, governor of Khorasan, in 73/712. The latest known date recorded according to the Cborasmian era, 753, is inscribed on an ossuary from the necropolis of Tok-kala; the entire inventory of inscriptions from the site can be reliably dated by coins of the Chorasmian kings found in the ossuaries. The regnal dates can in turn be established from Chinese chronicles and from the names of Arab governors of Khorasan mentioned on the coins themselves (Gudkova; idem and Livshits).

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