



CYROPOLIS

CYROPOLIS (Latin form of Gr. Kuroúpolis), ancient town in Central Asia probably founded by [Cyrus the Great](#) (559-30 b.c.e.). The alternative name Kuréschata [for another town of the same name see below] probably reflects Iranian **Kuru(š)-kaθa-*, lit. “the (reinforced) settlement of Kuruš/Cyrus” (Benveniste, pp. 163-65; Abaev), but was interpreted by the Greek authors through popular etymology as “Cyra, the farthest/last,” cf. Strabo, 11.11.4: *tà Kûra, éschaton òn Kûrou ktísma* “Kûra, the last city founded by Cyrus” (the form Kûra is also mentioned by Nonnus of Panopolis; Geiger’s suggestion [pp. 39-41] that the name is related to the Indian name Kuru is unlikely). There is no mention of such a city in the Persian sources, although [Darius I](#) (522-486 b.c.e.) described the limits of his kingdom as “from the Scythians who are beyond Sogdiana, thence unto Ethiopia” (DPH 5-6; cf. DH 4-5; Kent, *Old Persian*, pp. 134, 147) and the Achaemenids are known to have paid particular attention to their northeastern border. Cyropolis is mentioned in classical sources in connection with Alexander the Great’s suppression in 329 b.c.e. of uprisings there and in several other towns on the Tanais river (modern Syr Darya) near the later site of [Kojand](#) (formerly Soviet Leninabad; Arrian, *Anabasis* 4.2.2., 4.3.1; Curtius Rufus, 7.6.16, 19; cf. Justin, 12.5.12; Strabo, 11.11.4). Their information on the city can be traced to Alexander’s own time. For example, Arrian’s narrative was borrowed mainly from Ptolemy I Soter, son of Lagus and founder of the Ptolemaic dynasty of Egypt (r. 323-283 b.c.e.). Quintus Curtius Rufus combined two versions, one similar to that of Ptolemy, the other perhaps from his contemporary [Cleitarachus](#). Nonnus (26.48; cf. 174) borrowed from Dionysius, the author of *Bassarica*, who had in turn



undoubtedly adopted reports from the historians of Alexander.

Although some scholars have associated Cyropolis with the site of modern Ura-Tyube in Tajikistan southwest of Ҷојанд, the site of modern Kurkath, farther north near the Syr Darya, seems more convincing, both because of the obvious similarity of the name to that of **Kuru(š)-kaθa-* and because its precise location conforms more closely to the ancient reports. So far, however, archeological finds have provided no evidence to settle the question (see Negmatov, 1987, pp. 286-87). Mug Tepe, the citadel of Ura-Tyube, contains strata that have been dated to the 4th century b.c.e., but the ancient site of Shirin (Šīrīn) at Kurkath has been only scantily investigated so far; the well-known burial vaults at Shirin belong to a later period. Cyropolis was apparently the center of the region of Sogdia known as Ošrūsana in the Middle Ages, though the classical authors distinguished its residents and those of neighboring towns from the Sogdians (Arrian, *Anabasis* 4.1.4-5). According to the second version reported by Curtius Rufus, the residents of Cyropolis were called Memaceni (probably from an unattested geographical name *Memacene), *valida gens* (“a strong people”; 7.6.17), suggesting that the ancient name of Ošrūsana may have been *Maimaka, which was retained among the toponyms of the region in the Middle Ages (Markwart, pp. 287-88).

The Cyreschata mentioned by Claudius Ptolemy (6.12.5; cf. Ammianus Marcellinus, 23.6.59) was not connected with the Cyropolis described by the historians of Alexander. Ptolemy’s information can be traced through Marinus to the itinerary of Maes Titianus, who had described the route to China. According to the data of Ptolemy, this Cureschata was situated on the banks of the Kurshab (Koršāb) river, one of the sources of the Syr Darya (P’yankov, pp. 134, 136; cf. Tomaschek, 1889, p. 51). As early as the Middle Ages, there was a town Koršāb on this tributary,

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