



KURGAN TEPE

KURGANTEPE (Qūrğonteppa in Tajik orthography; Kurgan-Tyube in Russian), provincial capital and former province of Tajikistan. The province is bounded by the mountain ranges of Bābātāg in the east and Tēraklitāg and Qarātāg on the west, and the river Panj on the south. The inhabitable lands lie along the two fertile valleys of the rivers Vaḵš and Kāfarnehān (Kafirnigan), separated by the Āqtāg range. Both rivers flow southward to unite with the Panj to form the Oxus proper. The climate is subtropical and dry, with precipitation ranging from 15-20 cm in the plains to an average of 50 cm in higher valleys. Near the confluence of the Vaḵš there are wastelands and the national park of Pālvātōgāy (*Atlas*, pp. 10 ff.).

Archaeology and historical monuments. The lower stretches of the Vaḵš and the Kāfarnehān (medieval Qobādiān) fell within the orbit of ancient Bactria and medieval Balk, and they are known for their wealth of archeological remains. The very hydronym *Kāfarnehān* “hidden unbeliever,” along with some other toponyms (see below), seems to be a folk interpretation of the tombs of ‘heretic’ ancients, the treasures of which were subjected to looting throughout millennia. Consequently, archaeologists from both the Soviet and Tajik science academies have visited the region to excavate locations such as the prehistoric graves in the Bēškand valley, particularly the Tolḵār cemetery; Qal’a-ye Mir, Taḵt-e Sangin, and Taḵt-e Qobād (perhaps the site of the famous Oxus treasure of the Achaemenid era); the Greco-Bactrian sites of Kohna Qal’a, Keyqobādšāh, and Mončāq Tepe; the Kushan sites of Yāvān and Kāfer Qal’a; and the Buddhist monastery of Ajina Tepe (q.v.; *Atlas*, pp. 190 f.; for a survey of excavations, see



Frumkin, pp. 62-70). The town of Kurgan Tepe (i.e., Qörğon-Tappa “fortification-mound, kurgan,” again pointing to ancient remains) itself is believed to be on the site of Lēvkand, not far from the medieval Halāvard, the exact location of which is yet to be identified.

Extant structures from the last millennium are clustered around Šahrtōz (south of Qobādiān /Qabādiān), including the pre-Mongol tomb and *madrasa* of K̄vāja Mašhad (the alma mater of Nāṣer-e K̄osrow, according to local accounts), the mausoleums of Tellā Hallāji, K̄vāja Sarbāz, K̄vāja Dorbad (or Durbād), and Āq Mazār. In the same district there survives from the Timurid-Shaibanid period a *madrasa*, in the village of Leylakuya, emulating the style of Bukhara without such embellishments (Borjian, 1998). The historic Pol-e sangi bridge across a narrow gorge on the Vaḳš, connecting the region to Ḥeṣār, was destroyed during construction of Nārak (Nurek) dam at the northeastern corner of the province.

Modern history. The modern province of Kurgan Tepe corresponds to the medieval western K̄ottal(ān), Qobādiān, and eastern Čāgāniān (q.v.). In modern times, the region was often divided administratively into Kurgan Tepe, i.e., the Vaḳš valley, and Qobādiān, the lower Kāfarnehān, and was in the orbit of the successive Shaibanid, Janid, and Mangīt Uzbek dynasties, who ruled over Transoxiana after the collapse of the Timurids in the 15th century. The town Kurgan Tepe prospered in the 17th century, when the name began to appear in sources. After the collapse of the central authority of Bukhara in the first half of the 18th century, the Uzbek tribe of Yüz gained control over Vaḳš and Qobādiān from their stronghold in Ḥeṣār. Intermittently, however, the region would pass under the control of Uzbek rulers of Qondozi, across the Oxus, and those of Kulāb (q.v. at *iranica.com*) and Baljovān on the east. In 1870, the amir of Bukhara, Moẓaffar-al-Din, expanded his domain eastward with the help of the Russians, who had conquered the khanate just two years before; in consequence, Kurgan Tepe and Qobādiān were made sub-provinces of Ḥeṣār, which also administered other eastern provinces of the emirate: Kulāb, Baljovān, Darvāz, and Qarātegin (Gafurov, II, pp. 175 ff.; Yusupov, 1975, p. 22; idem, 1986, pp. 16 f.).

According to the Russian sources of the late 19th and early 20th centuries (see Yusupov, 1975, pp. 3-7), the province of Kurgan Tepe was organized into the districts (*amlākdāris*) of Kurgan Tepe proper, Jilikul, and Sarāy (now Panj), from north to south along the Vaḳš, with some thirty rural districts (*qešlāqs*). The economy was based on animal husbandry, practiced by the nomadic and

semi-nomadic tribes, and cultivation of grain and, increasingly, cotton. Production of cotton was bolstered by reclaiming marshlands along rivers and expanding the irrigation system, and this attracted a sizeable population of Russian farmers, merchants, and officials to the province (Barthold, *Sochineniya* II/1, p. 422). The native population, estimated between ten and twenty thousand, was remarkably unstable, with hardly any community having deep roots in the region. Heavy taxes demanded by local authorities and Bukhara would force peasants to flee, and they would be replaced by the Hazāras, who likewise would escape the repressions in Afghanistan (see HAZĀRA ii.). The population was ethnically diverse; according to one report (Gaevskiĭ, pp. 25 f.), Uzbeks were in majority, and Turkmens, Persian-speaking ‘Arabs’, Tajiks, and Hazāras made up the rest of communities in the province (cf. Karmysheva, pp. 30 ff.; see also Masal’skiĭ, p. 737; Nachaev, pp. 64-69; Logofet, pp. 275-77). The accounts of Qobādiān reveal similar ethnic composition and parallel patterns of population flux (Yusupov, 1986, pp. 16 ff.; Liliental, p. 317; Semēnov, p. 114). The Bolshevik invasion of the early 1920s and the following civil war caused major emigrations, which, together with subsequent immigrations transformed the demography of the province (see below).

In Tajikistan. Within the republic, Kurgan Tepe gained the status of a province (*welāyat, oblast*) in 1944-47 and again in 1977-92, after which it was united with Kulāb (q.v.) to form the new southern province of *Ḳatlān*. Kurgan Tepe was 12,600 km² in extent; its population was 946,000 in 1986 (*EST* VIII, pp. 332 f., 537 f.) and grew to about 1.3 million by 2000 (Abdulaev et al., pp. 112, 174). The city of Kurgan Tepe, the administrative center of the former province of Kurgan Tepe and the present *Ḳatlān*, stands at an altitude of 430 m on the middle course of the *Vaḳš*, 95 km south of the capital. Its location at a crossroad of railways from Dushanbe, Termez, Kulāb, and the Oxus port of Lower Panj on Afghanistan’s border contributed to the strategic and commercial status of the town. Accordingly, its population rose rapidly from 4,000 in the early 20th century (Yusupov, 1975, p. 16) to 51,000 in 1986 (making it fourth in size in the republic), excluding the numerous satellite settlements that surrounded the city. The town had an institute of pedagogy and a school of medicine (*Goroda*, pp. 42-46).

Kurgan Tepe was the hub of ambitious economic planning in Soviet Tajikistan. The republic specialized in the cultivation of cotton, and Kurgan Tepe accounted for half of its production: an output of nearly half a million tons by



the end of Soviet rule. As a result of expansion of irrigation networks, such as the Šōrābād and Jōyābād canals, irrigated farmlands dramatically expanded to 212,000 hectares, a quarter of all arable land in the province. In 1986, there were 50 collective farms (*kolkhozi*), mainly responsible for cotton production, and 70 state farms (*sovkhozi*), typically in the foothills, producing grain, fruits, silk, and fodder. The farmers also bred livestock, especially the Qarāqoli sheep, which was prized for its wool. Major industries were cotton-related: processing raw cotton, manufacturing textiles, extracting cottonseed oil, and producing mineral fertilizers. Other significant industries, such as production of electrical transformers, supported several hydroelectric plants on the Vaḵš (*Atlas*, pp. 138 ff.) and a large chemical plant in Yāvān, which were all integrated into the enormous South Tajik Territorial Production Complex (see ECONOMY xii.). These enterprises, however, raised serious environmental concerns (UNDP, pp. 97 f.).

The intensified economic development had dramatic demographic consequences. From the 1930s onward, in order to provide workforce for the cotton fields, the inhabitants of many mountain villages of Ġarm (central Tajikistan), western Pamirs, and Kulāb were collectively resettled in the plains of Vaḵš and Kāfarnehān (Sattorov, *passim*; Kurbanova, *passim*; Mosalmāniān, 2001, pp. 15 f.; Rajab, pp. 113 f.). These developments added to the ethnic diversity of the province, which had absorbed Uzbek immigrants from various regions of Transoxiana to fill the vacuum caused by mass emigrations of the revolutionary period of the early 1920s. Ethnic and ideological antagonisms surfaced in the irredentist civil war of 1992, when the Kulābi and Ġarmi communities of the province sided with rival political parties and many Uzbeks showed sympathy toward Tashkent. The internal feuds, combined with the invasion of armed mobs from Kulāb, resulted in destruction of the province's infrastructure and large-scale population displacement, including mass migration of Ġarmis to Afghanistan (Mosalmāniān, 1994, *passim*; Brown).



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