Ancient Archaeological Heritage of the Surkhandarya Oasis: Early Medieval Sites in the Jarkurgan District

Toshturdi Romozonovich Kholiyorov
Teacher at School No. 16,
Bandixon District Uzbekistan
Email: xoliyorovtoshturdi@gmail.com

Received: 27.09.2025
Revised: 29.09.2025
Accepted: 30.09.2025

Keywords:
Jarkurgan, Surkhandarya, Early Middle Ages, Archaeology of Uzbekistan, Fortified Settlements, Urbanization, Kushan Period, Material Culture, Site Preservation

Abstract

The Surkhandarya oasis, located in southern Uzbekistan, is home to a wide array of archaeological monuments dating back to the early medieval period. Among the most prominent are the ancient settlements of Ismoiltepa, Kattatepa, Hayitobodtepa, Yalpoqtepa, Oqtepa, and others located in the Jarkurgan district. These sites reveal a historically significant pattern of settlement, defense architecture, and socio-economic development from the Kushan period through to the later Middle Ages. This study aims to analyze the historical and archaeological value of these monuments, assess their current state of preservation, and highlight methodological challenges in their classification and cataloguing. The findings underscore the importance of a systematic approach to documenting and preserving these sites, which collectively contribute to our understanding of early urbanization processes in Central Asia.

Key Thesis Statement:

The early medieval archaeological monuments of the Jarkurgan district—particularly Ismoiltepa, Kattatepa, and Hayitobodtepa—offer valuable insights into the historical development of fortified settlements, regional socio-economic systems, and continuity of habitation in the Surkhandarya oasis from antiquity through the Middle Ages.

Main Arguments and Evidence:

1. Chronological Stratification and Cultural Continuity:

Archaeological data from sites such as Kattatepa and Hayitobodtepa indicate continuous habitation across multiple historical periods. Stratified layers dating from the 6th–7th and 14th–17th centuries at Kattatepa demonstrate both ancient and medieval phases of settlement, evidenced by ceramic remains and architectural fragments**[1]**.

2. Urban and Defensive Architecture:

Fortified structures, including ramparts, walls, and surrounding ditches found at Kattatepa and Hayitobodtepa, suggest a developed urban layout with complex defense mechanisms. These features reflect strategic planning and socio-political organization in the region during the early Middle Ages.

3. Archaeological Artifacts and Material Culture:

Pottery shards, architectural remnants, and other cultural materials uncovered at sites such as Ismoiltepa and Yalpoqtepa are indicative of daily life, craft production, and long-term settlement. These artifacts also assist in the precise dating of site occupation layers.

4. Impact of Modern Activity on Site Integrity:

Several sites, including G‘oyibot tepa and Karvontushdi, have suffered partial destruction due to agricultural activities and infrastructure development. This underscores the urgent need for heritage protection and responsible land use planning.

5. Cataloguing Challenges and Methodological Gaps:

The example of Oqtepa highlights inconsistencies in site documentation due to the use of dual numbering systems in archaeological records**[2],[3]**. Discrepancies in location data and classification reflect a lack of standardized methodology, complicating efforts to maintain a unified archaeological registry**[4]**.

Conclusion:

The archaeological sites of the Jarkurgan district serve as a testament to the long-standing cultural and historical significance of the Surkhandarya region. These monuments, representing different periods from the Kushan era to the late Middle Ages, reveal sophisticated settlement patterns, defense infrastructure, and material culture. However, modern threats and methodological inconsistencies pose challenges to their preservation. A comprehensive, interdisciplinary, and systematized approach is essential for ensuring the protection and scholarly understanding of this invaluable cultural heritage.

References:

1. Arshavskaya, Z. I., Rtveladze, E. V., & Khakimov, Z. A. (1982). *Medieval monuments of Surkhandarya*. Tashkent: Fan. p. 119.

2. Rtveladze, E. V. (n.d.). Reconnaissance study of Bactrian monuments in southern Uzbekistan. In *Ancient Bactria* (p. 79). Leningrad.

3. Route surveys of the monuments of Northern Bactria. (n.d.). In *From the history of ancient culture of Uzbekistan* (pp. 12–13). Tashkent.

4. Stride, S. (2004). *Archaeological geography of the Surkhan Darya province (Southern Uzbekistan, Northern Bactria)* (Doctoral dissertation, University of Paris I, History of Art). Supervised by Jean-Louis Huot, pp. 40–41.