

**SOME CONSIDERATIONS ON THE MONUMENTS OF THE EYLATON
CULTURE**

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Anotation. This article presents several considerations regarding the monuments belonging to the Eylaton culture. In particular, the views of archaeologists who conducted excavations at the Eylaton site are analyzed. The ceramic artifacts of the Eylaton culture are comparatively examined in relation to materials from neighboring cultures. Additionally, some information about the Sarvontepa site is provided.

Key words: Fergana Valley, Eylaton, Y.A. Zadneprovskiy, B.A. Latinin, periodization, pottery, red slip, Sarvontepa.

Introduction. The Early Iron Age remains one of the most problematic issues in the historiography of the Fergana Valley. This is due to differing interpretations of the sequence of ancient cultures in the region and the attribution of a “sedentary” status to the Eylaton culture. In the ancient agricultural culture of the Fergana Valley, the Eylaton (Eylaton–Oqtom) culture (7th–6th to 3rd centuries BCE) occupies a special place. It is evident that this culture continued the traditions of the Chust culture. Moreover, it also exerted influence on pastoral communities inhabiting parts of the valley.

Literature Review and Methodology. In the 1950s–1960s, archaeologists such as B.A. Latinin, A.N. Bernshtam, Y.A. Zadneprovskiy, and N.G. Gorbunova conducted excavations at Eylaton cultural sites in the Fergana Valley. In 1954, Y.A. Zadneprovskiy carried out excavations at the Eylaton site, after which the term “Eylaton culture” was introduced. During this period, the distinctive features of Eylaton pottery were identified: hand-made vessels, both decorated and undecorated, sometimes painted, and partially produced on a potter’s wheel.

This study employs archaeological-ethnological methods, comparative analysis, and systematization. Excavations conducted by Zadneprovskiy revealed the presence of ancient ceramics. However, such painted pottery was not found in the works of T.G. Obolduyeva and S.S. Qudratov. The existence of these materials suggests that the origins of the Eylaton culture may predate the 3rd century BCE. Nevertheless, the formation and fortification of the Eylaton city remain debated. Despite this, due to its size and advanced defensive system, Eylaton holds an important place as a major urban center in the history of Fergana.

The periodization of the Eylaton culture is generally dated from the 7th–6th to the 3rd centuries BCE. Its name derives from the archaeological site near the village of Eylaton in present-day Izboskan district of Andijan region. The periodization proposed by Zadneprovskiy and Gorbunova places the culture after the Chust culture. Their contributions to the study of Eylaton culture are significant. The analysis of burial mounds (such as Oqtom, Kungay, Sufon) and associated materials allows dating the Eylaton complex to the 7th (or 6th) to 3rd centuries BCE.

Most Eylaton sites are burial complexes, while single-layer settlements are rare, with the Eylaton city site being a notable exception. Although numerous studies have been conducted, they have not provided definitive results. S.S. Qudratov proposed a less rigid chronology (4th–3rd or 3rd–2nd centuries BCE), but this also did not resolve the dating of major urban centers.

Due to insufficient stratigraphic data, debates persist regarding whether the culture was predominantly agricultural or pastoral. Therefore, a комплексное (comprehensive) study of multiple sites is essential.

Results and Discussion.

At the early stage of research, B.A. Latinin lacked sufficient experience in archaeological investigations in the Fergana Valley. However, he later became one of the first to conduct excavations on earthen archaeological sites in Central Asia and studied irrigation systems in agricultural regions.

Latinin compared red-slip pottery from Eylaton with artifacts from the Anau site near Ashgabat. The similarities between painted ceramics from Anau and Eylaton are evident. Although Latinin initially misdated the Eylaton site, his findings were later recognized as similar to Eneolithic and Early Iron Age ceramics of southern Turkmenistan. This suggests that Eylaton may be contemporaneous with Anau.

The cultural layers of Sarvontepa have been associated with the Eylaton culture and divided into two phases: Eylaton I (early, 6th–5th centuries BCE) and Eylaton II (late, 4th–3rd centuries BCE). Sarvontepa clarifies several controversial issues and supports the idea of continuous development of agricultural culture in the Fergana Valley.

The traditions of the Eylaton culture are found throughout the valley, confirming Gorbunova's conclusions. Sarvontepa, located 20 km from Eylaton, lies within the Karadarya basin, an area rich in ancient agricultural settlements such as Dalvarzin, Ashqoltepa, Khojambog, and Dehqontepa.

Evidence shows that the Chust and Eylaton cultures coexisted in the same region. Importantly, there is no evidence of Northern Bactrian or Sogdian influence in the Early Iron Age material culture of Fergana. Additionally, the absence of Achaemenid materials suggests that ancient Fergana developed independently.

The two-stage development of the Eylaton complex confirms that it was not the only sedentary agricultural culture of the Early Iron Age. Instead, it continued earlier Bronze Age traditions, especially in pottery production, which shows noticeable development.

Pottery made on the wheel likely entered the Fergana Valley from the west, as such techniques appeared earlier in southern regions. The shapes and production techniques of vessels vary, though similarities exist, indicating common origins. The exchange of goods between pastoralists and agriculturalists further supports economic interdependence.

The origin of the potter's wheel in the region remains unresolved. It is suggested that both the wheel and red-slip pottery entered the valley simultaneously from the southwest. However, such pottery already existed in the Chust culture, indicating earlier local development.

Later research by S.S. Qudratov did not identify early ceramic samples, making it difficult to determine the chronology of Eylaton's fortifications. Excavations by T.G. Obolduyeva contributed to understanding the material culture and chronology of ancient cities in Fergana, including Eylaton.

Conclusion. The population of the Eylaton culture primarily engaged in agriculture, while surrounding foothill and steppe populations practiced pastoralism. Strong economic and ethno-cultural interactions developed between them. Over time, some groups adopted semi-sedentary pastoralism, while others transitioned fully to agriculture. Ceramic artifacts from Eylaton sites are also found in neighboring regions, indicating sustained cultural exchange. Overall, the Eylaton culture represents an important stage in the continuous development of ancient agricultural civilization in the Fergana Valley.

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