



Viktor N. Pilipko (Moscow, Russia)

REMARKS ON THE MATERIAL CULTURE OF THE AKHAL AREA IN THE HELLENISTIC PERIOD

Keywords: Archaeology, Central Asia, Parthia, Turkmenistan, Hellenism, ceramic complexes

In this paper Akhal is defined as the north-western part of the Kopetdag piedmont over a long distance from Gyaurs to Kyzyl-Arvat (Serdar).¹ It should be noted immediately that the largest cluster of ancient sites here falls within the Ashkhabad and Geok-Tepe (Gökdepe) districts, irrigated by considerable water flows: the Keltechinar, the Karasu, the Firyuzinka, the Alty-yab, and the Sakkyz-yab.

With the relative abundance of archaeological sites bearing evidence of the active development of the province in all phases of history, there are problems with discovery – or more properly identification – of the sites belonging to the Hellenistic period – the last third of the 4th century BC and the first half of the 3rd century BC. This could be explained by the poor archaeological exploration of this region, but in the neighbouring Etek area (in the south-eastern part of the Kopetdag piedmont), which is located in the same natural and climatic zone and explored by archaeologists with just about the same regularity, the sites of the Hellenistic time have been recognised quite clearly and in a relatively great number.

In the southern agricultural provinces of Central Asia, identification of the sites of the Hellenistic period has been carried out predominantly on the basis of the presence of ceramics in the investigated complex, evidently reflecting the influence of a proper Greek ceramic tradition.² This is expressed in imitating some specific Greek forms (phiale, fish plate, different kinds of bowls with com-

¹ In this article, place names of the Soviet period are used for toponyms in Turkmenistan.

² Gardin 1973; Shishkina 1975; Sedov 1984; Filanovich 1989; Lyonnet 2000; Gaibov 2004; Lyonnet 1997.

plex-shaped rims, craters, oenochoes etc.),³ in using separate morphologic elements and techniques, not attested in the local pottery production of the preceding period.

In Akhal, one encounters serious problems with identification of such pottery complexes, reflecting Greek influence and with certainty dated to the 3rd century BC. The case is worsened by the fact that we do not know any multi-level sites at which the expected Hellenistic levels are unambiguously identifiable between the deposits of the Achaemenid and Early Arsacid periods.

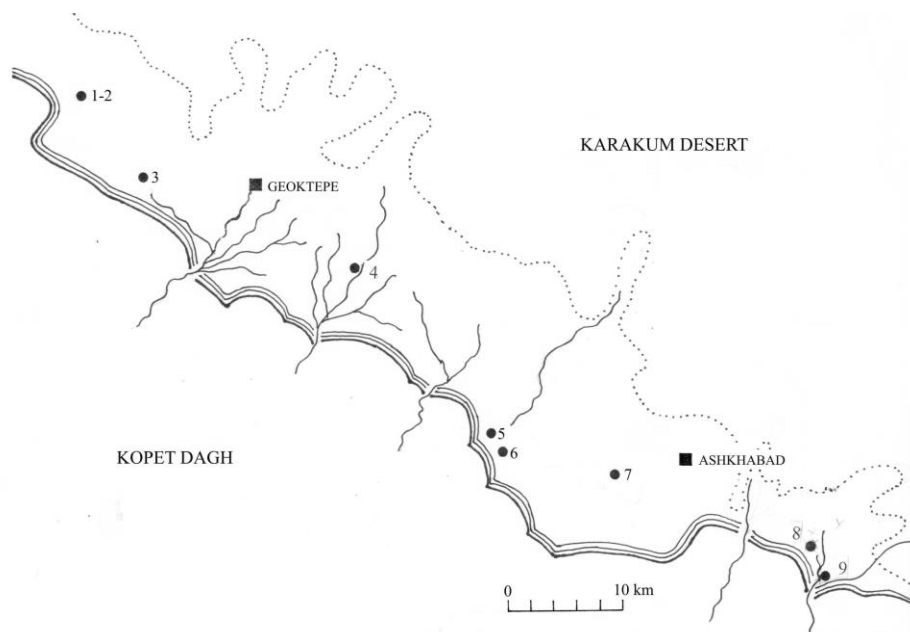


Fig. 1. Preliminary map of archaeological sites in Akhal, which were likely inhabited in the 3rd century BC. The object numbers correspond to those in Appendix 1.

Identification difficulties of the Hellenistic time complexes are also caused by the uncertainty of the dating problem in the case of the so-called “transition complexes”. This is a separate problem, so in this study I will confine myself to a brief remark on this subject. In my early publications, dealing with the corresponding materials from the Akhal area,⁴ the turn of the 3rd century BC was recognised as a hypothetical limit to which the tradition of manufacturing cylinder-conical ware shapes had survived. However, the works in neighbouring Etek⁵ and other regions

³ See in more detail: Abdullaev 2010.

⁴ Pilipko 1984; 1986; 2005.

⁵ Pilipko 1987; 1990.

of Central Asia⁶ allow us to suggest that the manufacture of cylinder-conical shapes, as well as the presence of spear-shaped and cuff-shaped rims of large pots, were continued in most districts of Central Asia into the first half of the 3rd century BC. This conclusion may evidently also be applied to Akhal.

In particular, one may assume that the final desolation of the Khyrly-depe settlement near Geok-Tepe (Fig. 1) took place exactly in the first half of the 3rd century BC. Its top layer shows an evident difference from the “classic Achaemenid complex” with its prevalence in the cylinder-conical shapes and cuff-shaped rims.⁷ It no longer contained the big cylinder-conical “jars”, while the biconic supports and the small cylinder-conical goblets lost their conical “shore” and the cuff-shaped rims of large pots become rare (Fig. 2: 17, 20).

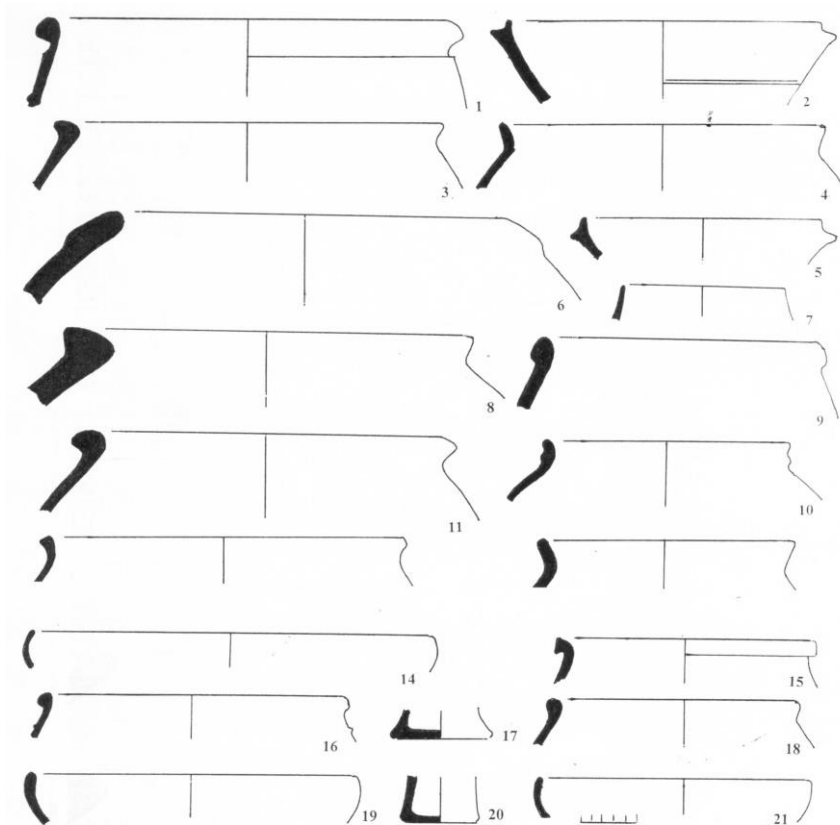


Fig. 2. Archaeological complex Khyrly IV. Presumable dating: end of the 4th–first half of the 3rd century BC.

⁶ Usmanova, Filanovich, Koshelenko 1985; Gaibov 2004; Lerner 2005; 2010.

From the multilevel sites of Akhal, which were subjected to a stratigraphical study, the presence of the 3rd-century BC layers may be confidently supposed only on three sites. These are the Anau settlement, Yanyk-depe, and Mound 7 at the settlement of Garry Kyariz.

At the Anau settlement,⁷⁸ some fragments of large pots typical of the Achaemenid time were found in the lower layer (Fig. 3: 6), and in the overlying layer was found a bronze arrowhead, general dating of which does not go beyond the 3rd and 2nd centuries BC. By the 1st century BC, the inhabitants of the Kopetdag piedmont were no longer using bronze arrowheads. Correspondingly, the lower layer of Mound 3 of the Anau settlement may be dated within the limits of the 3rd century BC/the first half of the 2nd century; a dating to the 3rd century BC appears to be the most likely.

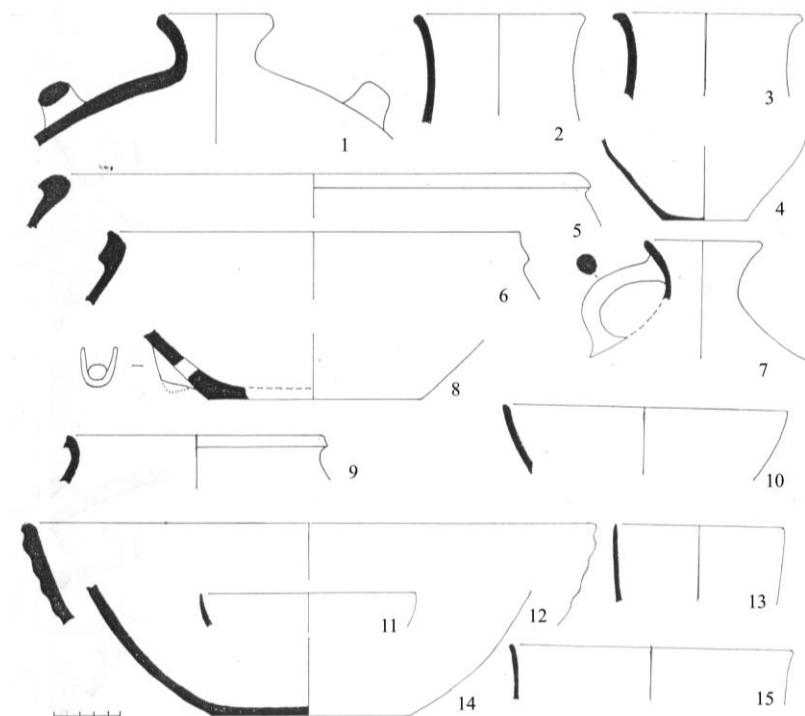


Fig. 3. Anau settlement. Pottery from the lower cultural layer.

The settlement of Yanyk-depe, situated in the Geok-Tepe district, was functioning for a long timespan.⁸ At least five building horizons have been excavated

⁷ Pilipko 2000.

⁸ Pilipko 2001b.

there, represented by the remains of residential dwellings. The uppermost layer may be dated around the beginning of the Christian era. The materials from the lowermost layer (Fig. 1: 4) demonstrate a difference from the relatively well studied complexes of the 2nd and 1st centuries BC. Thus, the stratigraphic placement and pottery complexes from the lowermost layer point to the dating of the Yanyk-depe settlement to the 3rd century BC.

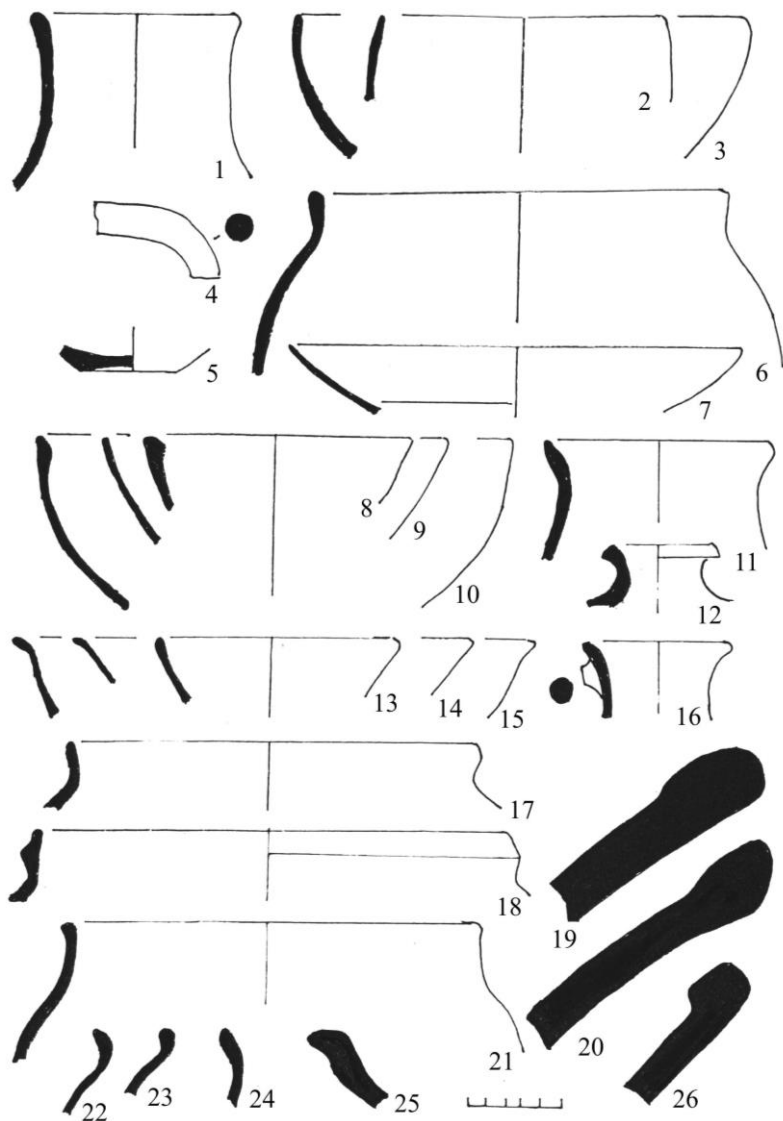


Fig. 4. Yanyk-depe. Pottery from the lower cultural layer.

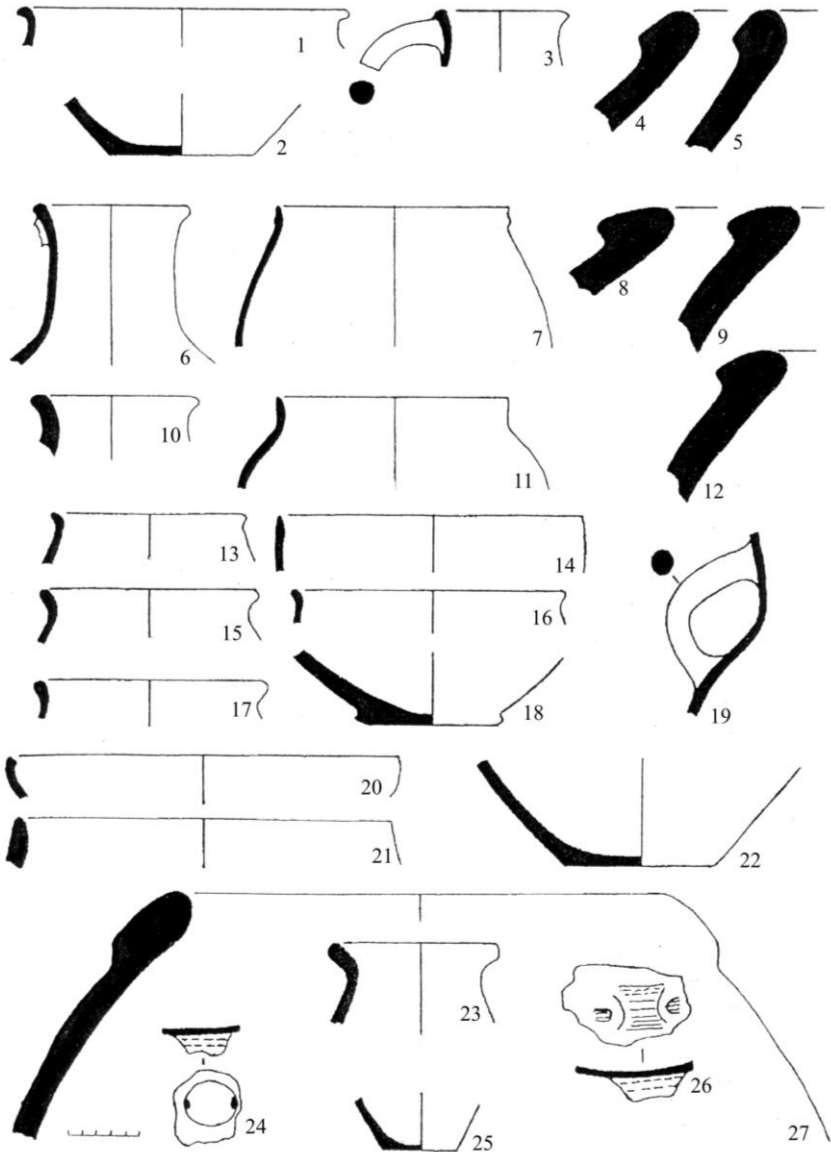


Fig. 5. Garry Kyariz. Mound 7. Pottery from the lower cultural layer.

Another site which should be supposed to have layers of the 3rd century BC is Mound 7 at the Garry Kyariz settlement.⁹ The stratigraphical investigations have shown that by itself it represents the remains of four successively existing buildings

⁹ Pilipko 1975.

made of rammed earth (paskha) or bricks. On the upper laps of the contents of the third horizon,¹⁰ a coin hoard was discovered which had been buried presumably in the 120s BC. The third horizon is thus chronologically definitely connected with the second half of the 2nd century BC. The bottomset layers of the second horizon through thickness exceed almost twice the beds of the third horizon. They represent the remains of a permanent building. For these reasons it is possible to suggest that the inhabiting timespan of this building was longer than that of the buildings of the third building horizon and in total the layers of these two horizons cover the whole 2nd century BC. Possibly, this period goes even beyond the limits of the 2nd century, but it is hardly possible to determine the exact dates due to the scarcity of available materials. Correspondingly, for the first – the earliest horizon – one can suppose a general dating somewhere within the 3rd century BC.¹¹ It may relate to the middle or even the end of that century. The dating to the first half of the 3rd century BC appears to be improbable – there are no signs of its connection to the complexes of the 4th century BC. The approximate nature of datings is worsened by the extreme scarcity of archaeological finds (Fig. 5).

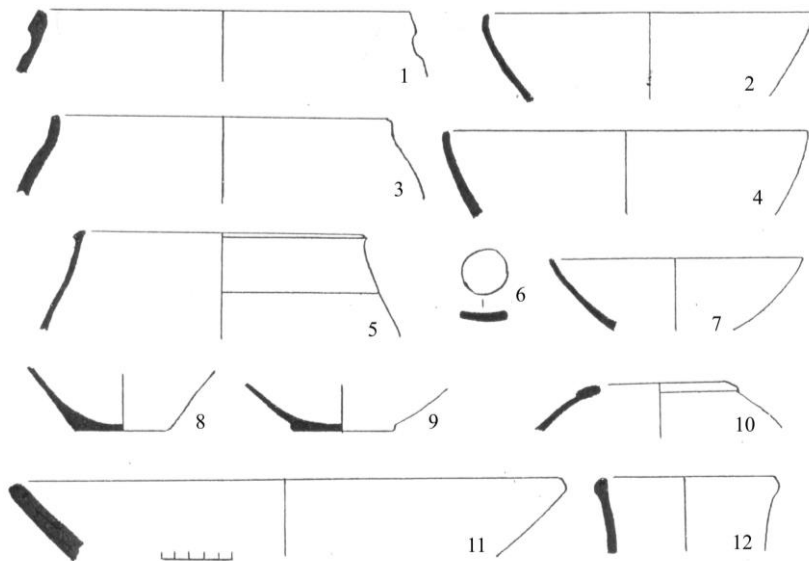


Fig. 6. Finds from the settlement at the mouth of the Keltechinar gorge.

All three identified complexes are not sizeable in amount, and do not give a clear idea of the specific features of local pottery of the period under investiga-

¹⁰ Enumeration of the stratigraphical horizons is bottom-up.

¹¹ Pilipko 1977.

tion. The fact that it is to the 3rd century BC that they belong is established not by some kind of morphological or technological features, but by their stratigraphical position. In other archaeological circumstances – for example, during examination of the surface pottery finds – such sets of wares simply lose their chronological integrity; such wares may be defined partly as belonging to the Achaemenid time, and partly as representing the 2nd century BC artefacts.

The stratigraphical situation, recognised at the Anau settlement, shows that in the lower stratum we definitely have a combination of two traditions – “the Achaemenid” one – marked by the appearance of the cuff-shaped rims of large pots, and the pottery showing some innovations of the Hellenistic period, while the cylinder-conical shapes, characteristic of the Achaemenid time, are missing. The presence of such “retrograded” pottery elements typical of Achaemenid times (in this case the use of large pots with cuff-shaped rims, but now without a conical “shore” in the bottom part of a vessel) is also documented in a number of other archaeological complexes of Akhal. In particular, this phenomenon is recorded at a small settlement at the mouth of the Keltechinar gorge (Fig. 6: 1). Later variants of these large pots at the settlements of Garry Kyariz and Yanyk are present even in the layers of the 2nd century BC,¹² but this is already an extremely rare shape for this period.

Examination of materials from the abovementioned sites shows that these complexes on the one hand demonstrate archaic features, going back to the Achaemenid period, and on the other hand show the almost total absence of Greek influence (fig. 7, 8), which clearly enough appears in the material culture of the neighbouring Etek area. Moreover, an influence of the Hyrcanian culture can be traced here.

If this preliminary conclusion, based on relatively small actual material, is true, then it implies some very essential historical reasoning. Thus, the culture of the central part of the Kopetdag piedmont in the Hellenistic period was notable for almost the complete lack of traces of Greek influence, which is in contrast with the observations concerning the neighbouring Etek area. A reason for that might have been the weak Greek colonisation of this province or the complete absence of Greek settlements.

A comparison with Etek also shows that the settled population of Akhal was relatively inconsiderable in number. At the same time there are no natural factors determining the low population density of this province. Correspondingly, it is more likely that the reasons for this phenomenon were of a social character. It is not improbable that this was caused by the influence of nomads, living in the neighbouring desert and trying to get the agricultural population of the Kopetdag piedmont under their power. By further following this line of reasoning in a certain

¹² Pilipko 1975, Fig. 35: pots, type 7; Pilipko 2001b, Fig. 11:17, Fig. 14:1

logical sequence we may reach the conclusion that for some reasons Akhal was beyond the scope of Greek influence and the local settled population mostly depended upon the nomads living in the Balkhan and the Uzboi regions, who, as narrated by Strabo, by long marches crossed a desert and raided the plains of the Parthians.

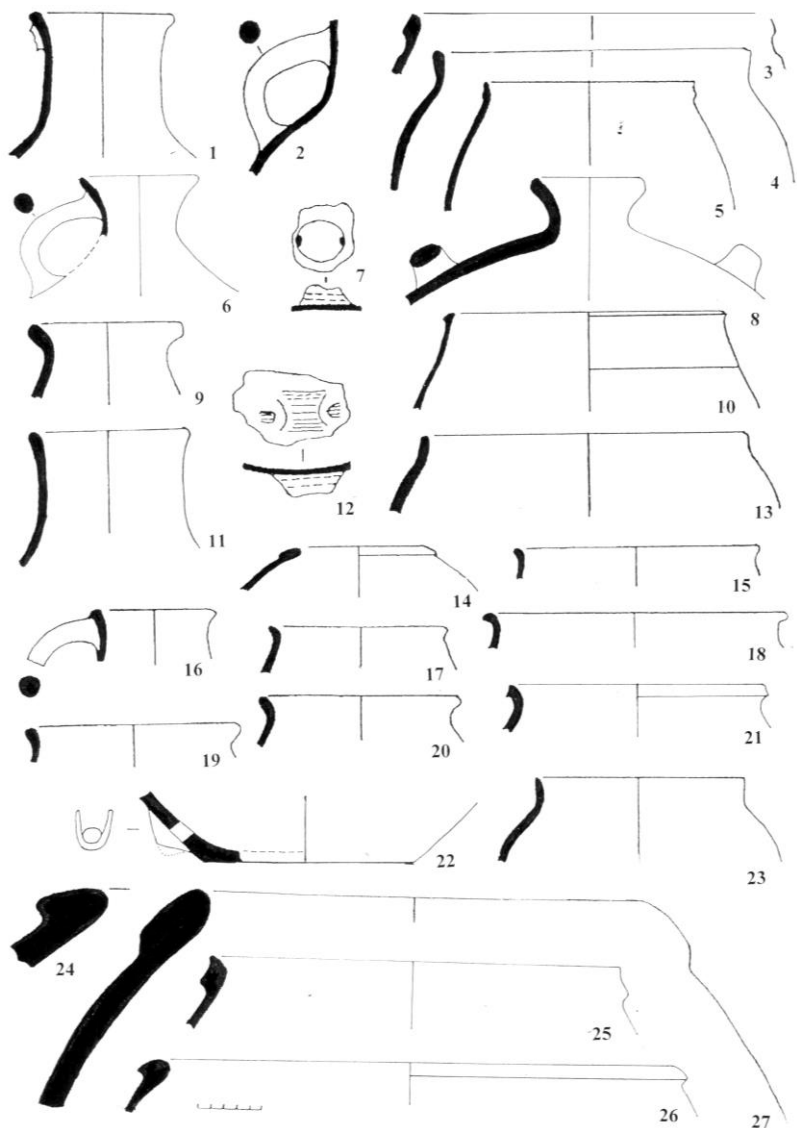


Fig. 7. Summary table. Archaeological complex of the second half of the 3rd century BC.
Closed forms.

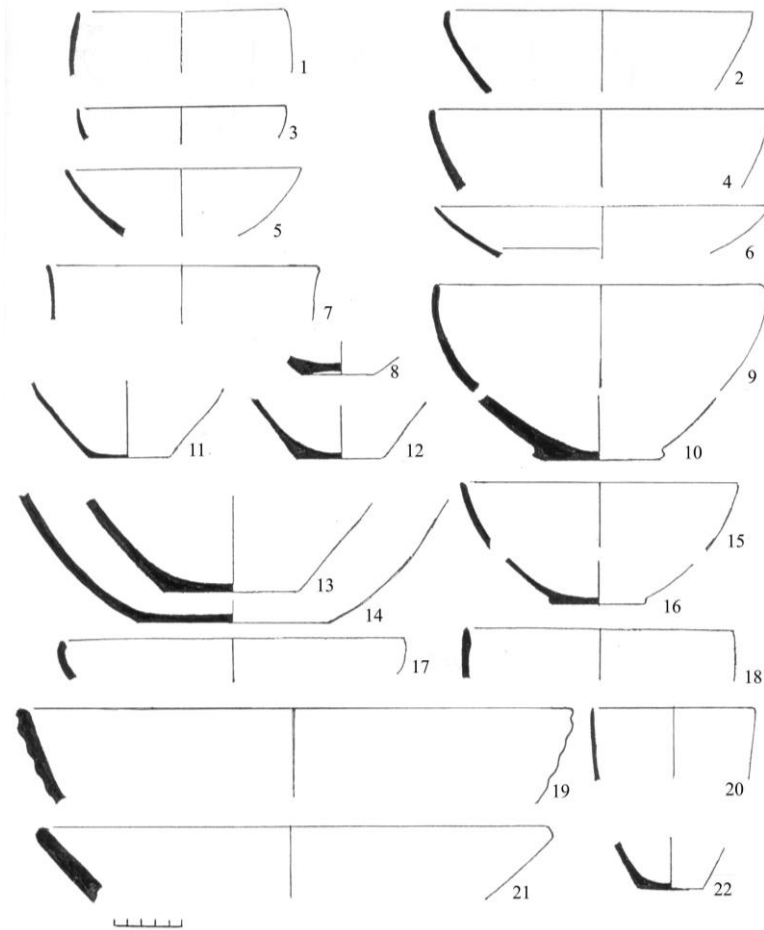


Fig. 8. Summary table. Archaeological complex of the second half of the 3rd century BC. Open forms.

In the circumstances, whereby we do not have enough available materials directly from Akhal, of significant importance is the pattern which may be observed in the neighbouring regions. A question about the termination of the manufacture of cylinder-conical shapes, characteristic of the Achaemenid period, is among a number of unsolved archaeological problems of Central Asia which have already been under discussion for many decades. Differences in dating this process reach 200 years, from the turn of the 4th century BC¹³ to the turn of the 2nd century BC.¹⁴ At present the discussion on this subject is still continuing.¹⁵

¹³ Vorob'eva 1959; 1973; Sagdullayev 1978.

¹⁴ Usmanova 1963; 1969.

My own excavations held in Etek allow me to suggest that here the complexes of the “Achaemenid type” in their classical variant had been surviving to the turn of the 4th/3rd centuries BC, and the so-called “transition complexes” had been in usage in the first half of the 3rd century BC.

If we expand these conclusions to the territory of Akhal, then all the early complexes from the Anau settlement discussed above, Yanyk-depe and Garry Kyariz 7 (lower part), should be connected with the second half of the 3rd century BC. And for the first half of that century we may suggest a presence of the “transition” complexes, which mainly still follow the traditions of Achaemenid times. In Akhal the finds from the upper, fourth layer of a stratigraphical dig at the settlement of Khyrly-depe (Fig. 2) may be regarded as examples of the complexes of this time.

On the other hand, the material culture of Akhal in the 3rd century BC had its peculiarities mentioned previously – preservation of local culture and the practical absence of Greek influence on it. The latter used to appear only in an indirect form. In the building practices there was a change to the format of mud bricks. Instead of rectangular blocks, the manufacturing of square shape blocks was growing. In pottery manufacturing, a rejection from forming vessels with the help of bowl-shaped supports was under way.

In the morphological repertoire, ceramics evolved significantly, while the development occurred by means of transformation of the traditional shapes of the Achaemenid time. The strictly cylinder-conical jars (actually in Akhal they were relatively few in number) had been changed to biconical large pots as early as the Achaemenid period, the upper part of which took a hemispheric shape over the course of time. In the period under consideration the large pots steadily lost their brace and the cuff-shaped rim; the latter was changed to a slightly thickened rim.

The goblets (goblet-shaped cups) with a cylinder-conical or ovoid profile were shaped on the basis of the cylinder-conical jars of medium sizes and cups with the vertical upturned rim. The early examples of these artefacts, belonging precisely to the 3rd century BC, had an exclusively flat bottom (fig. 8). The development of this shape was more clearly traced in the materials of Margiana and Etek, while their presence in the complexes of Akhal was limited. The predominant shapes of the second half of the 3rd century BC was large storage jars (khums), pots, and jugs.¹⁶ The open shapes were still few in number. The flasks and frying pans (roasters) used for breadmaking should be considered as new shapes of this period.

¹⁵ Sverchkov 2006; 2007; Lerner 2010.

¹⁶ In some research on the Central Asian ceramics of the Hellenistic period jugs [kuvshiny] are considered to be a shape borrowed from the Greeks. As for Akhal, however, one can surely insist on their Hyrcanian origin. Moreover, they were originally characterised here by the unified type of the handles – “slouching” and round in section.

It is important to note that the degree of the Hellenistic influence in the ceramics of Akhal increased in the 2nd century BC, while by formal logical evidence it should rather decrease in connection with the emergence of political independence by Parthia and the expulsion of the majority of ethnic Greeks from its boundaries.

This may be explained in the following way. Originally after attainment of independence the anti-Hellenistic spirits in Parthia, including Akhal, possibly increased still greater. However after transformation of the Arsacid state into an empire the situation changed. Having achieved a military victory over the Greeks, the Parthian kings were interested in cooperation with them in the established peaceful period. Mithridates I proclaimed a policy of philhellenism. In exchange for loyalty, the Greeks preserved the internal self-administration in their cities (poleis) and obtained liberty for economic activity throughout the whole empire. The achievements of the Greeks in different fields started to be recognised as models to be imitated.

The provincial northern part of Parthia-Parthava, named in the current research as Akhal, thanks to the appearance in its boundaries of an important Arsacid political centre – Mithridatkirt (in archaeological literature – the site of Nisa), in the 2nd–1st centuries BC began to play a significant part in the lives of the state, and essentially increased its external relations.

The Greeks appeared again (and maybe for the first time) in its capital centre. The native inhabitants of Parthia, participating in conquering campaigns and in administration over the newly gained lands, became familiar with the achievements of other peoples and introduced them into their life. Parthava (including Akhal), coming out from isolation, actively absorbed the cultural and technical achievements of a new epoch. The general level of Hellenisation of the local population considerably increased, even in comparison with the period of the Greeks' political domination.

One of the reasons for the new wave of Hellenisation might be the influx to Parthava of a dependent labour force from the newly conquered provinces, which gained significant achievements in the sphere of Hellenisation, such as Bactria, Margiana, Media, and Mesopotamia.

Appendix 1

List of archaeological sites of Akhal, presumably functioning in the 3rd century BC

1. Khyrly-depe

Situated within the modern village of Isbirden, about 9 km to the west of the railway station of Geok-Tepe. The site is a big mound-settlement that arose in the 8th and 7th centuries BC and functioned continuously (?) approximately until the 3rd century BC. It is represented by complexes from the 4th century BC and the first half of the 3rd century BC.

In the 20th century the remains of the settlement suffered from a strong deformation. The checking stratigraphic studies were carried out in 1983 by the Parthian expedition of the Institute of History of Academy of Sciences of the Turkmen SSR (V.N. Pilipko). The results of the excavations were published (Pilipko 2005).

2. The settlement of Garry Kyariz, Mound No. 7

Situated at the 17th km north-west of the railway station of Geok-Tepe. It is very likely that it was an original nucleus of an eventually expanded Parthian settlement. The lower building horizon of this site presumably dates to the 2nd half of the 3rd century BC. The site was excavated by the Parthian expedition in 1968–1972. Publications: Pilipko 1975; 1977.

3. The settlement of Garry Kyariz, Mound No. 15

A small mound (diameter 20–30 m), representing the remains of a separately built dwelling house. In 1970 a small complex of ceramics was obtained from a trial trench (Fig. 9). Initially the building was dated to the 3rd century BC (Pilipko 1975, 44). In the light of the most recent opinions it is possible to give it a later dating – the 2nd century BC.

4. Yanyk-depe

Mound-settlement. Situated at the 11th km south-east of the railway station of Geok-Tepe. In the 1980s the site incurred significant damage during agricultural work. This served as a reason for the site to be used to carry out trial archaeological excavations (Parthian expedition, V.N. Pilipko), during which its stratigraphy was specified. Its lower occupation layers presumably come from the second half of the 3rd century BC. The site was abandoned around the beginning of the Christian era (Pilipko 2001b).

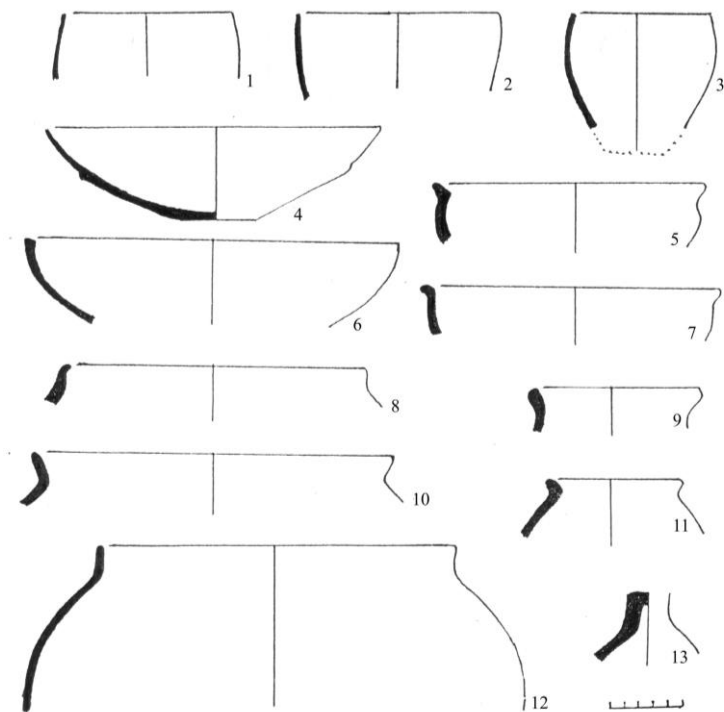


Fig. 9. Garry Kyariz. Mound 15.

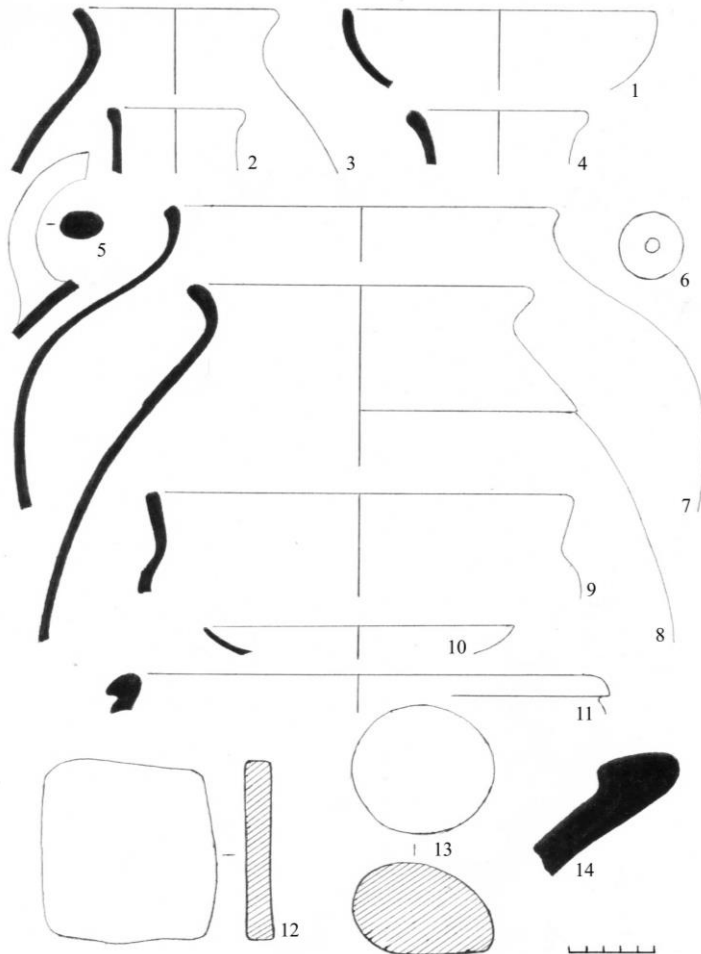


Fig. 10. Finds from the settlement of Bekrova.

5. New Nisa

Urban settlement. This site is situated 18 km to the west of the railway station of Ashkhabad. It is the biggest site of the urban type within the province of Akhal.

The first work devoted to clarifying the stratigraphy of New Nisa was conducted as early as the 1930s (Marushchenko 1949). New attempts were repeatedly made, but to date there have been no clear ideas as to the occupation period of this site, especially at early stages (Pilipko 2010). The question of when the city was established (under Alexander, the Seleucids or the Arsacids) still remains a subject of heated debate. As yet, there is no reliable data to solve this question. By and large, most scholars believe that the city was founded in the 3rd century BC.

6. Old Nisa

An archaeological site known worldwide. It is situated 16 km to the west of the railway terminal of Ashkhabad. It has been actively investigated, beginning in 1930 (Pilipko 2001). With the long history of exploration, the earlier layers of the fortress have remained practically unexcavated. For this

reason no reliable data is available about the foundation time of the fortress. It is determined relying on a general evaluation of the historical situation of that time. Earlier on it was suggested that the fortress actually came into being together with the emergence of the Parthian state, and that it was here that the burials of the early Arsacids were placed (Masson 1949). After an ostrakon was found informing that in ancient times the fortress's name had been Mihrdatkirt (Mithridatkirt), the prevailing opinion has been that it was founded in the period of Mithradates I (circa 171–138 BC).

The available archaeological data does not give any possibility of specifying a date of the fortress foundation within the period 3rd century BC—first half of the 2nd century BC.

7. Bekrova

A village near the western outskirts of Ashkhabad. Now it belongs to “The Greater Ashkhabad”. At the north-eastern edge of this village near a bus station earlier there was a small mound (diameter circa 20 m, height 3 m). Until the moment of its examination in the middle of the 1980s it was already represented by a shapeless butte in the break of which, however, one could find the rare fragments of ancient ceramics. Clearing a part of the break did not show up any specific cultural depositions, while some amount of ceramics was obtained (Fig. 10). The profiles and fabric of some artefacts allows us to suggest that on the place of this earth mound earlier there may have been situated a small settlement of the 3rd–2nd centuries BC.

8. Anau settlement

It was situated 3.5 km south-east of the railway station of Anau on the edge of a central farm of the kolkhoz named after Makhtumkuli. Now it is totally destroyed. A settlement of the scattered type, belonging to the early Arsacid period (2nd–1st centuries BC). The lower cultural layer of the largest south-western mound of this settlement may be dated to a time around the middle of the 3rd century BC (Pilipko 2000).

9. A nameless mound-settlement at the mouth of the Keltechinargorge

This small mound with a diameter of about 15 m and height about 2 m undoubtedly represented the remains of a detached house. The presence among the finds of several cuff-shaped rims from large pots close to the complex of the early Arsacid period allows us to suggest the occupation of this site in the 3rd century BC (Fig. 6). It should be noted that the remains of a settlement of the Achaemenid period are located in the direct vicinity of this mound (Pilipko 2000).

Bibliography

- Abdullaev, K. 2010: 'Grecheskie tipy keramiki Sogda i Baktrii' *PIFK* 1, 46–62.
- Bolelov, S.B. 2004: 'K voprosu o periodizatsii rannego etapa istorii drevnego Khorezma' in *Transoxiana: Istorīa i kul'tura*, Tashkent, 48–55.
- Filanovich, M.I. 1989: 'Istoriko-kul'turnye arkheologicheskie tablitsy po gorodishchu Giaur-kala v Starom Merve' in *Drevnii Merv (Trudy IuTAKE* 19), Ashkhabad, 62–121.
- Gaibov, B.A. 2004: 'Ranneellinisticheskaia keramika Margiany' *PIFK* 14, 600–608.
- Gardin, J.-Cl. 1973: 'Les céramiques' in Bernard et al. (eds.), *Fouilles d'Āi Khanoum I (campagnes 1965, 1966, 1967, 1968). Texte et figures. Rapport préliminaire publié sous la direction de P. Bernard*, 2 vols. (*MDAFA* 21; *FAKh* 1), Paris, 121–188, pls. 113–143.
- Lerner, J.D. 2005: 'Greek Ceramic Period IV of Āi Khanoum' in E.A. Antonova, T.K. Mkrtychev (red.), *Tsentral'naia Aziia: istochniki, istorīa, kul'tura*, Moskva, 464–476.
- Lerner, J.D. 2010: 'Revising the Chronologies of the Hellenistic Colonies of Samarkand-Marakanda (Afasiab II-III) and Āi Khanoum (northeastern Afghanistan)' *Anabasis. Studia Classica et Orientalia* 1, Rzeszów, 58–79.

- Lyonnet, B. 1997: *Prospections archéologiques en Bactriane orientale (1974–1978) sous la direction de Jean-Claude Gardin*. Volume 2: *Céramique et peuplement du chalcolithique à la conquête Arabe* (Mémoires de la Mission Archéologique Française en Asie Centrale 8), Paris.
- Lyonnet, B. 2000: 'Grecheskaïa okkupatsiïa Sogdiany. Rezul'taty sravnitel'nogo analiza keramiki Afrasiaba i Aï Khanum' in *Sredniïa Aziïa. Arkheologiïa, istoriïa, kul'tura*, Moskva, 75–80.
- Marushchenko, A.A. 1949: 'Kratkiï otchet o rabote kabneta arkheologii Turkmenskogo gosudarstvennogo instituta istorii za pervuiu polovinu 1936 g.' in *Materialy IuTAKE* 1, Ashgabad, 182–183.
- Masson, M.E. 1949: 'Gorodishcha Nisy v selenii Bagir i ikh izuchenie' in *Trudy IuTAKE* 1, Ashgabad, 16–115.
- Pilipko, V. 2000: 'Archaeological sites of the Keltechinar river valley (South Turkmenistan)', *International association for the study of the cultures of the Central Asia. Information Bulletin* 22, Moscow, 163–187.
- Pilipko, V.N. 1977: 'Stratigrafiïa kholma no. 7 na poselenii Garry-Kïariz' *Karakumskie drevnosti* 5, Ashkhabad, 46–59.
- Pilipko, V.N. 1984: 'Poselenie rannezheznogo veka Garry-Kïariz I' in *Turkmenistan v epokhu rannego zheznogo veka*, Ashkhabad.
- Pilipko, V.N. 1986: 'Ranniï zheleznyï vek Eteka (Ïuzhnyï Turkmenistan)' *Informatsionnyï bülleten' MAIKTsA* 11, Moskva, 8–18.
- Pilipko, V.N. 1987: 'Sredniï sloï ðugo-zapadnogo kholma poseleniïa KOsha-depe u Babadurmaza' *Izvestiïa Akademii Nauk Turkmenistana* 5, Ashkhabad, 52–59.
- Pilipko, V.N. 1990: 'Ranneantichnoe poselenie Kapyr-kala u Kaushuta' in *Drevniïa i srednevekovaïa arkheologiïa Srednei Aziï*, Tashkent, 60–76.
- Pilipko, V.N. 2001a: *Staraïa Nisa. Osnovnye itogi arkheologicheskogo izuchenïia v sovetskiï period*, Moskva.
- Pilipko, V.N. 2001b: *Itogi razvedyvatel'nogo izuchenïia poseleniïa arshakidskogo vremeni Yanyk-depe (Ïuzhnyï Turkmenistan)* PIFK 11, 178–192.
- Pilipko, V.N. 2005: *Raskopki Khyrly-depe* PIFK 15, 57–80.
- Pilipko, V.N. 2010: 'Stratigrafiïa i topografiïa gorodoshcha Novaïa Nisa' in *Drevnie tsivilizatsii na Srednem Vostoke. Arkheologiïa, istoriïa, kul'tura*, Moskva, 84–86.
- Pilipko, V.N. 2011: 'Akh'al' in ellinisticheskii i rannearshakidskii period' in *Drevniïa material'naïa kul'tura Turkmenistana i ee mesto v razvitii mirovoi tsivilizatsii*, Ashkhabad, 178–179.
- Pilipko, V.N., 1975: *Parfiïanskoe sel'skoe poselenie Garry-Kïariz*, Ashkhabad.
- Sagdullaev, A.S. 1978: *Kul'tura Severnoi Baktrii v epokhu pozdnei bronzy i rannego zheleza*, Leningrad.
- Sedov, A.V. 1984: 'Keramicheskie komplekxy aï-khanumskogo tipa na Pravoberezh'e Amudar'ï' *SA* 1984/3, 171–180.
- Shishkina, G.V. 1975: 'Ellinisticheskaiïa keramika Afrasiaba' *SA* 1975/2, 60–78.
- Sverchkov, L.M. 2006: 'Opyt sinkhronizatsii keramicheskikh kompleksov epokhi ellinizma (Kampyrtepa, Termez, Dzhigatepa, Kurganzol)' in *MTE* 5 (*Arkheologicheskie issledovaniïa Kampyrtepa i Shortepa*), Tashkent, 105–124.
- Sverchkov, L.M. 2007: 'Ellinisticheskaiïa krepost' Kurganzol. Raskopki 2004 g.' in *Trudy Baïsunskoi nauchnoi ekspeditsii: arkheologiïa, istoriïa i etnografiïa*. Vyp. 3, 31–66.
- Usmanova, Z.I. 1963: 'Erk-kala' in *Trudy IuTAKE* 12, Ashkhabad, 20–94.
- Usmanova, Z.I. 1969: 'Novye dannye k arkheologicheskoi stratigrafii Erk-kaly' in *Trudy IuTAKE* 14, Ashkhabad, 13–55.
- Usmanova, Z.I., Filanovich, M.I., Koshelenko, G.A. 1985: 'Margiana' in *Drevneïshie gosudarstva Kavkaza i Srednei Aziï (Arkheologiïa SSSR)*, Moskva, 226–242.

- Vainberg, B.I. (ed.) 2004: *Kalaly-gyr 2. Kul'tovyĭ tsentr v Drevnem Khorezme IV-III vv. do n.e.*, Moskva.
- Vorob'eva, M.G. 1959: 'Keramika Khorezma antichnogo perioda' in *Trudy KhAEE* IV, 63–221.
- Vorob'eva, M.G. 1973: *Dingil'dzhe. Usad'ba I tys. do n.e. v Drevnem Khorezme*, Moskva.

Abstract

This article deals with the archaeological sites of a central part of the Kopetdag piedmont (in the medieval period this territory was called “province of Nisa”, in the 19th century “Akhal”), presumably dated to the 3rd century BC. The author gives an explanation of a possible slight influence of Greek culture on the material culture of this region.