

THE TOPRAK-KALA FORTRESS IS THE CAPITAL OF ANCIENT STATE OF  
KHOREZM

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**Abstract:** *Toprak-Kala was built in I-IV centuries AD and now it is located on site of Ellikqala District. Name is translated as "dirt fortress". Toprak-Kala appears to have been built by Artav (Artabanos), ruler of Khwarezm, in the 1st or 2nd century CE. The establishment of Toprak-Kala probably followed the abandonment of Akchakhan-Kala, 14 km to the southwest.*

**Key words:** *Akchakhan-Kala, Ellikqala District, Zoroastrian temple, art drawing, music, art, dance, theater arts, ancient state, capital.*

Toprak-Kala, in modern Karakalpakstan, Uzbekistan, was an ancient palace city and the capital of in Chorasmia in the 2nd/3rd century CE, where wall paintings, coins and archives were discovered. Its history covers a period from the 1st to the 5th century CE. It is part of the "Fifty fortresses oasis" in modern-day Uzbekistan. Toprak-Kala appears to have been built by Artav (Artabanos), ruler of Khwarezm, in the 1st or 2nd century CE.



The establishment of Toprak-Kala probably followed the abandonment of Akchakhan-Kala, 14 km to the southwest. The ruins of the city were explored by the Chorasmian Expedition under the guidance of Sergey Tolstov in 1938. The date of the palace has been determined by the discovery of coins of the Kushan Empire rulers Vima Kadphises and Kanishka, as well as coins of the Khwarazmian king Artav (Artabanos). Wall paintings representing Zoroastrian deities were discovered in the Palace. Karakalpakstan recently attracts increasing attention of historians, researchers and travelers. The region is known for its unique culture, rich historical heritage, as well as rare

natural landscapes, ancient and medieval monuments, forming the area of "archaeological reserve."



Here is located one of the most ancient fortress in the world. The Toprak-Kala fortress is the capital of ancient state of Khorezm. It was built in I-IV centuries AD and now it is located on site of Ellikqala District. Name is translated as "dirt fortress". Name of Ellikqala District received from existence of the many castles, centered close to each other. Archaeological excavations give reason to assume that this fortress also served as a center of religious rituals and here was built the Zoroastrian temple. The fortress stands on a hill, but has remained only some parts of the walls. Here is a beautiful view of the surrounding desert. It can be highlighted the unusual sunset clay wall thickness of ten meters, a variety of well-preserved rooms and halls.

The findings indicate that IV-III century BC Khorezm existed art drawing, music, art, dance, theater arts. Excavations have uncovered the remains of ancient temple 4-3 century BC with a central two-storey circular building (the diameter of 44.4 m, height of about 9.5 m) and a ring of ramparts (7 m thick); Here were found specimens of ancient literature, religious figurines and ceramic funerary sculpture, weapons, ornaments, pottery vessels. In the center of the fortress stood tall rear with lots of rooms, which have been preserved pottery, weapons, ornaments, figurines. In one of the towers was the entrance to the complex, which includes a round outdoor playground. Its first floor was occupied by two separate groups of rooms. Perhaps complex feces were associated with funeral rites: the lower floor rooms were designed for the burial of the remains of Khorezm king and his wife. Toprak-kala and the whole of Chorasmia seem to have been under the control of the Kushan Empire for some time during the 2nd century CE, as coins of Vima Kadphis and Kanishka were found, interrupting a series of coins of Chorasmian rulers before and after them. Others have analysed the coinage evidence as indicating that the Kushan did not control Khwarezm.

Several high-reliefs of standing figures draped in robes of Hellenistic style, which are thought to derive from the style of the Greco-Buddhist art of Gandhara, reflecting the influence of the Kushan Empire, were discovered in the ruins of Toprak-Kala. This abundant sculptural work may also have been accomplished by artisans from nearby Bactria. Hellenistic tradition remained active since the time of the Greco-Bactrian kingdom. The statues are now located in the Hermitage Museum in Saint-Petersburg. Sergey Tolstov drew a reconstruction of the ancient city. Toprak-Kala fortress is one of the most unique buildings in Central Asia and it is included to the UNESCO World Heritage list.



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