

UCH KULAKH TEPE: CULTURAL CONTACTS in the EARLY MEDIEVAL TIMES

Ilaria Vincenzi

Barcelona ES

Abstract

The Early Medieval settlement of Uch Kulakh tepe, is a fortified castle with two living areas connected to it- both with stunning examples of the oldest paintings of the Oasis of Bukhara and a fortified southern complex also outside the castle. Located on the western portion of the Oasis of Bukhara, in the Varakhsha territory, along the road, that, across the Kizil Kum desert, leads to Khwarazm.

Uch Kulakh was occupied from the 4th-5th to the early 13th cent. AD. Seven phases of building activity have been identified and their chronology has been established on the basis of the archaeological data coming from the stratigraphic sequence. The study of the archaeological finds, the building techniques and also the unique lay-out of the site suggest very strong contacts and relationships with the nomadic groups that were crossing the steppes of Central Asia.

The iconographic patterns characterizing the wall paintings and that detected from the coinage, as well as the architectural models adopted are the result of the fusion and interaction between two different cultural realities: settled people with an Iranian-Central Asiatic cultural heritage and those typical of the Eurasian steppes.

During the last campaign of excavation, new rooms- with its own peculiarities and functions- and architectural structures were identified both inside the castle and in the living areas connected to it. They allow new hypotheses to be advanced regarding their functions and the role of Uch Kulakh within the territory.