



Article

Some Considerations on The Development of Socio-Economic and Ethno-Cultural Relations of Bronze and Early Iron Age Society in Uzbekistan

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Abstract: Since ancient times, the geographical position of the territory of Uzbekistan has had the characteristic of being distinguished from other territories by its strategic importance. The presence of natural resources, sacred ground, climatic conditions, geographical environment, abundance of ecological reserves and several regions favorable to fertile agriculture in the center of the Turonian lowland has provided a favorable opportunity for the development of social life since the earliest times. The main purpose of the study is to analyze some considerations regarding the development of socio-economic and ethnomedical relations of the bronze and early Iron Age society in Uzbekistan. The study was illuminated on the basis of scientific principles such as historicism, logicism and scientific methods such as inductive and deductive, analysis and synthesis, as well as modern approaches, and its scientific results were summed up according to the principle of unity of theory and practice. As a result, the socio-economic and ethnocultural relations of the bronze and early Iron Age society in Uzbekistan and its importance in the development of society are scientifically substantiated.

Keywords: kopetdag, ustyurt, lower zarafshan, fergana valley, amu darya riverbank, kazakhstan, tashkent oasis, surkhandarya

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1. Introduction

The Bronze Age (mid-3rd millennium – 2nd millennium BCE) society exhibited distinct economic and cultural characteristics that played a crucial role in the development of socio-economic relations. The evolution of Bronze Age society was influenced by the material culture of the Eneolithic period.

According to archaeological literature, the material and spiritual development of the Bronze Age in Central Asia is divided into the following historical-geographical regions:

- The foothills of Kopetdag;
- The Atrak River basin (northern Parthia and Daghestan).

Analysis of Literature on the Topic. According to the researcher M.A. Itina, in the early and mid-2nd millennium BCE, a group of Andronovo pastoralists who migrated from northeastern Kazakhstan settled in the Akhangaran Valley of the Tashkent region, while others moved to the Zarafshan oases[1]. These groups established their settlements around the tributaries of the Lower Zarafshan River, including the Makhandarya and Goyayli rivers.

In some regions of Uzbekistan, during the first quarter of the 7th–5th centuries BCE, agricultural communities founded cities such as Dalvarzin, Eylatan, and Ashkoltepa in

the Fergana Valley. In Samarkand province, apart from the Samarkand archaeological site, a cultural and economic center emerged in Koktepa, located in the Chelek district. These findings have been documented in the research of scholars such as Ya.G. Gulyamov, U. Islomov, and A. Askarov[2].

According to T.G. Oboldueva, the Burganly population, which had integrated with the sedentary inhabitants along the banks of the Akhangaran River in the Tashkent Oasis, lived in semi-subterranean dwellings. They practiced household livestock farming and “qayr” agriculture, contributing to the development of ethnic interactions in the region[3].

V.N. Pilipko concluded that the Odoytepa archaeological site, located on an elevated area along the left bank of the middle Amu Darya, dates back to the 9th–8th centuries BCE[4].

Researcher O.A. Vishnevskaya, based on new excavations at Kozaliqir, recorded that the site belonged to the first half of the 6th century BCE and remained in use until the early 5th century BCE[5].

2. Materials and Methods

Scientific Approach

- Chronological Consistency
- Historical Analysis
- Comparison and Justification
- Utilization of Achievements in Ethnography, Archaeology, Anthropology, Geology, and Geography

3. Results

According to the information recorded in the works of researchers, the development of Bronze Age societies in Central Asia was uneven[11]. However, there has been little attempt to classify these societies based on their level of material and spiritual development.

In Uzbekistan, the socio-economic and ethno-cultural development of Bronze Age communities was closely linked to their settlement patterns, which largely consisted of semi-subterranean dwellings[12]. For instance, the inhabitants of the Khorezm region adapted to the unpredictable conditions of the Amu Darya River, relying primarily on livestock breeding, fishing, and primitive forms of “qayr” agriculture.

Archaeological literature suggests that the agricultural communities of the Chust culture in the Fergana Valley emerged as part of historical processes that facilitated technological exchanges with neighboring regions[13]. This interaction led to the widespread use of iron tools in daily life. Researchers also note that the inhabitants of Jarkutan, under the initiative of a “priestly” leadership, expanded into the southwestern territories of the Sherobod district, establishing settlements such as Kuchuktepa[14]. Excavations in this area have uncovered iron agricultural tools, confirming the technological advancements of the period.

Suggestions

The following suggestions have been made based on the information presented above:

- Continuing the in-depth and scientific study of the complex historical path taken by our ancestors to gain a more comprehensive understanding of their development;
- Enhancing academic engagement by incorporating the information from this study into lectures and practical sessions for students majoring in history at higher education institutions, allowing them to gather more knowledge on the subject[15];

- Examining the natural conditions that influenced the socio-economic and ethno-cultural relations of our ancestors during the Bronze and Early Iron Ages, facilitating a better understanding of the factors that shaped their way of life.

4. Discussion

It is appropriate to divide the constructive activities of the Bronze Age population of Central Asia, aimed at developing various aspects of society, into two groups, as suggested by researchers. This division is based on the generalization of historical and geographical regions presented in published studies.

1st Group: The foothills of the Kopetdag in southern Turkmenistan and the Murgab River basin. This period is characterized by a high level of architectural knowledge, including well-developed urban planning, sophisticated defense systems, temples, and palaces.

2nd Group: The Fergana and Surkhandarya regions, where architectural knowledge was applied mainly to residential buildings. The internal structure of homes often included semi-subterranean dwellings (such as in Chust). However, the level of construction was relatively simple, as seen in Sopollitepa, where the defensive wall was built in a three-row P-shape, with the internal structure consisting of eight neighborhoods connected by short streets.

3rd Group: This category includes the Ustyurt, Zarafshan, and Tashkent regions, where semi-subterranean dwellings with wooden pillars were commonly used.

M.A. Itina documented the internal structure of the Yakkaparon 2 settlement in the southern Akchadarya basin, noting that it consisted of 20 residential rooms. She also recorded evidence of labor tools made of bronze and remnants of molds used for casting bronze tools[1].

The socio-economic and ethno-cultural relations of the Bronze Age society were influenced by the interaction between the Suvyorgan and Tozabogyab tribes. As a result, the Amirobod communities did not feel the necessity of using iron tools in their daily lives, a fact reflected in historical literature. Similar processes can be observed in the everyday activities of the populations settled in the Tashkent and Zarafshan valleys.

During the early and mid-2nd millennium BCE, a group of Andronovo pastoralists who migrated from northeastern Kazakhstan settled in the Akhangaran Valley of the Tashkent region and the Zarafshan oases. According to researchers, they established their settlements around the tributaries of the Lower Zarafshan River, including the Makhandarya and Gojayli rivers[6].

The semi-subterranean residential structures of these populations continued the tradition of wooden-pillar huts from the Neolithic period, demonstrating continuity in architectural practices.

According to T.G. Oboldueva, the Burganly population, which assimilated with the settled communities in the Akhangaran River region of the Tashkent Oasis, lived in semi-subterranean dwellings[3]. They engaged in animal husbandry and “qayr” agriculture as part of their daily activities, contributing to ethnic interactions.

In certain regions of Uzbekistan, during the first quarter of the 7th–5th centuries BCE, agricultural communities in the Fergana Valley established cities such as Dalvarzin, Eylatan, and Ashkoltepa. In Samarkand province, in addition to the Samarqand settlement, a cultural-economic center emerged in Koktepa, Chelek district.

During the 9th–8th centuries BCE, ethnic processes took place in the southern Akchadarya basin due to the interaction between the Suvyorgan and Tozabogyab populations. As a result, the Qavat-2 and Yakkaparon-2 settlements became sites of semi-subterranean ethnic integration.

According to V.N. Pilipko, the Odoytepa archaeological site, constructed on an elevated area on the left bank of the middle Amu Darya, dates back to the 9th–8th centuries BCE[4].

A.S. Sagdullaev noted that during the first half of the 1st millennium BCE, a group of northern Bactrian inhabitants expanded their migration geography, as evidenced by the materials found in Karki and Qoshqala[7].

Researcher D. Durdiev suggested that in the 7th century BCE, the Kangqaqir fortress was built on a highland near the Tunidarya area in the lower reaches of the Dovdon tributary of the Amu Darya[8]. However, the question of where the builders of Kangqaqir fortress originated remains open. Based on our analysis, it is likely that a group of inhabitants constructed Kangqaqir fortress due to food shortages.

The craftsmen of Odoytepa played a significant role in expanding settlement policies on the left bank of the Amu Darya. For instance, O.A. Vishnevskaya recorded that in the northeastern and northwestern parts of the middle Dovdon tributary of the Amu Darya, the Charmanyop irrigation system was constructed to facilitate land development. In the first quarter of the 6th century BCE, an elevated residential site known in historical literature as Kozaliqir was built in this area

According to N.A. Egamberdieva, there were 34 early Iron Age settlements around the Kozaliqir site, 3 around Mang'irqa'l'a, and 11 near the Kohna Uaz site[9]. However, her conclusions regarding early Iron Age residential settlements are debatable.

Researcher O.A. Vishnevskaya, based on recent excavations at Kozaliqir, confirmed that the site dates from the first half of the 6th century BCE to the beginning of the 5th century BCE. Historical sources indicate that Oybuyirqa'l'a, located in the southwestern Ustyurt Plateau, dates to the late 6th century BCE[5]. In southern Khorezm, an irrigation system extended from the Toshsoqa area to the Zaungezi Karakum border, at the end of which Ichanka'l'a was constructed.

The Iron Age (10th–5th centuries BCE) holds a significant place in the development of socio-economic and ethno-cultural relations. In Uzbekistan, changes in the quantity and quality of residential constructions during the Iron Age can be divided into two historical periods. The first period spans from the late 10th century BCE to the end of the 7th century BCE, while the second covers the 6th–5th centuries BCE[10]. During the first period, the dense settlement of sedentary populations in cultural-economic zones was a result of economic advancements, as reflected in scholarly publications.

The transition from the Bronze Age to the Iron Age in Central Asia is generally dated to the 10th–8th centuries BCE.

5. Conclusion

Thus, taking into account the historical information mentioned above, the following final conclusion can be drawn:

In the first quarter of the second half of the 2nd millennium BCE, the Chust and Sopollitepa cultural-economic centers, which had fortifications, were formed in the territories of Fergana and Surkhandarya in Uzbekistan. During this historical period, these settlements were located on the borders between agricultural oases and the nomadic world, serving a defensive function. As a result, they became the earliest centers of military defense education and contributed to the incorporation of new defensive elements in settlement construction.

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