



The Place of Southern Uzbekistan's Archaeological Collections in the Funds of the Samarkand State Museum-Reserve

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Abstract

This article analyzes the composition, historical and cultural significance, and exhibition potential of the archaeological collections from the Kashkadarya and Surkhandarya Provinces stored in the funds of the Samarkand State Museum-Reserve. These collections constitute an important body of material sources illuminating the uninterrupted historical development of Southern Uzbekistan from the Eneolithic period through the 19th century. The article examines, on a chronological and typological basis, the artifacts associated with Chimqo'rg'on, Sopollitepa, Jarqo'ton, Pishaktepa, Yerqo'rg'on, Ancient Termez, Zartepa, Polvontepa, Sho'rtepa, To'g'aytepa, Qoratepa, Kofirtepa, Oqsaroy, Gumbazi Sayyidon, Sultan Saodat, and the Yakkabog' madrasa. The study reveals the role of these collections in illuminating early civilization, urban development, craftsmanship, religious rites, Islamic-period culture, Timurid-era architecture, and the religious-educational centers of the khanate period. The article also substantiates the possibilities of creating thematic exhibitions, using 3D reconstructions, historical maps, and interactive museum technologies on the basis of the collections.

Keywords: Samarkand State Museum-Reserve, Kashkadarya, Surkhandarya, Southern Uzbekistan, archaeological collections, Sopollitepa, Jarqo'ton, Ancient Termez, Yerqo'rg'on, Qoratepa, Kofirtepa, Oqsaroy, Timurid period, museum funds, exhibition, craftsmanship, urban culture.

Introduction

The territory of Southern Uzbekistan is one of the important historical spaces in Central Asian history where ancient civilizations, early urban development, trade routes, religious-cultural processes, and craftsmanship traditions took shape. The Kashkadarya and Surkhandarya oases stand out as a region in which, from the Eneolithic and Bronze Ages onward, ancient agricultural culture, early cities, defensive structures, religious centers, and major craftsmanship traditions developed.

The archaeological collections from the Kashkadarya and Surkhandarya Provinces stored in the funds of the Samarkand State Museum-Reserve constitute an important scholarly source for studying the historical development of these regions. These collections include objects from Chimqo'rg'on, Sopollitepa, Jarqo'ton, Pishaktepa, Yerqo'rg'on, Ancient

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Termez, Zartepa, Qoratepa, Kofirtepa, Oqsaroy, Gumbazi Sayyidon, and other sites. They demonstrate the development of ancient production activity, Bronze Age urban culture, ancient trade connections, pre-Islamic religious rites, Islamic-period craftsmanship, and Timurid architectural decorative art in the territory of Southern Uzbekistan [1], [2], [3], [4], [5], [6].

The main aim of this article is to determine the historical and cultural value of the archaeological collections from the Kashkadarya and Surkhandarya Provinces stored in the funds of the Samarkand State Museum-Reserve, to analyze them by period, and to substantiate the possibilities for their display in museum exhibitions. Issues related to presenting the history of Southern Uzbekistan on the basis of these collections through regional, periodical, and thematic approaches are also examined.

Research Method

The preparation of this article employed historical-analytical, comparative, chronological, typological, and museological approaches. The archaeological collections from the Kashkadarya and Surkhandarya Provinces were first grouped by period. The artifacts were analyzed according to the following stages: Eneolithic and Bronze Age; Ancient period; Early Middle Ages; developed Middle Ages; Timurid period; and khanate period.

The chronological approach was used to identify the stages of historical development of the collections. Through comparative analysis, the sites of the Kashkadarya and Surkhandarya oases were compared with one another. The typological method was used to classify ceramic vessels, metal objects, construction elements, architectural coverings, ritual objects, ossuaries, and household items into separate groups.

The museological approach was applied to identify the exhibition potential of the collections, to determine their use in thematic exhibitions, to integrate them with modern display technologies, and to develop their scholarly-educational interpretation. The degree of study, conservation condition, and the need to engage certain objects in future scholarly research were also taken into account.

Results and Discussion

Analysis and Results

The archaeological collections from the Kashkadarya and Surkhandarya Provinces stored in the funds of the Samarkand State Museum-Reserve constitute an important scholarly source reflecting the uninterrupted historical development of Southern Uzbekistan from the Eneolithic period through the 19th century. These objects illuminate the processes of civilization formation, the development of urban culture, and the evolution of craftsmanship traditions in the region.

The earliest collections from the region are confined to the Eneolithic and Bronze Ages. Although these artifacts are relatively few in number, their scholarly significance is high. The finds identified at Chimqo'rg'on [7] (A-422) reflect the early production activity of the Eneolithic period. The complexes of Sopollitepa [8] (A-433) and Jarqo'ton [9] (A-517), which belong to the Bronze Age, help to demonstrate the early urbanization process in the region.

The finds of this period confirm the development of bronze craftsmanship, pottery, and a residential culture. These objects establish the leading position of Southern Uzbekistan's Bronze Age civilization within Central Asia. From an exhibition perspective, a special archaeological section on the theme "Southern Uzbekistan — Cradle of Early

Civilization” can be created on the basis of these objects, incorporating scale models of Sopollitepa and Jarqo’ton, replicas of metal implements, and residential reconstructions.

The Ancient period artifacts comprise objects from Pishaktepa [10] (A-497), Kitob District sites [11] (A-424), Poyonqo’rg’on [12] (A-639, A-640), Yerqo’rg’on [13] (A-466), and finds from Ancient Termez [14] (A-111, A-358). During this period, ironworking developed, cities and trade routes were established. Ceramic vessels, figurines, and construction elements of this period demonstrate the intensification of social stratification and state-formation processes.

An exhibition on the theme “Ancient Termez and the Urban Culture of Southern Sogd” can be created on the basis of these collections, incorporating maps of trade routes, replicas of Kushan coins, and reconstructions of temples.

The Early Medieval collections consist of collections assembled from the sites of Hayrabod, Zartepa (A-386), Polvontepa (A-428), Sho’rtepa (A-429), To’g’aytepa (A-431), and Qoratepa (A-545) [15]. During this period, local political structures were consolidated and religious and cultural traditions developed. Ossuaries, ritual objects, and household items are useful for demonstrating the religious worldview of the population.

On the basis of these objects, an exhibition on “Pre-Islamic Religious Rites in Sogd and Bactria” can be organized, with visual reconstructions of religious ceremony scenes and funerary traditions.

The developed medieval artifacts, dating to the 8th–13th centuries, are drawn from collections identified at the sites of Termez (A-73, A-284), Kofirtepa (A-442, A-591), Ancient Termez (A-488), and Qoratepa (A-516) [16]. During this period, Islamic culture, craftsmanship, and architecture reached a high level. Glazed ceramics, carved decorations, and mosque-madrassa elements are of great importance for demonstrating the development of urban infrastructure.

An exhibition on the theme “Islamic-Period Cities and Craftsmanship Centers” can be organized on the basis of these collections. The effectiveness of the exhibition would be enhanced by including a reconstruction of a pottery workshop and scenes animating the work processes of craftsmen [17, 18, 19, 20, 21, 22].

The Timurid-period artifacts from Southern Uzbekistan are associated primarily with the Shahrisabz region and are assembled in collections [23] consisting of architectural coverings from Oqsaroy (A-250), Gumbazi Sayyidon (A-256), and other architectural monuments (A-576). These collections were assembled as a result of archaeological expeditions organized by Uzkomstaris under the leadership of Muso Saidjonov and have not yet been subjected to scholarly study.

These finds confirm that palace architecture and decorative art reached a high level during the Timurid period. From an exhibition perspective, an exhibition on the theme “The Land Where Amir Timur Was Born and Raised” can be organized, incorporating a 3D model of Oqsaroy and architectural decorative elements.

The khanate-period collections of Surkhandarya and Kashkadarya Provinces consist of the Sultan Saodat complex (A-285), the Yakkabog’ madrasa (A-255), and certain ceramic objects [15], [23]. These objects primarily serve to demonstrate the development of religious-educational centers. On the basis of this period, an exhibition on “Khanate-Period Culture in Southern Uzbekistan” can be created.

In sum, the collections from the Kashkadarya and Surkhandarya Provinces reflect the uninterrupted historical development from the Eneolithic period through the 19th century.

Even though the artifacts are few in number, their integration with materials from other periods makes it possible to create complex scholarly exhibitions. The organization of regional, periodical, and thematic exhibitions on the basis of these collections will further enhance the scholarly and educational potential of the Samarkand State Museum-Reserve.

Discussion

The archaeological collections from the Kashkadarya and Surkhandarya Provinces stored in the funds of the Samarkand State Museum-Reserve allow for the study of the history of Southern Uzbekistan over a long chronological span. These collections, covering processes from the Eneolithic period through the 19th century, demonstrate the successive development of early production activity, urban development, religious rites, craftsmanship, architecture, and trade connections in the region.

The earliest collections from the region belong to the Eneolithic and Bronze Ages. The finds from Chimqo'rg'on show that early production activity was established during the Eneolithic period. The artifacts from the Sopollitepa and Jarqo'ton complexes confirm the special role of Southern Uzbekistan in the development of Bronze Age civilization. Through these finds it is possible to illuminate residential culture, bronze craftsmanship, pottery, and early urban processes. It is therefore appropriate to organize a special exhibition on the theme "Southern Uzbekistan — Cradle of Early Civilization" on the basis of these collections.

The Ancient period collections are associated with Pishaktepa, Kitob District sites, Poyonqo'rg'on, Yerqo'rg'on, and the finds from Ancient Termez. During this period, ironworking, urban culture, trade routes, and social stratification developed in Southern Uzbekistan. Ceramic vessels, figurines, and construction elements are important for studying the economic life, religious beliefs, and urban planning experience of ancient society. An exhibition on the theme "Ancient Termez and the Urban Culture of Southern Sogd" can be created on the basis of these collections [6, 22, 25, 26, 27].

The Early Medieval collections include objects assembled from the sites of Hayrabod, Zartepa, Polvontepa, Sho'rtepa, To'g'aytepa, and Qoratepa. During this period, local political structures were consolidated and religious and cultural traditions further developed. Ossuaries, ritual objects, and household items emerge as important sources for illuminating pre-Islamic religious beliefs, funerary rites, and everyday life. It is scientifically justified to organize an exhibition on the theme "Pre-Islamic Religious Rites in Sogd and Bactria" on the basis of these collections.

The developed medieval collections, covering the 8th–13th centuries, are associated with Termez, Kofirtepa, Ancient Termez, and Qoratepa. During this period, Islamic culture, craftsmanship, and architecture rose to a high level. Glazed ceramics, carved decorations, construction elements, and household objects demonstrate the development of urban infrastructure, pottery centers, and craftsmanship workshops. An exhibition on the theme "Islamic-Period Cities and Craftsmanship Centers" can be organized on the basis of these objects. Reconstructions of a pottery workshop, craftsmen at work, and scenes of urban life would enhance the impact of the exhibition.

The Timurid-period collections are associated primarily with the Shahrisabz region and consist of facing fragments and decorative elements from the architectural monuments of Oqsaroy, Gumbazi Sayyidon, and others. These finds demonstrate that palace architecture and decorative art reached a high level during the Timurid period. In particular, the architectural decorations of Oqsaroy constitute an important source for illuminating the urban development, monumental architecture, and artistic decorative traditions of the Amir Timur

era. It is appropriate to organize an exhibition on the theme “The Land Where Amir Timur Was Born and Raised” on the basis of these collections, displaying a 3D model of Oqsaroy and its architectural decorative elements.

The khanate-period collections are associated with the Sultan Saodat complex, the Yakkabog’ madrasa, and certain ceramic objects. These objects show that the activity of religious-educational centers continued in the 16th–19th centuries in Southern Uzbekistan, and that madrasas and shrines occupied an important place in social and cultural life. An exhibition on “Khanate-Period Culture in Southern Uzbekistan” can be created on their basis.

Although the reviewed collections are not equally extensive for each period, when integrated with one another they provide the possibility of presenting the history of Southern Uzbekistan in a comprehensive manner. In particular, early civilization can be exhibited through Sopollitepa and Jarqo’ton; ancient urban culture through Ancient Termez and Yerqo’rg’on; religious and craftsmanship processes through Qoratepa and Kofirtepa; and Timurid-era architectural decorative art through Oqsaroy and Gumbazi Sayyidon.

It is appropriate to use 3D reconstructions, historical maps, site models, interactive screens, trade route diagrams, and scenes animating craftsmanship processes in the exhibition process. These methods will serve to convey the scholarly content of the collections to a broad public in an accessible and impactful form.

Conclusion

The archaeological collections from the Kashkadarya and Surkhandarya Provinces stored in the funds of the Samarkand State Museum-Reserve are important scholarly sources illuminating the uninterrupted historical development of Southern Uzbekistan from the Eneolithic period through the 19th century. Through these collections it is possible to trace the development of early production activity, Bronze Age civilization, ancient urban development, religious rites, Islamic-period craftsmanship, Timurid-era architecture, and the religious-educational centers of the khanate period in the region.

The analyses show that the Chimqo’rg’on, Sopollitepa, and Jarqo’ton finds are important for illuminating the early civilization and urbanization processes of Southern Uzbekistan; the Pishaktepa, Yerqo’rg’on, and Ancient Termez collections are valuable for revealing ancient urban culture; the Qoratepa, Kofirtepa, and Termez artifacts are significant for demonstrating religious, craftsmanship, and Islamic-period culture. The Oqsaroy and Gumbazi Sayyidon architectural decorations from the Shahrisabz region display the high level of Timurid-era art.

The organization of regional, periodical, and thematic exhibitions on the basis of these collections will serve to enhance the scholarly and educational potential of the Samarkand State Museum-Reserve. In particular, exhibitions such as “Southern Uzbekistan — Cradle of Early Civilization,” “Ancient Termez and the Urban Culture of Southern Sogd,” “Pre-Islamic Religious Rites in Sogd and Bactria,” “Islamic-Period Cities and Craftsmanship Centers,” and “The Land Where Amir Timur Was Born and Raised” can more broadly reveal the content of these collections.

The archaeological collections from the Kashkadarya and Surkhandarya Provinces constitute an important component of the funds of the Samarkand State Museum-Reserve, providing the opportunity to present the history of Southern Uzbekistan as a holistic and continuous process. The in-depth scholarly study, cataloguing, application to exhibitions, and

display of these objects using modern museum technologies are of great importance for the popularization of Uzbekistan's archaeological heritage.

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