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### On the Research of the Oktom Cemetery Mound

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#### **Abstract:**

This article presents the information obtained by archaeologists N.G.Gorbunova and B.Z.Hamburg based on the results of archeological research at the Oktom grave monument, including the structure of grave monuments, analysis of finds inside the grave.

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As in the whole of Central Asia, in the Ferghana Valley, there is diversity in burial ceremonies over time. Cemetery mounds belonging to nomadic herders can be found in all geographical areas of the Fergana Valley, in particular, in plains, hills, and mountain settlements. The initial information about the cemeteries was left by the orientalist N.I.Veselovsky. We can also find information about cemeteries, which are called kurum and mugkhana by local residents, in I.A.Castanye [11:19]. In general, some data about the nomadic herders of the valley has been converted from amateur research to scientific archaeological research by geologists, local historians and other scientists.

It should be noted that in the Fergana Valley, agricultural monuments of the Late Bronze Age after the Chust culture were separated as a separate group by Yu.A.Zadneprovsky and named "Eilaton culture" after the first studied monument [7:167]. The term "Eilaton culture" refers to the complex of monuments of the early Iron Age, i.e., the total findings and material evidence related to the culture of the economy of the entire period in the Fergana Valley. During the period of Eilat, there were few places of population, and most of the monuments were made up of tombs [9:9]. One of such

monuments is the Oktom cemetery. Archaeological excavations were carried out here in 1954-1955 by N.G.Gorbunova and B.Z.Hamburglar, employees of the Museum of Local History of Fergana region[3;4].

N.G.Gorbunova said that the monuments of Oktom culture were initially “left by peasant communities”. However, the scientist later changed his opinion and stated that these settlements could be related to herdsman and that “it is difficult to separate the culture of herdsman and the cultures of peasant communities in Ferghana.” This proves that he fully confirmed the opinion of Professor A. N. Bernshtam that there were two types of economic management in the Fergana Valley since ancient times [2]. For this reason, the Eilaton culture of the early Iron Age was called by many scientists the “Eilaton-Oktom culture”, that is, the culture of settled farmers and herders.

The Oktom cemetery, located in a system of hills 9 km south of Fergana, is quite large and consists of two parts: north-eastern (Damkol) and north-western (Oktom). At that time, 65 tombs were identified. 15 of them belong to the beginning of our era, 50 to the early iron age. 31 of the cemeteries have been excavated and studied. A total of 126 graves (31 under burial mounds) were identified. Depending on the appearance of the upper part, the cemeteries are divided into “oblong” types with a length of 6 to 74 meters, a width of 3-5 meters, and a “short” type with a diameter of 3-5 meters. The height of the grave is about 20 cm to 70 cm.

Due to the poor preservation of the bones, only 82 out of 222 graves were anthropologically determined by sex and age. 38 of them are the graves of children under the age of 9, who were buried together with adults or in one row. Furthermore, the composition of the bones shows that several women and men were buried in the same grave [6:94].

The following types of graves have been identified:

1. Round graves covered with wood.
2. Round graves but they are surrounded by stones.
3. Burial structures built on the surface of the ground without excavating any enclosure.

It is recorded that 2 to 8 deceased were placed in the graves of Oktom and similar graves one after the other many times. In graves where multiple burials were observed, the bones of the front body were pushed to the side of the leg or to the side. Sometimes the deceased was buried on top of or next to the body that had been placed before. The gender and age of the deceased are not considered in consecutive burials in the same grave. Children are placed near or next to adults. In the third type of graves, multiple successive burials were not observed.

Placing a special “tushama” - pillows - under the head of the corpse was observed among farmers and herders of the Bronze Age, and this tradition has not lost its importance even today. Pillows under the corpse's head are made of earth, gravel, mud, stones, plant stems, and woven fabrics. This situation is proved by the fact that in graves belonging to the Chust culture, a rounded spiked crop stem was found, in Karabuluk, juniper branches and straws, in Kengkol, a plant bundle, and in Gormiron, gravel was used [10:49]. In the Oktom cemetery, stone pillows were placed under the corpse's head [5:6]. Placing pillows under the head of the deceased was seen as a form of care for the deceased by their loved ones or to make the deceased as “comfortable” as possible [8:104].

Academician A.Askarov states that the skulls found in the Oktom cemetery are mostly of the local Meso-brachy crane European population, they may be the descendants of the Dolicho-mesocranian

tribes of the Bronze Age. The scientist says that they became brachycephalic under the influence of the inhabitants of the Andronovo culture [1:340-341].

The proximity of the Oktom cemetery mound to water sources, pastures rich in meadows, and low mountain hills of Tarontog indicates the development of cattle breeding. The discovery of sheep bones in 21 graves indicates the development of sheep farming [6].

It is clear that the nomadic herders did not live separately from the settled peoples in socio-economic processes. This is also proved by the material resources found in settlements typical of nomads. Besides, there were similarities in the production of the owners of two different farms. In particular, the similarity between nomadic herders and farmers is observed more in pottery. A lot of articles have been published about it. Fine-sounding, elegant ceramics are rarely found in the graves of nomadic herders. Because such quality ceramics were produced in the pottery centers and they are connected with the major pottery centers of the valley. Pottery belonging to nomads can be rough and rough at first.

N.G.Gorbunova and B.Z.Hamburglar express the following opinions on the issue of periodization of the cemetery. The burial ceremony in a grave under a pile of not very high stones in the form of a circle, and the discovery of a mound similar to the “long” mounds described by archaeologists in the Karakol cemetery, date the Oktom cemetery to the Sak-Usun period, or is a reason to believe that it belongs to VI-I centuries BC. Bronze tips of Scythian type arrows, typical of the V-III centuries BC, serve as a crucial material for determining the date of the cemetery. Patterned ceramics have a special place in the matter of periodization. In the Fergana Valley, it is known to paint dishes from the Bronze Age. Ceramic vessels in the Oktom cemetery testify to the continuation of this tradition in the later period. However, it is significantly different from Chust and Dalvarzin pottery in terms of decoration and preparation techniques, as well as its shape. Pottery vessels with small traces of fabric were also found. Such vessels were found in Kyrgyzstan, in the Kovunchitepa and Burghuly settlements, as well as in the Chek and Kaskanyor settlements in the Fergana Valley. Therefore, this technique of making dishes was used throughout the 1st millennium BC, and traces of fabric on the dishes cannot be the basis for absolute dating. However, the simultaneous meeting of fabric traces and semicircular cup (chasha) and bowl (miska) is the basis for indicating VI-IV centuries BC as an absolute date proposed by A.I.Terenozhkin.

Cemetery mounds similar to Oktom were also recorded in the old tombs of the Eilaton culture, such as Kungai, Sufon, Valik, Niyozbotir. That is, the named graves are exactly similar to each other according to their arrangement and other characteristics. They provide information about the funeral customs typical of the Early Iron Age. These ceremonies are related to religious views, and their study is of great importance.

In conclusion, as in the whole of Central Asia, in the Fergana Valley, there is diversity in burial ceremonies over time. But one thing is known, we can see the honor and respect shown to a person after his death, as in all nations and religions, from the funeral rites and the ceremonies held after it. As a result of the increase in the population and the development of cities, Ferghana also led to the separation of urban and rural cemeteries in ancient times. Though it is difficult to distinguish them from each other, some city graves have been identified. As an example of these, we considered the example of the Oktom cemetery mound of the Eilaton-Oktom culture, albeit partially, in the research works of archaeologists. They have developed clan-like behavior and burying large families together.

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