

THE ORIGIN OF THE FIRST AGRICULTURAL AND URBAN CULTURE IN THE SOUTH OF CENTRAL ASIA: GENESIS AND STAGES OF DEVELOPMENT

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Abstract

In the history of Humanity the emergence of cities is a core sign of transition from the barbaric period to civilization, from the tribal system to statehood. In general, the process of civilization and the emergence of the first states went on parallelly with the origin and development of the first cities. The first stages of statehood were also closely connected with the first cities, because the first cities appeared as the centers of the first states, and their development was interdependent. Based on the study of the results of archaeological research conducted in different periods in the southern regions of Central Asia, we have put forward the following tasks: to examine the emergence of the first agricultural culture in the region and its historical roots, to consider the factors that led to the formation of the first cities of the Bronze Age, as well as to present a brief account of the stages of development of the urban culture of that period and the general aspects of its reflection in material culture. Also in hereby article in accordance with the study of material cultural monuments of the Bronze Age found in ancient Bactria and Margiana by archaeologists of different countries in recent years, there were made scientific conclusions on the factors of the origin of the first agricultural culture and the first cities in the country, the relationship of the region with the material culture of the city-states of the Ancient East, especially ancient India, Mesopotamia and Central Iran.

Keywords: Bronze Age, urbanization, migration, Oltintepa, Namazgoh, Sopollitepa, fire-worshiper.

INTRODUCTION

Throughout the history of Humanity, cities have been of decisive social, economic, and cultural importance. Therefore, the need to clarify the laws of development of urban processes requires an in-depth and comprehensive analysis of the results of archaeological research conducted in different periods.

The region located in the delta of the Murgab River, in ancient times was called Margiana. The earliest written information about Margiana is given in the book of **Vendidad** of the Avesta, in which the land is referred as Mouru, and in the Behistun inscriptions of the Persian king Darius I, as Margush. The Greek version in the form of Margiana appeared during the marches of Alexander the Great, this name was used in the works of ancient historians such as Isidore of Charakis, Pliny the Elder, Strabo and Ptolemy. In the last century, many years of research conducted by archaeologists from various countries showed that Margiana, one of the centers of ancient eastern civilization existed long before it was mentioned in Persian and Greek written sources.

A great deal of scientific studies was conducted on the origin of the most ancient cultures in the regions of Margiana and Bactria. There are different views among researchers on the emergence of the most ancient agricultural culture in Margiana and Bactria and the influence

of the countries of the ancient Eastern world on this process. But all of them confirm that in ancient times Bactria and Margiana had very close historical and cultural ties with the Ancient East, so they acknowledge that it is inappropriate to consider these two countries as separate historical places separated from each other. This is explained by the migration of tribes close to each other in terms of culture and genetics to the regions of Bactria and Margiana. Therefore, in the scientific literature it was proposed to interpret the archeological culture of the Bronze Age of Margiyana and Bactria as the Bactrian-Margiyana Archaeological Complex (BMAC). [19, p.27.] It should be noted that many researchers correlate the emergence of these civilizations with migration processes.

As a result of extensive archaeological research conducted in the second half of the twentieth century, important archeological data on the agricultural culture, architectural traditions, urban planning, applied arts, religious beliefs and social order of the ancient communities of Bactria and Margiana at the end of the third millennium - the second millennium BC were collected. The materials of these studies provide an in-depth study of the historical and cultural processes that took place in the region during the Bronze and Early Iron Ages and also provided answers to some questions related to the emergence and development of ancient agricultural culture and urban planning in southern Central Asia.

METHODS

The study of ancient monuments in the Murgab oasis was carried out in 1904 by an American expedition led by R.Pompelli. In the second half of the twentieth century, extensive archaeological research was conducted in the area, and archaeologists such as M.M. Dyakonov, V.I.Sarianidi, G.G.Shmidt, V.M.Masson, A.A.Askarov, E.V.Rtveladze, I.N.Xlopin, B.A.Kuften, A.S.Sagdullaev, B.N.Udeumuradov and T.Sh.Shirinov made important scientific conclusions about the first agricultural culture of Central Asia, the factors of the emergence of the first cities dating back to the Bronze Age, as well as the issues of early civilizations.

Collected materials show that the oldest cities of Central Asia first appeared in the southern regions of the region, in the south of present-day Uzbekistan and Turkmenistan.. In the archeology of southern Turkmenistan, the culture of Prayer (Namozgoh) is an integral part of the ancient Eastern civilization, during which the scope and boundaries of inter-tribal relations expanded. Archaeologists point out that the first cities began to appear in Prayer V phase of the **Anov**¹ culture. [5, p.107.] In the archeological periodic system, this corresponds to the advanced stage of the Bronze Age. Studies show that radical changes in socio-economic and cultural life in Central Asia took place in the III millennium BC precisely in the Bronze Age.

In the ancient farming communities of the Bronze Age, economic upheavals accelerated social stratification and paved the way to the emergence of new local centers of ancient Eastern civilization. As a result of socio-economic and cultural processes, the boundaries of the areas where ancient agricultural culture spread from south to northeast of Central Asia, and in the Murgab Valley and Bactria. New centers of urban culture typical to ancient Eastern civilization began to appear. Studies have confirmed the fact that the culture of this region in terms of

ancient rural planning, construction techniques and architecture is much closer in its characteristics to the culture of the ancient cities of Mesopotamia and Iran.

Among the experts there are various opinions about the origin of the agricultural culture of ancient Margiana. The archaeologists such as V.M. Masson, A. Askarov and I.S. Masimov based on the analysis of many archeological materials found in the area confirm that there was strong influence of the population of Southern Turkmenistan on the formation of the ancient agricultural culture of Margiyana. [¹⁰, p.12.] According to them, in the second millennium BC, a group of tribes living in the foothills of the Kopetdag (a mountain range mainly in Iran, partly in Turkmenistan , and part of the Turkmenistan-Khorasan Mountains) in southern Turkmenistan moved in a northeastern direction, reached the delta part of the Murgab River and inhabited e this area. With this population migration from the south, the traditions of highly developed agricultural culture also were brought. But some experts note that the first attempt to explore the Murgab River delta dates back to the Late Eneolithic period. [²¹, p.119.]

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The development of productive industries by the Bronze Age such as the transition from primitive hunting to farming and animal husbandry, the introduction of artificial irrigation in agriculture, ceramics, metallurgy, textiles, and jewelry were the processes related to the origin and development of cities with a number of industries. The first cities were formed as a trade and handicraft, military-administrative management system and cultural center of the agricultural district.

The main economic factor in the formation of the ancient city was the agriculture and handicrafts of the settled population, they were originally the economic center of the surrounding settlements, the district, the province or the center of social management of the political, religious, and stratified communities of a particular country, that was the first state.

In general, in line with a scientific development accepted in world science, the presence of the following factors is required to call a place of residence a city:

- The existence of high monumental architectural constructions among the buildings of citizens; the areas, where the buildings of social and religious ceremonies are organized, are considered to be the center of the city. The center, in its turn, is the block where the mayor and monks live; mayor's palaces and religious buildings form its basis;
- The construction of defensive walls around densely populated areas; defensive walls are provided with a tower (guard tower), a solid and steady gate, target openings, etc .;
- The establishment of main streets and sewerage systems in urban neighborhoods;
- The growth and density of population;

But it should be noted that experts consider that determining the population of the ancient city is very controversial. Today we have some statistics about the population of cities from the

middle Ages up to the present, the statistics about the population of the ancient cities has not been sufficiently studied yet.

Initial data on the population of ancient cities were obtained from the research of foreign scientists. In particular, "G. Chaeld speaking about the main features of urban planning proposed: an area with a population of five thousand and more could be considered as a city. As a result of special research, French archaeologist G. Frankfort concluded that the population density of the ancient cities of Mesopotamia was 400 people per 1 hectare. V.M. Masson based on the results of this comparative analysis, suggested that there may have been about 2,000 people in Kaykubodshah (Tajikistan) and about 6,500 in Zartepa (Uzbekistan)". [², p.53.] At the same time an american archaeologist Braywood, points out that the population density in the agricultural communities of the Ancient East increased 100 times compared to the time of the hunter-gatherers. [⁹, p.134.]

The occurrence of property and social inequality in society, as well as the change and complexity of governing bodies of society is another factor in the formation and development of urban culture. In the conditions of Central Asia, settled communities could no longer afford to continue farming, to dig large canals to irrigate ever-expanding agricultural fields, to build dams and ditches, and regularly clean the canals that could be easily by constant winds. The growing population needed the reclamation of new lands, and the need to provide them with manpower required some changes in the management of primitive communities. Now, instead of ancestral elders who ruled the tribal communities, the densely populated areas were governed by a religious and secular authority in the face of priests and aristocracy. These changes were directly connected with the origin of property inequality, the occurrence of class society and cities.

Speaking about the oldest cities in the south of Central Asia, experts first mention the monument of Oltintepa (Southern Turkmenistan).

The foothills of the Kopetdag and the Geoxur oasis of southern Turkmenistan were studied by archaeologists V.M.Masson, G.Schmidt, B.A.Kuften, V.I.Sarianidi, I.N.Khlopin. After the archaeological excavations in Oltyntepa, it was suggested that the first urban civilization (proto-city) appeared in the south of Turkmenistan in the Bronze Age. [¹¹, p.14.]

As a result of well-known archaeologist V.M. Masson's research, there were studied the remains of a Bronze Age defensive wall, residential complexes, a monumental temple resembling Sumerian ziggurats with a staircase made of clay and raw brick.

This monument had its first urban content in terms of its internal content and external form during the Bronze Age, during the Prayer V (Namozgoh) period. It was the center of a particular agricultural district, a centralized point of handicrafts and universal ideology. Although there are no many sources about the trade system of Oltintepa city the discovery of ivory materials belonging to the ancient Indo-Harappan civilization, the widespread circulation of copper ore and lojuvard, the birth of the pictographic inscription in southern Turkmenistan under the influence of protoelam, was the result of cultural ties due to interregional trade relations. The opening of the "aristocratic area" in the central square of the city, the discovery of a mausoleum

associated with it was an important element of the social stratigraphy of the society of that time. For example, gold rings and a silver seal were found in the Tomb of the Priests (known as "kohin")². Another shrine in the Tomb of the Priests contained 36 beads, 35 of which were made of gold and other precious stones. The sign of supreme authority "Emblem" was found in another "priest's tomb", women's cosmetics made of silver and ivory were found in the tomb of the "city authority". Such rich tombs indicate that they belonged to the representatives of the urban aristocracy, and that the urban culture in Oltintepa was still in its early stages.

The change in the structure of religious views and ideology is accentuated by scholars as another factor in the formation of urban culture. An important feature of the city is the establishment in Shahristan of a sacred religious center - a monumental temple complex, which serves all segments of the population. Now, instead of the previous various totemistic and magical religious notions, the image of a single God was adopted. In Oltintepa, during Prayer V period the Moon was the chief Deity of the first city, which was depicted in the image of a celestial bull (a statue of a bull with a golden head and gemstone eyes was found in the tomb of the priest. A crescent-shaped turquoise stone was attached on its forehead). And now the people of the city had a common image of the god. A city-wide temple was built in his honor. As mentioned above the existence of an ideological center is an important element of urban culture. Supplementary farm buildings and housing complexes for priests were built near the temple.

In the Bronze Age ancestral and tribal elders simultaneously took over two powers (religious and secular). The discovery of the golden heads of a wolf and an ox in the sanctuary fully proves that this object is related to the activities of the priests and fortune tellers. For example during the Ur (mid-third millennium BC) period in Mesopotamia, the making of ox heads from gold, silver, and bronze was widespread.

For example, in Mesopotamia during the Uru³, (third millennium BC) period, the use of gold, silver, and bronze for the head was widespread. The Sumerians depicted the moon god Nanna-Sin in the form of a golden-headed bull. They decorated it with stones. Bull heads made of gold and silver were found in sites related to the ancient Eastern monuments, including temples in Mesopotamia and Egypt.

Sumerians shrined to Nanna, the god of the moon, he was the protector of the kingdom of Uru. The was given a special sacred region in the city of Uru. The Mesopotamian ziggurat was also located in the same region. Thus, the discovery of the Oltintepa ziggurat, which was reminiscent of the Sumerian temples in its origins, and the building complexes belonging to it, along with finds such as the golden-headed bull and the wolf, indicates that this place was the ideological center of the first city. The above mentioned give possibility to regard Oltintepa as the first city, a city of temples.

Materials collected about the population of the Oltintepa monument, housing construction system, inventory related to funeral rites, issues related to food consumption of the population, let us to clarify some of the problems about the social nature of urban society in the Prayer V period. Studies have shown that the village of Oltintepa began to be surrounded by a defensive

wall from the end of the Eneolithic period and from the first Bronze Age. The Oltintepa area was divided into residential neighborhoods and artisan blocks, which were connected by narrow streets. The width of the streets was 1.5-2m. The width of the main streets leading to the central square of the city was 4-5m, where carts could move. The collected materials show that in IV-III millennium BC, the Central Asian regions began to enter the system of trade, exchange and cultural relations, typical to the ancient East. As a result of appearance of the most ancient ways, there were developed cultural, trade and economic relations among the peoples of the East. During this period, the domestication of the two-humped camel was an important means of providing transportation.^[9, p.137.] For example if in the territory of southern Turkmenistan in the IV-III millennium BC during Prayer (Namozgoh) period IV a model of a four-wheeled cart with a camel was found, it is known that by the middle of the III millennium BC appeared four-wheeled carts with a buffalo. It is not just coincidence that the oldest trade route, the Lazurite route, also appeared during this period. During the research in Oltintepa, V.M Masson found pictographic symbols drawn on more than a hundred female goddesses. Although many researchers consider writing to be another feature of early cities and civilizations, we cannot say that they are completely unanimous on this point. ^[7, p.397; 20, p.27.] These signs are almost indistinguishable from the Harappan and Sumerian and Protoelamic inscriptions in their form and character. “These signs are not only found in female goddesses, but they are also found in other objects. One of the important facts, proving that these symbols are ancient writings, is that the number of the symbols is very big, but their variety is limited, and there is a definite type of characters in figures”. ^[9, p.157.]

In some cases the same signs are repeated several times on the body of the statue. There are also statues with totally different signs. Some of the signs studied and divided by V.M. Masson into 6 groups were used as colourful flowers in the pottery of the Eneolithic period of Southern Turkmenistan. But nearly most of them trace their origins to the Proto-Sumerian and Proto-Elamite inscriptions. Indeed, the active cultural ties that existed in ancient times between the primitive communities of Central Asia and the people of Mesopotamia and Harappa (a golden-headed bull can be an excellent example of this) by the time of Prayer II culture, the direct influence of the ancient Eastern script, especially the Proto-Elamite script, led to the emergence of pictographic writing in Southern Turkmenistan as well.

According to V.M. Masson's semantic hypothesis based on certain iconographic object symbols, the symbols in the goddesses are iconic symbols of various gods. For example, the image of the star goddess Oltintepa Inanna Ishtar was the goddess of the Sky, the goddess symbolized by the corn plant depicts Nahid, the goddess of fertility, and the goddess with zigzag signs depicts the goddess of water.

I.V. Sarianidi had concluded that along with the highly developed agricultural culture in the Margiyana region at the end of the second millennium BC, there was a state authority with an inscription similar to that of Mesopotamia. ^[17, p.57.] The City life in Oltintepa did not continue after the last Bronze Age. The population left the city and moved towards the Murgab Valley. According to V.M Masson, who had been researching the area for many years, the emergence of the first settlement in the Murgab River basin was due to migration processes from the

Eastern regions to the foothills of the Kopetdag. Archaeologists I. Masimov and A. Askarov also support V.Masson`s opinion that the migration processes began in the foothills of the Kopetdag, spread to Margiana and then to Bactria. Although I.V.Sarianidi claims that tribes of southern Turkmenistan occupied the Murgab river basin, however the features of the archeological complex in Bactria-Margiyana are not similar to the culture of Prayer V in southern Turkmenistan, but relatively similar to the culture of that period in Iran. [¹⁷, p.54.] Archaeological materials found in Oltyntepa also provide information about the social character of the first urban society of Prayer V period.

Scientists state a number of reasons of a mass migration of the population from the foothills of the Kopetdag:

- salinization of the soil as a result of climate change and prolonged continuous use;
- the soil was spoiled and unusable;
- the lack of water in Oltintepa district, which was necessary for the development of agriculture

As a result, large cultural centers of the Bronze Age, such as Namazgoh-tepa and Oltintepa, became extinct. Thus, by the second millennium BC, highly developed settled agricultural cultures were formed in the Murgab River Basin (Turkmenistan) and the middle reaches of the Amu Darya. More than 200 Bronze Age monuments were found and studied in these areas, which later became part of ancient Margiyana and Bactria. V.I. Sarianidi, who has been conducting archeological excavations in the Margiyana region for more than 30 years since 1972, compared the archeological materials of the ancient Margiyana monuments with analogous materials of objects found in neighboring countries. On the basis of the research V.I. Sarianidi showed that other tribes entered the Murgab oasis from the western regions after the migration of the tribes of Southern Turkmenistan in the II millennium BC. According to the scientist, these tribes were close in all respects to the tribes that came from Southern Turkmenistan, and consequently their reunification would take place in the new territory. [¹⁰, p.12.] However, along with such views, there are also views that the historical and cultural traditions of the Bronze Age Bactrian-Marginian civilization have deep local roots. [²¹, p.119.] As during the Bronze Age people began to own new lands in Central Asia, many tribes migrated to the northern and northeastern regions of the region. Thus, in the northeast of Murgab, in ancient Bactria, in the Ulanbulaksay and Bostonsay basins, the Sopolli culture of irrigated agriculture and developed handicrafts was formed. According to archeological excavations in the Sopollitepa, the role of the peasant communities of Southern Turkmenistan in the formation of the Bronze Age civilization of this country was great, i.e. the ancient peasant communities migrated to Bactria directly from the Murgab oasis of present-day Turkmenistan. [⁹, p.137.] Above we discussed the acquisition of the delta part of the Murgab River in the second millennium BC, when the tribes moved in a northeastern direction from the foothills of the Kopetdag in southern Turkmenistan. According to researchers, some of these tribes continued to move further east and settled in the Bactrian regions. Thus, new historical and cultural traditions were established in the region. However, according to other theories, in the

second millennium BC, the territory of Bactria was conquered by tribes from Northeastern Iran. The hypothesis that Mesopotamia may have played a role in the emergence and development of ancient Bactrian culture is not denied. [12, p.48.] The first territory in southern Uzbekistan occupied by Murgab peasants was the Sherabad desert. Their first residence was Sopollitepa. According to archeological data, the settlements of the ancient peasants were originally located in the basins of small foothills and the lower reaches of large rivers. In the territory of Uzbekistan, this process took place in the first half of the second millennium BC. In the southwestern regions of Central Asia, the process began in the Neolithic period and became more widespread by the Eneolithic period.

We see that a large group of such villages was formed on the banks of the ancient tributary of the Sherabad River (Bostonsay), in Jarqo'ton. Later, the ancient peasants went to the lower basins of the Bandikhansay, Khojaipok, Sangardak Rivers, and later to the Regar and Nurek districts in search of new lands. Thus, during the second millennium BC, as a result of the emergence of a number of villages in the lands of Northern Bactria by the heirs of the culture of prayer, new agricultural microdistricts were formed.

In 1968 Uzbek archaeologist A. Askarov found Sopollitepa historical place of the Bronze Age located in 70 km from Termez (Uzbekistan) to the north-west, in the lower basin of the Ulanbulaksay, and studied it in detail in 1969-74.

The total area of Sopollitepa is about 4 hectares. Its central part is square in shape, it is distinguished by its height and precise planning. It is 82 meters long on all sides and is surrounded by three rows of defensive walls. [9, p.139.] The thickness of the walls, built with a complex architectural plan, exceeds 2 meters. According to scientists, these walls, which were divided into precisely sized corridor blocks, were built in a snare way and designed to distract the enemy. The inner blocks, which used to be the gates leading to the castle, served as a trap. These blocks were used for various purposes in later periods.

The houses inside the Sopollitepa village fortress were divided into 8 blocks by the streets. This indicates that the Sopollitepals consisted of 8 tribes, i.e., 8 patriarchal tribe communities. The construction of houses within the blocks did not take place at the same time, but at all stages of the history of Sopollitepa.

Material sources indicate that metallurgy was highly developed in Sopollitepa. Bronze daggers, spears, knives, axes, needles and utensils were made of bronze. The development of bronze metallurgy led to the appearance of craft workshops.

Material sources show that a number of branches of handicrafts reached the height of development. All Sopollitepa pottery is processed on a pottery wheel and baked in two-tiered jars. The ceramics were so attractive, elegant, resonant and delicate that they differ little in quality from modern ceramics. They were vases with legs of various shapes, cups, teapots and jugs with taps, palm and conical bowls, bowls and jars, ceramic pots and etc. Although no patterns were found on the pottery, it was discovered that in vases and cups, in wide round jars with flanges called khumcha, there were ribbon-like nine-colored stripes found in the pottery of the Murgab Valley Prayer VI period.

The masters of the Sopolli (pottery) period used the minerals mined in Afghanistan, Iran, Uzbekistan, Tajikistan and possibly Kazakhstan. According to the excavations, “In the first stage (XVII-XIV centuries BC) the raw materials extracted from the iron deposits of Afghanistan and Iran were in the lead. In the last stage (middle of the XI century BC) the share of ore deposits of Northern Fergana-Tashkent, Kyzylkum, Tajikistan and Kazakhstan significantly increased”. [15, p.16.]

During the excavations in Sopollitepa, 29 signs inscribed on ceramic vessels were found. They are divided into 8 groups depending on their shape: similar to the shape of a crescent, drawn bow shape, the shape with a straight line in the middle, two straight lines, in the form of a cross, a straight line connecting the two circles, reminiscent of the letter “A” and snake-shaped symbols. The fact that similar symbols were found in southern Turkmenistan, northern Afghanistan, Iran and India indicates that they were the first inscriptions. [6, p.25.] Archaeological finds in the Sopollitepa monument also demonstrate the close connection between the Bactrian and Harappan civilizations in the formation of material culture and architecture. [4, p.87-97; 20, p. 17-20.]

The fact that similar signs were found in southern Turkmenistan, northern Afghanistan, Iran and India shows that they were the first inscriptions. Thus, the results of archeological research conducted in Sopollitepa showed that the formation of the Bronze Age civilization of this region was associated with the ancient peasant communities of the Murgab (Margiyana) oasis. Life in Sopollitepa lasted for two hundred years. Archaeological evidence of the ancient cities described in the Avesta, a unique written source of the past history of the peoples of Central Asia and Iran, was obtained as a result of the planning of the village-fortress of Sopollitepa.

Scientific views on the chronology of the emergence of agricultural culture in Northern Bactria have changed in recent years. Archaeologists have clarified the chronology as a result of radiocarbon dating. At the same time, the activity of Western scientists, who became more and more interested in the study of archeological monuments in the southern regions of Uzbekistan in the late XX-early XXI centuries is of great importance. For example, F. Coll and F. Hibert's results of radiocarbon analysis of the monuments in Central Asia were based on a comparison with the monuments of the Ancient East. They proposed to antedate the ceramic stage. F.Coll considered the Sopolli stage to be 2190-1880 BC, and F.Hibert to 2277-1745 BC.[13, p.52.]

As new lands were acquired, the people of Sopollitepa gradually moved northeast along the foothills of the Kuhitong and Baysun Mountains. As a result, in the lower reaches of the Sherabad River, new villages of ancient farmers began to appear. This is how the historical place Zharkuton, located on the ancient tributary of the Sherabad River - Bustonsoy River emerged and came into existence.

In 1973 A.Askarov began archaeological excavations in the historical place Zharkuton, located in the Sherabad river valley and uncovered important artifacts. It was a ruin of an old city, occupying an area of 100 hectares and consisting of two parts, "Arki Alo" and "Shahristan". The residence of the mayor - the palace of the sovereign was situated in Arki Alo. The total area of Arki Alo (arch) was not less than 3 hectares. It was surrounded by a thick defensive

wall. Connected to the arch, on its eastern and southern sides, "Shahristan" was inhabited by the main population of this ancient city - farmers and artisans.

Experts point out that the formation of ancient cities must be based on economic factors such as fertile soil, water, fertile irrigated agriculture, and the emergence of a differentiated society in accordance with religious, military and political governance. Only when the historical conditions are in place for these three factors to exist in dialectical unity the ancient cities and city-states appear on their base. [³, p.10.] The monument of Jarkutan meets all these requirements and considered as the oldest and the only city studied in the territory of Southern Uzbekistan. During the archeological excavations, samples of highly developed ceramics and bronze metallurgy, production of jewelry, tools, as well as the remains of textile workshops from raw cotton and silk were found and studied. The found porcelain vessels, the ivory plates, and the ivory statues found in the Harappa culture indicate that cultural ties with India and Mesopotamia were very close in the 2nd millennium BC. [¹⁸, p.29.] A stone statue of the head of a man from the Bronze Age - II millennium BC was found near the monument to Jarqoton (Mirshod). G.A. Pugachenkova, one of the leading experts on the ancient art of Central Asia, points out that although no exact copy was found, the content of the sculpture was reminiscent of the images of ancient Mesopotamia and Mohenjo-Daro. [¹⁴, p.38.] Archaeological excavations discovered highly developed samples of pottery and bronze metallurgy, jewelry, tools, as well as the remains of textile workshops based on raw cotton and silk.

Among the three residential arrays opened in the Ark Square, a separate building stands out from the rest with its majestic construction. In the middle of the palace there was a platform with an area of about 20 m². The presence of a pedestal in the courtyard of the monumental building indicates that this palace was the residence of the mayor.

During the 28 years of archeological research in Jarkutan, hundreds of bronze labor and military weapons, ornaments, metal seals depicting tribe and community totems, talismans and amulets showing the social status of leaders and elders were found, this is the evidence that there were workshops for the production of metal tools and military equipment.

A metal smelting shop was discovered in the Ark Square, it is a unique find in the history of Central Asian archeology. There were opened two two-tiered circular-shaped metal smelting furnaces, built close to each other.

While studying another hill the researchers identified that it was a remnant of a monumental architectural complex - a temple of fire-worshippers. It is located about 350 meters southeast of the Ark, in the highest part of Jarkutan. If the ruler's residence in the arch was to the west of the ancient city, the fire-worshipping temple was to its east, a sacred place of worship for the townspeople and the surrounding communities. After the discovery of the fire-worshipping temples of the Bronze Age in ancient Bactria, many researchers put forward the idea that the roots of Zoroastrianism were originated in these regions. V.I. Sarianidi, who had been researching the southern regions of Central Asia for many years, also noted that the temples of the sacred fire occurred in the Bronze Age in southern Central Asia. [¹⁶, p.30.]

These two monumental structures, on the one hand, were a symbol of the main urban culture of the ancient city in the system of religious and secular governance, and on the other hand, were two important factors that gave meaning and significance to name this large settlement as a city.

Indeed, if we look at the urban planning of Central Asia before the Hellenistic period, the main core of the city originally appeared around the temples. The palace of the governor of the city may have appeared later than the city temple. For example, the same temples played a key role in the emergence of the oldest city-states in the southern regions of Central Asia - Jarqoton, Oltintepa and Gonurtepa. [⁸, p.4.]

According to a comparative analysis of archeological materials, the Jarqo'ton temple was built on the site of an ancient fortress in the 14th century BC. Researchers have identified the following archeological features of the first cities on the example of the Jarqo'ton monument:

1. The existence of palaces inhabited by community leaders or rulers;
2. The existence of majestic temples, which were the religious center of the country;
3. The division of the arch surrounded by the walls of the castle and the palace in the territory of the arch location of dwellings;
4. The availability of residential buildings in a large area, the location of community service facilities in the area; productive forces assembly of devices and handicraft workshops
5. The availability of blocks which had highly developed handicrafts (pottery, pottery, specialists in textile, construction, leather processing;
6. The existence of rich tombs with seals and valuables;
7. The difference between the houses that represent the community hierarchy
8. Findings of trade-related items of other cultures;
9. The existence of glyptics, epigraphy and the original form of writing.[², p.104.]

We talked about the inscriptions found in Sopollitepa. The next stage in the development of these signs were found by researchers in Jarqo'tan. In Jarqo'ton these signs were found only in pottery, jars, jugs, and pottery. There were found 47 various signs. Most of them only once were written on ceramic vessels. They were not repeated. That is why they were not divided into groups. In the Sopollitepa script the symbols were used separately, while in Jarqo'ton several symbols were written together. According to researchers it was connected with the development of writing. [6,p.26.] The most common of the symbols found in Jarqoton is the cross. This sign was also found on tumors⁴ and seals.

Sometimes a crescent with a cross, circular symbols was drawn together. This evidence indicates that the cross symbol was a common symbol. Researchers link some of the symbol found in Jarqoton to their lifestyle. This is evidenced by the hammer-shaped and car wheel symbol. A ladder-like sign was found in the tombs of Jarqo'ton. [¹, p.46.]

In the course of research, it was found that the Jarqoton monument had all the features typical of ancient cities. Summarizing the following facts: the town square consisted of an arch and a shahristan; the densely populated area of the settled agricultural culture was surrounded by defensive walls; the existence of the monumental mausoleum in the city arch, the residence of the head of the city community, the main shrine that served all equally in the city square we can define that the ancient city was professionally composed of various branches of handicrafts.

The arched formation of the monumental residence of the governor is an indication that city life was organized not only on a religious but also on a secular basis.

German specialists have made a great contribution to the study of archeology in the southern regions of Uzbekistan. Archaeologists of the Uzbek-German Bactrian expedition carried out 23 radiocarbon analyzes to determine the age of the Jarkoton monument in 1994-2003. Radiocarbon analyzes were carried out in the laboratory of the Eurasian Branch of the German Institute of Archeology.

Fifteen analyzes from three layers of the construction period of the Jarkoton period showed 1950-1600 BC. [¹³, p.53.] Archaeological finds from a cross-cultural stone - chloride stone, faience, gypsum - correspond to the same period of 300–350 years.

CONCLUSIONS

Thus, the radical changes in economic life occurred in the end of the third millennium BC to beginning of the second millennium BC such as – the development of various manufactures, the introduction of artificial irrigation system in agriculture, the discovery of pottery-based crafts, jewelry, metal melting and casting technology, and the growing density of population in certain areas as a result the high development of other sectors proved to be a factor contributed profoundly to the urbanization process.

According to the evidence found in archeological researchs, it is claimed that the first urban culture was formed in the southern regions of Uzbekistan in the historical conditions typical for ancient Eastern civilization in the first half of the second millennium BC. The economic, social and cultural foundations of the lifestyle in the ancient city were studied on the example of the monuments in Sopollitepa and Jarkuton lying on the Sherabad oasis in Surkhandarya region. While Sopollitepa, with all its features of urban culture, is reminiscent of a proto-city that was mentioned in the Avesta as "vara", the monument in Jarkutan is truly the first ancient city in the territory of Uzbekistan. It was discovered that these monuments contained all the signs typical to ancient cities. Culture in Sopollitepa – as an integral part, as well as the new center of the ancient Eastern civilization was formed in the second millennium BC in the middle Amu basin, in the northern regions of ancient Bactria. Its residential architecture, division of Sopollitepa Square into blocks, and an original defense system testify to the high status of Sopolli culture, as well as the embark of ancient city-building techniques in the south of Uzbekistan in the first half of the second millennium BC.

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