

PAPER

FACTORS CONTRIBUTING TO THE EMERGENCE OF OBJECTS IN THE TRADITIONS OF CATTLE-HERDING COMMUNITIES IN THE SOPOLLI CULTURE

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Abstract

This article examines the factors contributing to the emergence of pottery, metal objects, and burial forms characteristic of the Eurasian steppe nomadic tradition in the material culture of farming communities in Southern Uzbekistan during the Bronze Age.

Key words: Bronze Age, Sopolli, Southern Uzbekistan, culture of the ancient peasant community, Andronov, steppe innovations.

INTRODUCTION

In the territory of Uzbekistan during the Bronze Age, an example of an ancient Eastern-type civilization emerged, historically known as the Oxus civilization or the Bactria-Margiana Archaeological Complex (located in present-day southern Uzbekistan, southern Tajikistan, southern Turkmenistan, and northern Afghanistan, dating approximately 2400/2300–1500/1400 BCE) [Сарианиди, 1990. P. 316. Hiebert, 1994. P. 200. Kohl, 2007. P. 321. Francfort, 2009. P. 20]. The material objects from the early stages of this civilization are very similar to those of the ancient East and in some cases even superior in quality. Furthermore, the discovery of material objects characteristic of the Oxus civilization in other centers of civilization such as Harappa, Elam, and Mesopotamia confirms its historical cultural connections with these civilizations. Thus, historically, the Oxus civilization represents the fifth center of ancient Eastern civilization.

The Late Bronze Age in southern Central Asia is characterized by multiculturalism [P'jankova, 1994. P. 17. Luneau, 2010. P. 615]. During this period, several cultures coexisted in the region. This multiculturalism is particularly characteristic of the Oxus civilization in the Late Bronze Age.

DISCUSSION

The Sapalli culture, located in the southern part of modern Uzbekistan not far from the Amu Darya, is considered an integral part of the Oxus civilization [Асқаров, 1973. Б. 172]. Historically, the Sapalli culture is divided into five stages: Sapalli, Jarkutan, Kuzali, Molali, and Bustan. In the Sapalli and Jarkutan stages of the culture, material objects comparable to those of Ancient Eastern civilizations were discovered. During these stages, settled agriculture is considered the foundation of the region's inhabitants' way of life. This is evidenced by the location of the Sapallitepa (37°27'00.21"N. 66°50'40.53"E) and Jarkutan (37°37'49.59"N 66°57'43.08"E) sites near Bronze Age water sources. The proximity of these sites to water sources underscores the importance of water for their inhabitants. Additionally, distinctive features of the defense systems in these stages include the labyrinthine defense structure at Sapallitepa (residential complexes comprising three chronological construction phases) [Асқаров, 2015. Б. 672], and the ruler's palace at Jarkutan being separated from the general population by a wall (with a monumental temple discovered on Hill 6) [Асқаров, 2015. Б. 672]. If the economic structure during these stages had been primarily based on animal husbandry, such complex fortifications would not have been necessary.

In the later stages of the Sapalli culture, material objects associated with pastoral populations from the northern regions

began to appear alongside those belonging to settled communities. At the Jarkutan site, considered a settlement of sedentary people in the Bronze Age, artifacts of material culture from nomadic steppe pastoralists were discovered, originating from thousands of kilometers away. How did these nomadic material possessions end up at the site? Or did nomadic communities actually inhabit the Jarkutan site?

In which material objects are these influences manifested:

Firstly, in pottery, ceramic items characteristic of the local Oxus civilization are mainly small and yellowish or dark orange-red in color, while ceramics of the "steppe" type are coarse, handmade, and often feature geometric decorations created by impact. Researchers [Рахмонов, 1982. Б. 167. Рахмонов, Шайдуллаев, 1985. Б. 58–63. Аванесова, 2010. Б. 107–133] note that at the end of the Bronze Age, wavy and combed marks, pits, or certain decorations, which were prominent among potters, are considered as indicators of the northern pastoral population. The style of notched ornamentation is also known from earlier periods [Luneau, 2014. P. 311–312], but occurs in very small quantities.

Secondly, changes in metalworking. The influence of northern pastoral communities is evident in metalworking techniques and technologies. The number of metallurgical molds discovered from the Late Bronze Age is significantly higher compared to the previous period. This technological method, as part of the "Andronovo" technique, may have also emerged under the influence of the northern population. Metal ores (tin, copper) were extracted from deposits in the Zarafshan region.

Thirdly, changes in the socio-economic system. As an indicator of migration, millet was identified in the Oxus settlements at the end of the 3rd millennium BC, and there is a possibility of increased millet cultivation during the Late Bronze Age [Luneau, 2014. P. 164]. The presence of this plant was confirmed in China in the middle of the 3rd millennium BC and in the northern "steppe" region at the end of the 3rd millennium BC.

Fourthly, changes in burial practices represent another direction directly influenced by the steppe population. In the Jarkutan cemeteries, a mixture of burial ritual elements from both populations is well-documented. There are also instances where "steppe" items are placed inside the grave along with the body [Кутимов, 2008. Б. 75–91]. In the southern regions of Central Asia, cremations were recorded during the Late Bronze Age. Although such graves are not frequent, this ritual is characteristic of the "steppe" population [Bendezu-Sarmiento, 2004. P. 181–204. Bendezu-Sarmiento, 2007.]. Burials of this type were also found in Bustan VI [Аванесова, 2013. Б. 640]. However, due to the presence of materials from the Oxus civilization, they are attributed to the inhabitants of the Oxus civilization, though this feature has been acknowledged.

CONCLUSION

Traces of fire in graves are considered as indicators of the influence of "steppe" populations. However, this aspect cannot be fully attributed to the steppe inhabitants alone. This is because fire was extensively used in the region even in earlier periods [Francfort, 2005. P. 277–281]. Taking these factors into account, the diversity of material objects found in the Jarkutan monument can be explained by the following circumstances:

Firstly, this occurred as a result of the military influence exerted by the northern steppe population on the south. The reason for this was the increased demand for new resources due to population growth among the pastoral communities in the north. Naturally, this led to an increased need for new territories. However, this reason cannot be considered the primary factor. If it were, there should have been evidence of military conflicts in the Bronze Age monuments of the south (such as bodies scattered across defensive areas and traces of mixed and broken material

objects).

Secondly, as a result of trade, economic, and cultural ties. This reason is quite substantiated, as the material objects of two cultures are found intermingled: items from northern pastoral nomadic communities are discovered in southern settlements (pottery, burial customs, miniature objects, arrowheads, etc.), while artifacts from southern agricultural communities are found in the monuments of northern nomadic pastoral communities (wheel-made pottery, burial practices, metalworking workshops, etc.). Certainly, this hypothesis is well-grounded.

Thirdly, it is the result of the migration of Indo-Aryan or Indo-Iranian peoples from the north to the south during the Bronze Age. The Bronze Age marks the starting point of ancient migration processes. The southward migration of Indo-Aryan or Indo-Iranian peoples can be considered plausible.

In conclusion, it can be said that the appearance of material objects belonging to the "steppe" inhabitants at the Jarkutan site began in the Bronze Age as a result of migration processes of nomadic pastoral communities from the north. This became the foundation for cultural connections between the populations of these two communities.

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