



SPECIFIC FEATURES OF THE SPATIAL DISTRIBUTION OF OXUS CIVILIZATION SITES

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Abstract: This article presents the geographical distribution of monuments belonging to the Oxus civilization, an ancient Eastern Bronze Age culture, within the context of modern states. It also describes the characteristics of their locations.

Key words: Oxus civilization, Kopet Dag, Murghab delta, Amu Darya, Bactria, Surkhandarya, Kyzylsu, Panj, Vakhsh, artificial irrigation.

Introduction. The article analyzes the formation and territorial expansion processes of the Oxus civilization - a major cultural phenomenon of Turan in the Ancient East. The study examines the social, economic, and migratory factors of these processes from a distinct scientific perspective, highlighting their interrelationships on a scientific basis. Additionally, based on archaeological materials, the article analyzes the location of monuments belonging to the Oxus civilization in the agricultural regions of Bactria and Margiana, as well as their cultural and historical significance. Consequently, this civilization is evaluated as a historical phenomenon in the development of ancient society, intricately linked with social relations, the economic system, and population migration processes.

Literature and Method. Historical and geographical issues of the Oxus civilization monuments are addressed in the scientific research of A.A. Askarov, V.I. Sarianidi, I.T. Kruglikova, A.S. Sagdullayev, Sh.B. Shaydullayev, Ye.Ye. Kuzmina, N.M. Vinogradova, B.A. Litvinsky, G.A. Kosholenko, I.S. Masimov, G.N. Lisitsina, F. Kol, and N. Boroffka.

The monuments of the Oxus civilization in Margiana were first discovered in 1904 by an expedition of the Carnegie Institute in the vicinity of Kopet Dag. Further sites of the Oxus civilization were identified after World War II, in 1946, by the Southern Turkmenistan Archaeological Complex Expedition (IOTAKE), organized by M.E. Masson. Subsequently, archaeological sites were discovered by the Karakum expedition in Southern Turkmenistan in 1962, by a small team from the Institute of Archaeology of the Russian Academy of Sciences in the ancient delta of the Murghab River in 1972, by the Sumbar archaeological expedition led by I.N. Khlopin in 1977, and from 1994 to the present day by the Turkmen-French archaeological mission (MAFTUR).

In the southern Bactrian region of the Oxus civilization, monuments belonging to the Oxus civilization were discovered between 1969 and 1973 by V.I. Sarianidi and I.T. Kurglikova as a result of the Soviet-Afghan archaeological expedition in South Bactria.



In the Uzbek part of Northern Bactria, from the late 1960s, an archaeological expedition led by A. Askarov identified the first monuments of the Oxus civilization. Between 1994 and 2003, the Institute of Archaeology of the Academy of Sciences of Uzbekistan and the German Archaeological Institute (DAI) collaborated to identify monuments in the Surkhan oasis. In the southern Tajikistan region, since 1974, monuments have been identified as part of the South Tajikistan expedition by researchers including B.A. Litvinsky, A.M. Mandelshtam, L.T. Pyankova, N.M. Vinogradova, and others.

Discussion. Historical Geography of the Oxus Civilization The monuments of the Oxus civilization are located in the southern part of Turan, along the delta of the Murghab River, which flows from the Pamir-Hissar-Hindu Kush mountain ranges, and along the Atrek, Tejen, Surkhandarya, Sherabad River, Ulanbulaksoy, Panj, Vakhsh, Yakhshuv, Tairsuv rivers and nearby areas. The theory that between 3000-2500 BCE, this civilization underwent its formative stage in the foothills of the Kopet Dag and spread as a result of migration along the rivers and deltas of Margiana and Bactria by the end of the Namazga V period has been scientifically proven [2; 25; 26; 46; 36; 32; 31; 40; 34; 35; 33]. To date, approximately 300 settlements belonging to the Oxus civilization have been identified, surrounded by fortified defensive structures [41; 42; 38]. These settlements are located in an area bordered by the Caspian Sea to the west, the Karakum Desert and steppe to the north, the Iranian Plateau to the south and southwest, and Indian cities to the southeast [38]. It is appropriate to analyze these monuments within the context of modern republics.

According to V.I. Sarianidi's archaeological research in the Republic of Turkmenistan, by the end of the 3rd millennium BC and the beginning of the 2nd millennium BC, the Murghab River delta in Southern Turkmenistan was settled through expansionary migration. This area, including agricultural regions such as Keleli, Aji-Kui, Auchin, Taip, Gonur, Togolok, Adam-Basan, and Tohirboy, was inhabited by people possessing an early urban culture with highly developed crafts in almost all sectors. In these agricultural oases, numerous Bronze Age monuments have been discovered simultaneously: 13 in Keleli, 7 in Aji-Kui, 14 in Auchin, 8 in Taip, 15 in Gonur, over 30 in Togolok, 10 in Adam-Basan, and 12 in Tohirboy. In total, more than 100 Bronze Age monuments are located along the lower Murghab River. Researchers have determined the chronological periods of these monuments [8; 15]. While the main water source for earlier monuments in Turkmenistan was the Kopetdag tributaries, subsequent migration led to the utilization of the Murghab River delta, which originates in the Hindu Kush mountains, and the Tajan River to the southeast as primary water sources. At the beginning of the 3rd millennium BC, the depletion of the Tajan River's water supply resulted in the northwestern Geoksyur oasis becoming virtually waterless, causing life there to cease [10]. The water supply from the Tajan River in southeastern Turkmenistan during the 3rd-2nd millennia BC was linked to a significant shift in settlement patterns, corresponding to changes in the flow of the main southeastern water artery. Archaeological excavations at Xapuz-depe demonstrate its chronological and cultural-historical continuity with the corresponding later monuments of the Geoksyur oasis [28].



The second phase of migration was directed towards Southern Bactria. The population of the Kopetdag foothill urban centers initially migrated to the Murghab oasis in Margiana. As a result of population growth, the subsequent wave of migrants from the Namazgah VI culture, which had formed in the Murghab oasis, moved to the oases of Southern Bactria. There, they established the Dashli culture, which exemplifies the culture of the Ancient East. This conclusion is based on similarities in artifacts, architecture, and burial rites[30; 39; 16]. According to Sh. Shaydullayev, the monuments of Ancient Bactrian culture are located in eleven agricultural oases[23]. V.I. Sarianidi noted that the early civilization in Southern Bactria was situated along four irrigated regions – rivers: Davlatabad, Farrukhabad, Dashli, and Nichkin[27]. It is recorded that 4 Bronze Age monuments are located in the Davlatabad agricultural oasis, and more than 40 in the Dashli agricultural oasis. V.I. Sarianidi studied an entire group of Bronze Age monuments in the territories of the Davlatabad and Auchin oases[9]. Based on the findings of initial archaeological research conducted in the area, V.I. Sarianidi pointed out that the monuments of the Davlatabad oasis represented the first developed territory and the settlements of ancient agricultural tribes that had migrated from Eastern Khorasan. The subsequent development of these tribes' culture was observed in the Auchin oasis, where more than ten Bronze Age monuments were identified[9].

The subsequent migration wave corresponds to the territory of Northern Bactria within the Republic of Uzbekistan. The local variant of the Namazgah VI complex in southern Uzbekistan is known as the Sapalli culture. In archaeological literature, the area where the Sapalli culture was situated is referred to as Northern Bactria. The Sapalli culture encompasses Bronze Age monuments of Southern Uzbekistan and is divided into several agricultural oases. A.A. Askarov[1], E.V. Rtveladze[21], A.S. Sagdullaev[22], and Sh.B. Shaydullaev[29] have presented their views, categorizing the region into the Ulanbulaksay, Sherabad, and Khojaipaksay agricultural oases and the Pashkurt Valley[7]. The agricultural oases are located on alluvial-proalluvial plains on the slopes of the Kohitang-Boysun Mountains[23]. Monuments of the Sapalli culture, including Sapallitepa, Kultepa, Kichkinatepa, Jarkutan, Kuzali, Bustan, Tillabulak, Arabulak, and others, are primarily found in the Ulanbulaksay and Sherabad agricultural oases and the Pashkurt Valley[5; 6], while the monuments of the Mulali stage are situated in the Khojaipaksay agricultural oasis[7]. Radiocarbon dating from the Sapallitepa settlement in Northern Bactria indicates that this site was not established after the oldest settlements in Margiana, but was contemporary with them[45].

Monuments such as Sapalli, Jarkutan, Tillabuloq, and Arabuloq emerged almost simultaneously, and as a result of evolutionary historical development, the Molali and Bustan monuments were formed[23].

The subsequent migration involved the movement of representatives of the Dashli and Sapalli cultures to the territory of Southern Tajikistan. In archaeological and historical literature, Northern Bactria is territorially divided into two parts: Southern Uzbekistan and Southwestern Tajikistan. The Tajik part of Bactria encompasses the valleys of the right tributaries of the Panj River, intersected by rivers flowing into them, the Amu Darya, and low mountain ranges parallel to it. Towards the south, as the mountain ranges subside and river



valleys expand to their maximum, the climate is characterized by high average annual temperatures and low precipitation. In this region, where agriculture was impossible without artificial irrigation, the banks of the Vakhsh and Kafirnihan rivers were identified as the next migration zone. From the Eneolithic and Bronze Ages, processes of gradual land development by farmers and herders were observed in this area along the Hindu Kush – Amu Darya – Panj route. J.K. Garden and B. Lionne identified 26 settlements in this region dating back to the 4th-2nd millennia BC[14; 12; 18; 20; 47; 19; 37].

Researchers have noted that Bronze Age monuments were divided into agricultural oases of Kafirnihon, Vakhsh, Panj, and Kizilsuv[23]. In these agricultural oases, settlements of people engaged in animal husbandry were located alongside the settlements of Sapalli-Dashli representatives. Similar complexes were united into Beshkent[14] and Vakhsh[11; 18] cultures. While some of the burial grounds of the Early Tulkhor cemetery in the lower reaches of the Kafirnihan belong to the Beshkent culture[20], the monuments of the Vakhsh culture are associated with the lower reaches of the Vakhsh and Kizilsuv[19; 20]. New cemeteries of the Vakhsh culture have been identified on the left bank of the middle reaches of the Kafirnihon River[20], on the right bank of the Vakhsh near its confluence with the Panj[18; 20], in the Kizilsuv Valley[20], in the Yassu Basin[18; 20], and in the areas between Panj and Kizilsuv[12; 20].

According to B.A. Litvinsky, the origin of the Vakhsh culture can be attributed to farmers who migrated from Southern Turkmenistan[12]. However, L.T. Pyankova refuted his opinion and instead acknowledged the genetic influence of Northern Afghanistan and the steppe population[43; 12].

According to L.T. Pyankova, V.I. Sarianidi, and A.A. Askarov, the simultaneous emergence of the Vakhsh and Beshkent cultures is attributed to the transition of Dashli and Sapalli culture representatives to animal husbandry under the influence of steppe pastoralists, and their subsequent migration to Tajikistan[18; 44; 24; 2; 4].

Conclusion. The widespread distribution of monuments belonging to the Oxus civilization of the Bronze Age was attributed to several factors:

Firstly, for the population that had direct contact with the Ancient Eastern world, agriculture served as the primary means of subsistence;

Secondly, the primary source for agriculture was fertile soil near rivers. Therefore, the main archaeological sites are located near rivers.

Thirdly, in connection with the Ancient East world, the role of precious lapis lazuli, mined in Badakhshan, was incomparable. The inhabitants of the Oxus civilization were well acquainted with precious mineral stones.

Fourthly, the role of animal husbandry alongside agriculture in society has been proven through the bones of numerous small livestock animals.

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