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SOUTHERN UZBEKISTAN IN THE EARLY IRON AGE: FORMATION OF AGRICULTURAL OASES

Abstract: Formation of agricultural oases, ancient sites of the Southern Uzbekistan and their location are analyzed in this article. Early Iron Age settlements, cities are formed in these agricultural oases. To study the history of these oases give information about ancient civilization.

Key words: Early Iron Age, agriculture, oasis, Bactria, Southern Uzbekistan, Surkhan oasis, irrigating, archaeological research, settlement.

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Introduction

The widespread use of iron, production of a labor tools and weapons made drastic changes in the history of mankind. Unlike copper and bronze, iron was a universally accessible, cheap metal with sound qualities. But forging iron implements involved considerably more labor than did the casting of bronze. The new technology was mastered slowly. In the Ancient East the iron was considered as a precious metal. There is evidence that iron was 9-10 times more expensive than gold, 35-40 times than silver, 400 times than lead [1, P. 75].

The first iron products were found in Central Asia in the early first millennium BC. According to experts, the use of iron and its gradual spread across the region accounted for X-VI century BC. Although there is no exact information in the Avesta about the discovery of the iron, it is nevertheless possible to draw some conclusions based on the fact that V. Geiger read the word “ayah” in the “Minor Avesta” as “iron”, and A. Bartolome generalizing the term, translated it as “metal”.

The origin of iron metallurgy has led to widespread changes in irrigated agriculture in most major river valleys of the region, the emergence of the ancient cities and development of urban planning culture has led to the changes in social and economic life.

A lot of historical and cultural changes took place in the first half of the first millennium B.C. on

the territories of Bactria. These changes were related to the following processes:

- emergence and spread of iron products;
- emergence of villages with fortresses, and later, their subsequent transformation into cities;
- noticeable change in material culture;
- migration of tribes [2, P. 49].

At the beginning of the first millennium B.C., localities in the Northern Bactria – along the coasts of Surkhan and Sherabad (Surkhandarya region) rivers developed as an extension of the Sapalli culture. The average flow of Surkhan and Amu Darya rivers, Kafirnigan, Panj and Vakhsh river valleys were mastered by farmers in the middle of the first millennium B.C.

Materials and methods

There are also a number of views on regionalization of Bactria localities in the early Iron Age. In the Bronze Age localities of settled agriculture mainly developed in the north-west of Bactria, in the early Iron Age, these expand and covered scale of a north-eastern territories. On the one hand the lifestyle of piedmont areas population developed much more, on the other hand the new valleys around Surkhandarya, Kafirnigan, Vakhsh, Yavansu were explored. Southern Uzbekistan (Surkhandarya region) was one of the main parts of ancient Bactria.

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Historians and archaeologists, such as E.V.Rtveladze [3, P. 263-266], A.A.Askarov [4, P. 7-12], A.S.Sagdullaev [5, P. 14], Sh.B.Shaydullaev [6, P. 9-15] researched agricultural oases of Bronze Age [12] and Early Iron Age of the Southern Uzbekistan. Their researches are important to detect main oases of the Southern Uzbekistan.

E.V.Rtveladze, while summarizing the research concerning this period describes the location of the population living in the area in the following way:

- Ulanbuloksoy was a tributary of the Amu Darya. The monuments Kuchuktepe and Dabilkurgan were located in the Valley Ulanbuloksoy;

- Sherabad - a tributary of the Amu Darya River, located in the middle reaches of Sherabad Darya. On the right bank of Sherabad Darya new localities emerged in the Bronze Age. Later left coast territories were also assimilated and the border of the valley reached Angor territory;

- Urgul (Bandikhan) is located in the middle reaches of Bandikhansoy. Initially, Bandikhan 1 and 2, located on the right coast were destroyed. A new locality – Gozimullatepe 1 has emerged;

- Khalkajar – right tributary of the Surkhandarya valley covers Khalkajar. Local waters in flow have been mastered in the Bronze Age. Since the VII century B.C. localities began to emerge on the left bank of the river. The largest monument of the valley is the ancient city of Kiziltepe;

- Upper Surkhan located in the basin of the middle reaches of the Surkhandarya;

- Middle Surkhan located in the middle reaches of the Surkhandarya pond;

- Amu Darya is located in an area from Termez to Boldir, the middle reaches of the Amu Darya basin;

- Vakhsh-Yavan is located in the middle reaches of the rivers Vakhsh and Yavansu;

- Lower Kafirnigan occupies downstream of Kafirnigan;

- Boytudasht located in the upper valley of the Panj district of Boytudasht.

A.S.Sagdullaev conducted a comparative analysis of the results of archaeological research, and divided the localities of the period before ahamanids in Bactria in the following groups: Large centers are formed in the form of strong fortifications and fortresses of Kiziltepe and Altindilyar; The major localities were densely located in this place and had a strong fortress like Bandikhan 2; Separate fortresses with forts and trenches as Talashkantepe 1; Separate fortresses with forts and trenches as Buyrachitepe 1; House-fortresses with the central and outer courtyard surrounded by wall like Kizilchatepe 1,2,6; Fortified house-fortresses with permanent buildings alike Kuchuktepe though without broad and central courtyard.

In the studies of Sh.B.Shaydullaev it is noted that, seven agricultural lands of early Iron Age were

found in the of Northern Bactria and four of them in Southern Bactria: 1. Sherabad agricultural oasis. 2. Agricultural oasis Boysun included pastures on the hillside of Boysun mountain and combines ponds of Bandikhansoy, Mirshadi. 3. Agricultural oasis Surkhan unites the middle reaches of the Surkhandarya territory. 4. Kafirnigan oasis. 5. Vakhsh oasis. These were the basin of Yavan-su of Vakhsh River, the second includes the territory of the left bank of the river Vakhsh. 6. Agricultural region Panj includes the channel of the river of the same name. 7. The area of agricultural region of Kizil-Su includes the lower reaches of the river Kizil-Su. Besides that, on the territory of South Bactria monuments of this period are located in four agricultural regions. These are Dashly, Farukhabad, Altin-Dilyar and Naibobod [7, P. 221-223].

It must be noted that, Uzbek-Czech and Uzbek-Czech-French archaeological expedition (Sh.Shaydullaev, L.Stancho [8, P. 13-14], J.Lhuillier [9, P. 14-17], J.Havlik [10, P. 17-18]) detected new sites in Sherabad oasis, studied new irrigational regions and their researches play a great role to study ancient history (early Iron Age) of the Southern Uzbekistan.

In the developed areas by farmers for farming, the population located densely. Differing from the vast untapped fields, they may be called by the ancient “Valley of the cultural economy”. Each of them had prolific lands and irrigation systems as well as house-fortresses and the countryside, uninoculated lands and pastures. The development of ancient agricultural areas was due to the natural-geographic, socio-economic and cultural factors. They provide an opportunity to consider them as ancient cultural and economic areas.

For Sherabad agricultural valley Jondavlattepe be classified as such a monument, and for the agricultural valley Boysun – the Bandikhon 1 monument. Sherabad agricultural valley includes Kuhitang mountain pastures, basins of Ulanbuloksoy and Sherabad. And the agricultural valley Boysun includes Boysun mountain pastures, Bandikhan and Mirshadi basins. During the period of ancient Bactrian culture, other areas of the valley due to their location along a small pond Bandikhan 1, that is, in a strategically wrong place, has been transformed into the center of the valley - the city. In the valley Sherabad – Jondavlattepe, in Boysun - Kiziltepe transformed into territorial governmental centers with the status of valley [7, P. 188].

One of the major cultural centers of the valley is Kiziltepe. It's area is 22 hectares. The monument consists of an arch, the town and district towns. The main part of the locality formed by expanding on-site of Kizil 1. On the north and west of the locality citadel was built and it circle enclosed by defensive walls all around. Kiziltepe Valley was a comprehensive and particularly distinguished from other localities which

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meant it served as the cultural, economic and administrative center.

Talashkan 1 of Sherabad Valley also deserves attention. It consists of a defensive fortress surrounded by defensive walls. The walls are reinforced with towers, where were discovered two rows of trenches arrayed in the form of chess. Houses in a small fortress built close to the walls. The middle of the building is open like a courtyard. In localities around the central locality of small valleys were found houses and the household objects. All of them are built of mud bricks and clay.

The data cited in the written sources has an important meaning in obtaining information about the economic life of the ancient period. Certain tribes mentioned in the Avesta were also involved in animal husbandry. In the oldest collections of Avesto there is no information about agriculture. The Videvdat part considers the agriculture as a blessing, "Who will farm

with left and right hands, right and left hand, Spitama Zaratushtra, will bring on that land the blessing" [11, P. 49].

Conclusion

Overall, in the first half of the first millennium B.C., agricultural valleys were developed in the Southern Uzbekistan and the development of areas of different form has been observed.

The territory of each valley was naturally delineated, and each of them is a separate agricultural area or a small administrative structure. In sedentary valleys, where the population resided in a relative density, the agricultural economy developed rapidly. Also, discovered animal bones in the localities provided enough information on the proper development of animal husbandry in the Southern Uzbekistan.

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