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RESULTS OF ARCHAEOLOGICAL RESEARCH IN BURIAL STRUCTURES OF THE IRON AGE POPULATION IN THE EASTERN COASTAL PLAIN

Abstract: This article analyzes the archaeological study of the Iron Age burials of the pastoral population of the Lower Amu Darya region. At the same time, information is provided about the procedures for placing bodies in burial structures.

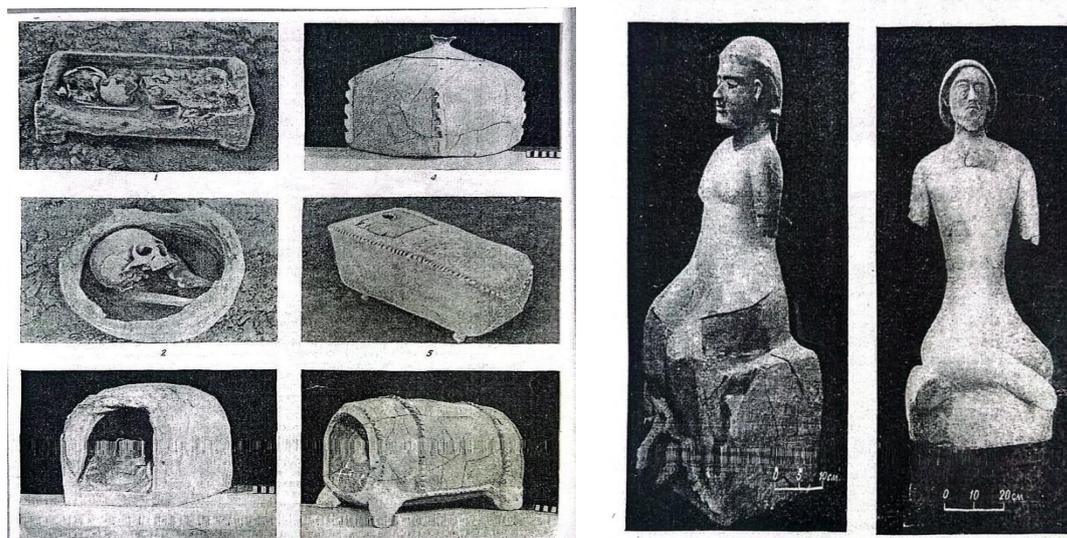
Keywords: S.P. Tolstov, B.I. Weinberg, O.A. Vishnevskaya, L.T. Yablonsky, South Aral Sea, East Aral Sea Plain, Sarykamysh, Dovdon, Kuyisoy, Chirikrabort, Uygarak, Sakarchata.

Introduction

The article examines how sedentary and pastoral tribes, referred to by various names in historical records, adapted to their geographical environment in the regions surrounding the South Aral Sea, the Sarykamysh Sea, and the lower Syrdarya basin. During that period, the pastoral population engaged in economic activities, maintained cultural and economic ties with one another, and played a significant role in the socio-economic development of society throughout different historical stages. Additionally, the article analyzes the findings from archaeological research conducted at burial sites left by Iron Age settlers and pastoralists.

Analysis of literature on the topic

The Khorezm archaeological and ethnographic expedition has continued its research in the Khorezm oasis by examining archaeological monuments located in the eastern Aral Sea and the middle part of the Syrdarya River, which connects to the area from the northeast. This archaeological work, which lasted until 1992, uncovered numerous settlements dating back to the Neolithic, Bronze, Iron, and Antique periods. This extensive exploration has facilitated significant research on these historical sites.



Bone pots found at the Qal'aliqir and Qoyqirlangqal'a monuments during the Khorezm archaeological and ethnographic expedition.

In 1946, excavations were conducted at Chirikrabort, situated in the lower reaches of the Dzhani Darya, a tributary of the Syr Darya. The site itself has an egg-shaped topography. During the archaeological study, the remains of mausoleums intended for the burial of cattle-breeding tribes within a defensive fortress were examined. Researchers investigated 40 burial structures made of mud brick, constructed in a circular arrangement by the Chirikrabort cattle-breeding population. The investigation revealed that the bodies of the deceased were identified in 18 of these tombs¹.

The graves of the deceased, located 40 km northeast of Chirikrabad, were studied from an archaeological perspective. Babushmulla is surrounded on all four sides by a rectangular fortified defensive wall, encompassing a total area of 3 hectares. Situated 800 meters north of the monument, Babushmulla is a square structure measuring 21x21 meters and stands 8 meters tall above ground level. The lower part of the structure measures 30x30 meters, with a height of 3.5 meters. The interior of the tomb consists of four square rooms².



Рис. 75. Городище Чирик-рабат. План:
I — центральная группа курганов; II — курган № 1; III — круглое погребальное здание; IV — квадратное погребальное здание; V — стратиграфический раскоп; VI — поздняя цитадель.

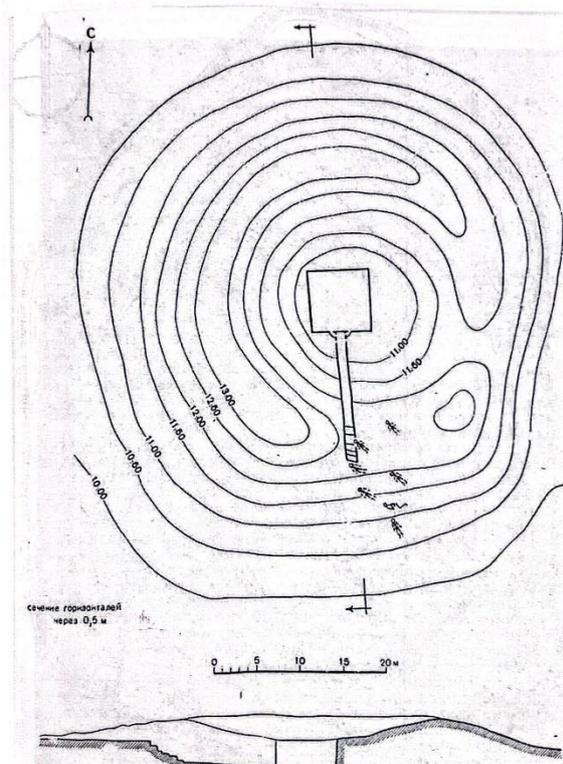


Рис. 76. Чирик-рабат. Курган № 1. План и разрез.

These pictures are taken from S.P. Tolstov's work "Po drevnim deltam Oksa i Yaksarta"

In the lower and middle reaches of the Syr Darya basin, the Khorezm expedition gathered historical information about fortified settlements of semi-sedentary and pastoral tribes, as well as the locations of mausoleums and their construction methods. This research focused on the Zhetiosar

¹ Толстов С.П. Хорезмская археолого-этнографическая экспедиция АУ СССР. 1946 г // Известия Академии наук. М., наука, 1947. Т. №2. -С. 172-182; Вайнберг Б.И. Левина Л.М. Чирикрабатская культура //Низовья Сырдарьи в древности-М., Наука., 1992. Вып 1. -С. 37-56.

² Толстов С.П. По древним дельтам Окса и Яксарта. // М.: Изд-во восточной лит.-ры. 1962. -С. 166.

monuments situated between the Inkor Darya and Zhana Darya tributaries during the years 1948-1949 and 1951. Key contributors to this expedition included S.P. Tolstov, Y.A. Rapoport, M.A. Orlova, T.A. Zhdanko, and L.M. Levina. The monuments Altinosar 2 and 3 in the Jetiosar oasis, along with the tombs of their inhabitants, date back to the mid-1st millennium BC³.

In 1959, the Khorezm expedition documented over 70 burial mounds located along the banks of the Inkor Darya River, which are known as the northern and southern Tagisken monuments. During 1960-1961, M.A. Itina excavated 11 graves within the northern Tagisken burial mounds. These mounds were constructed in a circular tomb style. The interior of each tomb featured a circular section that was separated by a circular corridor, with a circumference of 14 meters⁴.

The burial mounds of semi-sedentary and pastoral tribes located along the banks of the Inkor Darya River were studied by researchers from the Khorezm expedition between 1961 and 1965. These archaeological sites are referred to as Uygarak. A total of 70 burial mounds from the Uygarak cemetery were excavated and analyzed. The artifacts recovered from these sites date back to the 7th-5th centuries BC⁵. Since 1971, Weinberg, a member of the Khorezm expedition, has been studying the Tumen-Kichidzhik tombs, which were created by a population engaged in ethnic relations during the late 8th and early 7th centuries BC in the Kuyi Sai Heights, located in the southwestern region of the Khorezm oasis. Out of the 43 graves found at the site, 18 date back to the 7th century BC. The graves are semi-subterranean and measure between 60 to 80 centimeters to 1 meter deep. The deceased are positioned on their backs, with their heads oriented towards the west, and in some cases, to the southwest⁶.

In 1981, L.T. Yablonsky, a member of the Khorezm expedition, discovered burial mounds in the Sakarchaga sands along the banks of the Davdon River in the Sarykamysh basin. These mounds were found to be 1.8 to 2.6 meters deep. Archaeological research uncovered ash remains in shallow graves as well⁷. It is important to note that until the last quarter of the 8th to 6th centuries BC, there was no historical information about the burial customs of the population in the Lower Amu Darya basin found in the works of the Khorezm expedition.

The archaeological study of burial mounds in the southwestern regions of the Lower Syr Darya basin, conducted by the staff of the Khorezm expedition, contributed to the development of source study and historiography concerning the Iron Age population as a formal discipline.

Additionally, the burial structures of the Neolithic tribal communities in the Kuyi Sai Highlands, who engaged in daily activities near the southern border of the Khorezm oasis and the Lower Syr Darya basin, have preserved distinctive features characteristic of their burial practices⁸.

Research methodology. The achievements of objectivity, historical-chronological analysis, generalization, logical conclusions, archaeology, ethnography, and geography were utilized.

³ Толстов С.П. Қадимги Хоразм маданиятини излаб. Т., Фан, 1964. -Б. 138-139.

⁴ Толстов С.П. По древним дельтам Окса и Яксарта. -М. Наука, 1962., -С. 80-81; Толстов С.П., Итина М.А. Саки низовьев Сыр-Дарьи (по материалам Тагискена). // СА. 1966. №2. С. 151-175.

⁵ Результаты историко-археологических исследований 1961 г. на древних руслах Сыр-Дарьи (в связи с проблемой их освоения) // Советская археология. 1962. № 4. -С. 127; Вишневская О.А. Культура сакских племён низовьев Сырдарьи в VII-V вв. до н.э. По материалам Уйгарака. М., 1973. -С. 6-7.

⁶ Вайнберг Б.И. Памятники куюсайской культуры /// ТХАЭЭ. Т. XI. — М.: 1979. — С. 26–27.

⁷ Яблонский Л.Т. Исследование могильника Сакарчага // АО, 1981. — М.: Наука, 1983. — С. 482-483; ўша муаллиф. Раскопки курганов в Северной Туркмении // АО, 1982. — М.: Наука, 1984. — С. 492; ўша муаллиф. Раскопки курганов в Северной Туркмении. - В кн.: Археологические открытия (далее —АО) 1983 года. -М.: Наука, 1985. -С. 559.

⁸ Вайнберг Б.И. Изучение памятников Присарыкамьшской дельты Амударьи в 70-80-ых годах//Скотоводы и земледельцы Левобережного Хорезма (древность и средневековье). М., 1991, с. 108.

Analysis and results. The historical data documented in publications about archaeological studies of burial structures created by sedentary and pastoral tribes in the Khorezm oasis, the Sarykamysh basin, and the lower Syrdarya basin—which are geologically interconnected—were analyzed both theoretically and comparatively.

The results were explained as follows: The article discusses the religious beliefs of our ancestors who practiced irrigated farming in the Iron Age culture of Khorezm, particularly in regard to the burial of the deceased. The findings presented will enhance the Iron Age exhibits at the Khorezm History Museum.

Conclusions and suggestions. The following conclusions can be noted on the topic of the article:

- The methods of burial for the deceased among both the settled populations and herding tribes along the right and left banks of the Amudarya River have been examined. This includes:

- The typological characteristics of burial structures among settled communities and cattle-breeding tribes, as well as their settlement patterns and specific traits.

- Conclusions drawn from the archaeological study of burial structures used by populations living in the lower Amu Darya region and related adjacent areas.

Based on the conclusions drawn, the following proposals have been developed:

- Investigate the geographical location of the Khorezm oasis, which lies at the crossroads of nomadic pathways, and examine the characteristics of their burial sites.

- Explore the history of economic and cultural ties between the Khorezm oasis population and the pastoral tribes, as this is a pressing issue today.

- Analyze the religious beliefs of both sedentary and cattle-breeding tribes from a scientific perspective in order to enhance the available information resources.