

SOME QUESTIONS OF THE ORIGIN OF THE SCYTHIAN COMPLEXES OF ANCIENT FERGANA

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Abstract:

The article considers the question of the origin of the Scythian complexes of the Fergana Valley based on the analysis of a wide literary base of researchers. Studying the Scythian complexes, the author reveals a picture of the distribution area of the same Andronovo tribes both in the Zarafshan basin and in the Ferghana Valley. At the same time, the fate of these pastoral tribes is not well known. As the author emphasizes, they gradually dissolved into the environment of local agricultural tribes, or continued their usual occupation - cattle breeding. Judging by the formation of the culture of the Scyths of the Southern Aral Sea region, the author suggests that cattle breeding tribes of the Andronovo culture played a big role in their origin.

In the end, the author concluded that steppe tribes, whose culture is similar to the cultures of the Jettisu, the Aral Sea region and the Middle Syr Darya, penetrated Fergana since ancient times. The earliest traces of the steppe circle in the Ferghana Valley are traced in the monuments of the "Kayrakkum culture", the bearers of which are the direct predecessor of the culture of the Scythian tribes.

Keywords: Ferghana Valley, Bronze Age, Kayrakkum culture, pastoral tribes, funeral rite, Scythian-Sak culture, archaeological and written sources.

Introduction

From the beginning of II millennium BC vast areas of Eurasia – including the southern Russian steppes, the Urals, Kazakhstan and Altai, the steppe and foothill regions of Central Asia, including the Fergana Valley, were inhabited by pastoral tribes. Experts initially called the culture of these tribes “steppe”, now most often “Andronovo”, highlighting its local variants [Avanesova, 1995. P.82-86].

B.A. Litvinsky attributed “Kairakkum culture” to the cultures of these tribes in the Fergana Valley, the name of which comes from the name of the area where this type of monument was discovered [Litvinsky, Okladnikov, Ranov, 1962. P.91-195; Litvinsky, Ranov, 1961]. At the time of the discovery of this culture, there were about 70 points, representing the remains of semi-dispersed settlements and production sites of the tribes that lived here. The settlements of these tribes were large and small in size – from 0.1 to 3 hectares (hectare), and were located in groups. The houses were still close to the houses of the Keltaminar culture, i.e. were light, and were houses of the “hut” type. Judging by the remains, the hearths were made of stone and had a rounded shape. They were engaged in metal production because archaeologists in these settlements often found remains of slag from stone molds for casting metal. The Kairakkum people lived near the Naukat copper deposit, where the main copper ore comes to the surface of the earth. According to B.A.Litvinsky, the “Kairakkum culture” was culturally closer to the Andronovo culture, and a lesser extent to the



“log house” and Suyargan cultures. At the same time, B.A.Litvinsky and V.A.Ranov, studying the stratigraphy of the Aktanga canopy, came to the conclusion that the “Kairakkum culture” arose as a result of the development of the local Neolithic “Gissar culture”[Litvinsky, Ranov. 1961].

According to B.A. Litvinsky, the existence of the “Kairakkum culture” consists mainly of two stages: the early stage – the second half of the 2nd – the beginning of the 1st millennium BC. and late – the end of the first – second quarter of the 1st millennium BC.

In addition to Western Fergana, traces of synchronous pastoral tribes were also found in the territory of Southern Fergana. In particular, G.P. Ivanov, in the area 5-6 km to the east of the city of Fergana, discovered a Bronze Age burial – the “Kashkarchi” burial ground[Ivanov, 1988. P.44-47], funerary inventory, which is very close to the inventory of the Muminabad burial ground[Askarov, 1965. P.53-60], located near Urgut. It is known, that on the territory of the Zarafshan valley, there are several points where the presence of traces of pastoral tribes of the Late Bronze Age is recorded[Avanesova, Shaidullaev, Yarkulov. 2005. P.12-33; Avanesova, 1991].

A picture emerges of the distribution area of the same Andronovo tribes, both in the Zarafshan basin and in the Fergana Valley. However, the fate of these pastoral tribes is not well known. They gradually dissolved among the local agricultural tribes or continued their usual occupation – cattle breeding. Judging by the formation of the Scythian culture of the Southern Aral Sea region, we can assume that the pastoral tribes of the Andronovo culture played a large role in their origin. This conclusion was reached by L.T.Yablonsky, who studied the monuments of Sakar-Chaga, Uygarak and South Tagisken[Yablonsky, 1991. P.72-89]. He also noted the proximity of the material culture of Sakar-Chagy and Kuyusai. In the time preceding the Sakarchaga burials, one can find their analogies in the mausoleums of Northern Tagisken, where the central chamber, rectangular in shape, was surrounded by a ring of fire[Tolstov, 1963].

All the above-mentioned Early Scythian burials were united by another important feature – the presence of a rectangular chamber with traces of four columns sunk into the ground, in the center of which there is a slightly recessed or flat platform for the deceased. This form of burial is somewhat reminiscent of the form of funerary structures and stone sculptures of pre-Scythian times. Somewhat later, the same burial structures appeared in the mounds of the ordinary population of steppe Scythia. Moreover, a characteristic feature of these monuments is the presence of a quadrangular burial chamber in the center, and a stone or earthen fence surrounding it [Melyukova, 1989]. At the same time, in some burials, the burial chambers were deepened to the extent of about one meter. Burials of this type were characteristic not only of the Aral Sea region Scythian tribes but also for many Scythians of the North Caucasus, Volga region and Southern Urals. Another characteristic feature of the Scytho-Sak general cultural area is the presence of a stone fence, or stone backfill over the buried.

The question of the burials of the pastoral tribes of the Fergana Valley of the Scythian period remains somewhat complicated. There is still an ongoing debate in the archaeological literature regarding the assignment of many mounds from the mid-1st millennium BC to the agricultural population or pastoral tribes. For, the Fergana Valley was the most northeastern outpost between agricultural and pastoral tribes living in the valleys of the Pamir-Alai and Tien Shan mountain ranges. This left its mark on the layering of cultures in this region.

For this moment the Eilatan culture was known in the Fergana Valley, which was the direct



“successor” of the Chust culture[Zadneprovsky, 1961; Gorbunova, 1984. P.99-107; Alokunov, 2021. P.244-248]. However, until recent times, only one large settlement (Eilatan), surrounded by two rings of defensive walls, was known from the Eilatan culture, and all other archaeologically studied monuments were mainly funerary monuments. In particular, in 1953, local historian P.T. Konoplya discovered the Khangiz burial ground, located at the foot of the hills in the Fergana region[Gorbunova, 1990. P.178-199]. In 1957, in the vicinity of the village of Asht, on the site of the Karamazar cemetery, E.D. Saltovsky discovered a burial ground of the 6th – 4th centuries BC, and since 1972 systematic excavations have continued here[Saltovskaya, 1976. P.49-60]. In 1954-55 employees of the Fergana Regional Museum, amateur local historian P.T. Konoplya, discovered the Aktam burial ground, later excavated by B.Z.Gamburg and N.G.Gorbunova[Gamburg, Gorbunova, 1957. pp. 78-90]. Subsequently, two more burial grounds were discovered, dating back to the middle of the I millennium BC – Sufan [Gorbunova, 1969; 1961] and Kungai burial grounds. The main characteristic feature of these burial grounds is the presence of the orientation of the buried in the western and, very rarely, in the southern direction. Slightly deepened burial pits and a pebble mound on the surface of the graves were also traced[Gamburg, Gorbunova, 1957]. These mounds, with mounds of pebbles, were round in plan with a diameter of 3-5 m and a height of up to 0.5 m, elongated in the direction from north to south, ranging in size from 5x3 m to 67x4 m, and a height of up to 0.6 m. The construction of the “long” mound was not simultaneous, apparently, it was a family affair.

Analysis of the funeral rite and material culture shows that the funeral monuments mentioned above, like a mound near the village of Asht, with “stone boxes” and stone mounds, or similar burial grounds like Sufan, Kungai and Aktam, were left by the Scythian tribes mentioned in Greek written sources. These documents note ... “the most famous of the nomads are those who took Bactriana from the Hellenes, namely Asia, Pasian, Tocharians, Sakaravli , who moved from the region on the other side of the Jaxartes next to the region of the Sakas and Sogdians, occupied by the Sakas”[Strabon, XI , 8, 2]. The same author reports that “ the Scyths were separated from the Sogdians Jaxartes, and Sogdiana from Bactriana – Oxus”[Strabon, XI, 11, 4]. It comes from this that such funerary monuments as Dashti-Asht, Aktam, Kungai and Sufan burial grounds belong to the Scythian tribes, indicated in Greek sources as “Scythian tribes on the other side of the Jaxartes”.

Thus the steppe tribes, whose culture is similar to the cultures of Jettisu, the Aral Sea region and the Middle Syr Darya, penetrated Fergana from ancient times. The earliest traces of the steppe circle in the Fergana Valley are traced in the monuments of the “Kairakkum culture”, the bearers of which are the direct predecessors of the culture of the Scythian tribes.

As a result of the mutual influence of the cultures of the agricultural population and pastoral tribes, the culture of the Early Iron Age emerged. Nomadic, pastoral tribes finding themselves surrounded by an agricultural population, partly switched to agriculture.

In the funeral rite and especially the material culture of the Sufan, Kungai and Aktam burial grounds one can see traces of the culture of the Sscythian-pastoral population, which gradually settled surrounded by farmers of the Eilatan culture. This transition can be traced according to genetic characteristics: from the Chust – the production of molded, painted dishes, and sometimes – the custom of burial in ground graves, etc., and the general features of the early nomads can be traced in the burial mounds of Alai, Ketmen-Tyube, Jettisu, Talas, Tien Shan and Middle



Syrdarya.

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