BG Pulse Journal USA
ISSN:1947-2536 http://www.bgpulseusa.com/index.php/bg

ETHNOCULTURAL PROCESSES IN CENTRAL ASIA DURING THE BRONZE AGE

Matyusubova Xurshida Xasanovna
Asia International University
Master's student, MM101-T-25, 1st year
Doi: https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.21349704

Abstract: This article analyzes the socio-economic, cultural, and ethnic processes of the Bronze Age in Central Asia. The study highlights the formation of irrigated agriculture, the development of pastoralism, and interactions between sedentary and nomadic populations. Based on archaeological evidence, the settlement patterns of tribes, their material culture, and ethnocultural processes in the region are examined. The results demonstrate that the Bronze Age laid an important foundation for later historical-cultural regions and ethnogenetic processes in Central Asia.

Keywords: ethnic processes, ethnogenesis, irrigated agriculture, pastoralism, archaeological sites, Andronovo culture.

Introduction

The Bronze Age (approximately the 3rd–2nd millennia BCE) is named after the alloy bronze, produced by combining copper and tin, which was widely used for manufacturing tools and weapons. During this period, irrigated agriculture based on artificial irrigation systems emerged in the territory of present-day Uzbekistan. Archaeological sites of this period have been discovered and studied in Zamonbobo (Karakul district, Bukhara region), Sarazm (Panjakent region, Tajikistan), Sopollitepa, Jarqo'ton (Sherabad district, Surkhandarya region), as well as Tozabog'yob, Qavat-3, and Amirobod (Khorezm–Karakalpakstan region).

During this period, agriculture and animal husbandry developed significantly, and populations began transitioning to sedentary and semi-nomadic lifestyles. Crafts, particularly pottery and metallurgy, reached a high level of development. Economic and cultural interactions between tribes intensified, and social stratification emerged.

The Bronze Age in Central Asia developed in a distinctive way, where interactions between sedentary agricultural populations and pastoral tribes played a crucial role. This period laid the foundation for later historical-cultural development and ethnogenetic processes.

Methodology

The research methodology is based on historical-comparative analysis, a systematic approach, and anthropological methods. The main sources include archaeological materials, ethnographic studies, and historical literature.

Results and Discussion

Researchers of the Central Asian Bronze Age rely primarily on archaeological and anthropological data, as written sources are limited for this period.

During the Bronze Age, populations related to the Mediterranean anthropological type were present in the southern regions of Central Asia. In contrast, different groups inhabited the northern steppe and desert zones [1].

In the second half of the 2nd millennium BCE, tribes engaged in agriculture and pastoralism migrated into the mountainous and steppe regions of Uzbekistan and southern Tajikistan from both southern and northern directions. Evidence of the material culture of steppe tribes is found in the

Vakhsh archaeological sites, where pottery and bronze tools have been discovered. These hand-made ceramic vessels are decorated with complex geometric incised patterns and resemble pottery associated with the Andronovo culture, which was widespread in the steppes of Western Siberia and Kazakhstan during the same period [2].

Archaeological evidence confirms the emergence of new cultural groups among the Bronze Age population of southern Tajikistan. Residential remains, pottery, tools, and ornaments discovered at sites such as Teguzak and Kongurtut reflect the spread of sedentary agricultural communities into the regions of Kafirnigan, Vakhsh, and Panj river valleys, as well as mountainous areas.

A Bronze Age pastoral site was identified near the village of Muminabad, close to Samarkand. During the second half of the 2nd millennium BCE, pastoral tribes increasingly settled in the steppe and foothill regions of Central Asia. Their material culture shows strong similarities with populations of the South Siberian and Kazakh steppes. Evidence of their presence includes pottery, metal objects, and burial sites characteristic of pastoral societies [3].

Some pastoral groups gradually became sedentary and settled along the borders of agricultural communities. Ancient populations also inhabited riverbanks, deserts, and foothills, indicating the utilization of geographically favorable areas for both agriculture and livestock breeding.

In the Zarafshan, Hissar, Bobotag, and Pamir mountain foothills, communities primarily engaged in sheep and goat herding. These groups maintained close cultural and economic relations with agricultural populations in the oases.

Bronze Age ethnocultural processes have been widely discussed in academic conferences and documented in scholarly literature [4]. Since the second half of the 19th century, the spatial distribution of ancient Central Asian peoples mentioned in early written sources became a major topic of Oriental studies. This issue was further developed in the early 20th century, particularly through archaeological findings.

This topic is reflected in the works of scholars such as A.S. Sagdullayev, V.M. Masson, and S.P. Tolstov [5], who analyzed historical geography and ethnocultural processes of Central Asia, including territorial boundaries defined by rivers and mountains.

In the 1970s–1980s, large-scale archaeological research in Central Asia significantly changed previous scientific views on the historical geography of the region. The 1977 international symposium on ethnic problems of Central Asia emphasized that the 2nd millennium BCE represented a crucial stage in ethnogenesis, forming the basis for modern populations [7]. Discussions included the spread of Indo-Iranian tribes, the migration of Andronovo pastoralists, and the so-called “Aryan problem,” examined from linguistic, archaeological, and cultural perspectives. Alternative theories suggest that Indo-Iranian populations may have originated in Western Asia.

From the 1990s to the early 21st century, important contributions were made by researchers such as A.A. Asqarov, E.V. Rtveladze, A.S. Sagdullayev, T.Sh. Shirinov, Sh.B. Shaydullayev, and N.A. Avanesova [8]. Their studies, including dissertations and monographs, provided new archaeological and cartographic data on Bronze Age sites [9–10]. International scholars such as K. Lamberg-Karlovsky, Ph. Kohl, F. Hiebert, N. Boroffka, J. Cierny, and J. Lutz also made significant contributions to the study of Central Asian Bronze Age cultures [11].

Conclusion

In conclusion, the presented data indicate that Bronze Age tribes in Central Asia played a crucial role in laying the foundations of early state formations. The populations of this period

represent the ancient ancestors of the modern peoples of Uzbekistan, as supported by archaeological and historical evidence.

By the 1st millennium BCE, several major historical-cultural regions emerged in Central Asia, including Khorezm, Sogdiana, Bactria, Margiana, Fergana, and Chach (Shosh).

References

1. Ethnic Problems of the History of Central Asia in Antiquity (2nd Millennium BCE). Moscow: Nauka, 1981.
2. A.S. Sagdullayev. *History of Ancient Central Asia*. Tashkent: Universitet, 2004.
3. T.Sh. Shirinov. *Tools and Weapons of the Bronze Age of the Central Asian Interfluve*. Tashkent: Fan, 1986.
4. I.V. Pyankov. *Bactria in Ancient Tradition*. Dushanbe: Donish, 1982.
5. A.A. Asqarov. "Main Features of the Ancient World of Central Asia." *Social Sciences in Uzbekistan*, 1994, No. 6.
6. J. Togaev. *Historical Reconstruction Issues of the Bronze and Early Iron Ages (Southern Uzbekistan case)*. PhD abstract, Tashkent, 2021.
7. A. Bokiev, A. Shaydullayev, Z. Yuldasheva. *Ox Civilization*. Tashkent: Yangi Nashr, 2015.
8. L. Stančo, P. Tušlová (eds.). *Sherabad Oasis: Tracing Historical Landscape in Southern Uzbekistan*. Charles University: Karolinum Press, 2019.
9. C.C. Lamberg-Karlovsky. "The Bronze Age of Bactria" 1989.