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THE EMERGENCE OF EARLY STATEHOOD IN KHOREZM IN THE CONTEXT OF CENTRAL ASIAN CIVILIZATIONS AND THE ARAL SEA CULTURES

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Аннотация

В статье рассматриваются социально-политические, хозяйственные и культурные процессы, происходившие в Хорезмском оазисе в VII–VI вв. до н.э., на примере культуры Кузаликыр. На основе археологических и исторических источников анализируются военные объединения сакских племён, процессы оседания населения и этапы формирования ранней государственности в Хорезме. Обосновано, что возникновение крепости Кузаликыр и прилегающих сельскохозяйственных поселений свидетельствует об усложнении оборонительных, управленческих и хозяйственных функций общества.

Ключевые слова

Хорезм, культура Кузаликыр, саки, ранняя государственность, оборонительные сооружения, оседлое скотоводство, археология, Центральная Азия.

Abstract

This article analyzes the socio-political, economic, and cultural processes that took place in the Khorezm oasis during the 7th–6th centuries BC, focusing on the Kozaliqir culture. Based on archaeological and historical evidence, the study examines the military-political organization of Saka communities, the processes of sedentarization, and the stages of early state formation in Khorezm. The emergence of the Kozaliqir fortress and surrounding agricultural settlements is interpreted as evidence of increasing complexity in defensive, administrative, and economic systems.

Keywords

Khorezm, Kozaliqir culture, Saka tribes, early statehood, defensive structures, sedentary pastoralism, archaeology, Central Asia.

Introduction

In recent years, the issue of early state formation processes in Central Asia, tribal associations, and their socio-political structures has been regarded as one of the topical scientific problems in historical scholarship. In particular, a comprehensive study of the ethnocultural, economic, and political processes that occurred in the Khorezm oasis in the early first millennium BCE holds significant importance for the correct interpretation of the region's ancient civilizational development. These processes were closely linked to the activities of the Saka tribes, their military associations, and the formation of defense systems.

The Kozalikir culture, which emerged in the 7th–6th centuries BCE, is characterized in Khorezm by an economic system based on settled animal husbandry and agriculture, defensive structures, handicraft production, and the appearance of governance elements.

Literature Review

The ancient history of the Khorezm oasis, the Saka tribes, and the Kozalikir culture have been studied since the second half of the 20th century by a number of local and foreign researchers. As a result of archaeological explorations, Kozalikir fortress, the surrounding agricultural settlements (uy-qo'rg'ons), and traces of handicrafts have been identified, serving as important sources for illuminating the economic and social structure of Khorezm in the first

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millennium BCE. In scholarly literature, the origins of the Kozalikir culture are interpreted in various ways.

Methodological Foundations

The present study is based on the scientific-methodological principles accepted in historical science, with the principles of historicity and objectivity serving as leading criteria.

In the research process, a complex of historical-comparative, archaeological analysis, historical-ethnographic, and paleogeographic approaches was applied, and the Kozalikir culture in the Khorezm region was comparatively studied with the cultural environments of Bactria, Sogd, and the Aral Sea region. Based on these methodological approaches, the processes of formation and development of early statehood in Khorezm were analyzed in organic connection with the general stages of Central Asian statehood history, leading to scientifically grounded conclusions.

Analysis

In the 7th–6th centuries BCE, in the Mirshodi cultural-economic district of southern Uzbekistan (Surkhandarya oasis), around the fortified Qiziltepa with defensive walls similar to Kozalikir, 15–16 agricultural uy-qo‘rg‘ons were located. They belonged to individual large patriarchal families and united within the district-oasis framework, forming territorial neighborhood communities. The main occupation of the uy-qo‘rg‘on inhabitants was the production and processing of agricultural products.

Around Kozalikir as well, traces of residential structures consisting of 2–3 rooms, located close to each other, have been identified. They have not been excavated, and opinions and conclusions in this regard are based on findings of ceramic vessel fragments and remnants of kilns used for firing them, which were destroyed in their time. The majority of ancient agricultural uy-qo‘rg‘ons in Khorezm (220 dwellings) have been identified in the territories on the right bank of the Amu Darya, dating to the 5th–4th centuries BCE, i.e., the Achaemenid period [5, p. 214].

In the eastern part of Khorezm (Akchadarya delta), uy-qo‘rg‘ons, divided into separate groups, were located along irrigation canals. These qo‘rg‘ons formed agricultural oases, and in some, remnants of pottery kilns and workshops related to iron processing have been found. However, around Kozalikir fortress, the characteristics of territorial settlement of neighboring communities and traces of artificial irrigation structures–canals and ditches–have not been identified.

It is expedient to once again emphasize the necessity of linking the origins of the Kozalikir culture with external migrations and ethnocultural influences. As a result, previously unknown military fortifications, defense systems, the construction of large structures in the Khorezm oasis, the beginning of the use of adobe and unfired bricks in construction and architecture, the spread of practical building knowledge and methods, and the start of using the potter's wheel in pottery occurred.

In this period, the emerging initial governance in the statehood system was more closely related to social, economic, and military functions [3, pp. 19–24]. As a result of changes in socio-economic and external relations, new governance tasks emerged. In this regard, due to the Khorezm population being settled in various parts of their country (Sarykamysh basin, Khazarasp, and Koshkala oases), the necessity for territorial-administrative governance arose. This situation refutes the hypothesis that local traditions of state construction in Khorezm were unknown before the Achaemenid period.

According to researchers, between 545–539 BCE, the Persian king Cyrus II conquered Margiana, Khorezm, Sogd, and Bactria, extending the territorial borders of the Achaemenid

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state to the Syr Darya basin and northwestern India [6, p. 105]. However, the Saka-Massagetae living in the steppes between the Caspian and Aral Seas did not submit to the Persians. In 530 BCE, Cyrus II undertook an unsuccessful campaign against them.

Until the reign of Darius I, nomadic tribes fought against the Persians. After Darius I's campaigns against the Saka-Tigraxaudā in 519 BCE, the Sakas entered the Achaemenid state. These briefly outlined political events testify to the Sakas having formed powerful military associations.

Based on the information revealed in this section of the study, it is appropriate to note as a conclusion that analyzing the processes of emergence and development of early statehood in Khorezm in connection with the stages of Central Asian statehood history is expedient. Accordingly, while the early statehood system in Central Asia was first formed in the Margiana-Bactria regions at the end of the third millennium – beginning of the second millennium BCE, in Khorezm a clan-based system was developed.

In the late Bronze Age (15th–10th centuries BCE), as a result of the widespread expansion of steppe pastoralists in Central Asia and the territories of Kazakhstan, a culture of settled pastoralists possessing agricultural skills developed in the Aral Sea region. In their social structure, kinship traditions and customs occupied a leading position.

According to data from the Avesta, in the period encompassing the 9th–8th centuries BCE, during the rule of the "Kavi kings" in the southern lands of the region, the essence of the Northern Tagisken culture in the eastern Aral Sea region indicates that military leaders emerged in pastoralist communities, and the initial tribal unions began to form.

In the 7th century BCE, in the Khorezm oasis, the Saka–Khorezmians and the Saka communities of the eastern Aral Sea region united into military alliances of separate tribes. For the purposes of defending their settlements and conducting external campaigns, the production of weapons (spears, daggers, axes, bows and arrows, large knives) increased significantly, military functions in society grew, and the prestige of military leaders and warriors rose.

From the end of the 7th century to the mid-6th century BCE, the emergence and development of the Kozalikir culture represented an almost complete innovation in Khorezm compared to previous historical stages, to which the Saka–Khorezmians adapted. The Kozalikir fortress was originally built as a political support center for the tribal union and as a refuge for the surrounding pastoralist population. In connection with concepts such as military fortifications and defensive structures, researchers explain the meaning of the toponym "Khorezm" in the form "hu-warazam" as "a land with good fortifications for livestock; a territory with fortified settlements." In this regard, words known from the Avesta related to the term "Khorezm"–such as "wara" (fortress, defensive structure–citadel) and "zam" (land, country)–hold great significance [8, p. 29].

Results

It is worth emphasizing that, prior to the Kozalikir fortress, defensive structures had been constructed in the regions of Bactria and Sogd. For example, in Bactria, sites such as Qiziltepa, Altindilyor, and Atchopar [7, pp. 85–86], and in Sogd, Uzunkir, Yerkurgan, and Koktepa formed large military fortifications. These served as refuges for the population living in agricultural oases and for their livestock, providing protection against military invasions.

In the inner fortress of Kozalikir, the palace-residence of the tribal union's leader has been identified, along with storage facilities consisting of large pithoi intended for reserves of agricultural products and grain silos. Additionally, remnants of a workshop for smelting iron and metalworking have been found in the fortress [4, pp. 155–156].

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Within the material culture of Kozalikir, there are handmade ceramic vessels characteristic of the Sakas, bronze arrowheads, and horse equipment. However, the primary features (architecture, large buildings constructed from bricks, defense systems, wheel-made ceramic vessels, iron processing) and the spread of Zoroastrian burial rites indicate the widespread influence of southern civilizational traditions.

In the Kozalikir oasis, along the Davdon channel of the Amu Darya, settlements of settled pastoralists such as Quyisoy and Yassiqir are located. In the Khazarasp oasis of southern Khorezm, the population living in close proximity to the Amu Darya channel engaged in agriculture and handicrafts. This is evidenced by archaeological materials obtained from sites such as Khumbuztepa, Qoratosh, and Toshsaqa [2]. Furthermore, the discovery of Qoshqala, related to the Kozalikir culture on the left bank of the middle Amu Darya, has raised questions regarding the southern borders of ancient Khorezm at that time. This approach has found supporters, and in Sh.T. Adilov's article, the development of lands in western Sogd–the Bukhara oasis–in the 6th century BCE is interpreted as directly linked to migrations of Khorezmians [1, pp. 124–125].

In conclusion regarding, it can be stated that, from the end of the 8th century BCE to the beginning of the 7th century BCE, the earliest Saka tribes settled in the lower Syr Darya basin in the eastern Aral Sea region. During this period, due to the cessation of water supply in the Akchadarya channel on the right bank of the Amu Darya, opportunities for permanent settlement in the eastern part of the Khorezm oasis were limited. For this reason, pastoral tribes occupied the territories around the Sarykamysh basin in western Khorezm. These tribes are conditionally referred to in the literature as "Sakas–Khorezmians," and they were contemporaries of the Sakas who roamed the borders of the eastern Aral Sea region.

The issue of the origins of the Aral Sea Sakas is interpreted in connection with the changes that occurred in the ethnocultural and ethnic history of pastoral tribes in the Eurasian steppes during the transition from the late Bronze Age to the early Iron Age (the emergence of semi-sedentary and nomadic pastoralism, migrations, and the cultural and ethnic intermixing of tribes). Such changes in the Aral Sea regions can be observed in the development of the Tozabagyab–Amirabad–Northern Tagisken cultures. On this basis, and as a result of the mutual influence of general ethnocultural processes in the Eurasian steppes, the Saka tribes emerged.

Conclusion

Historical and ethnocultural processes hold great significance in the interactions between Central Asian civilizations and the cultures of the Aral Sea region. As a consequence of population groups from Bactria–Margiana first entering the lands of southern Khorezm on the left bank of the Amu Darya and later the Sarykamysh basin regions, the territorial settlement boundaries and ethnic geography of the Aral Sea population changed, leading to fundamental transformations in the economic life, culture, socio-economic relations, and political relations in the Khorezm oasis.

Prior to this, in the 9th–8th centuries BCE, tribal unions and military associations first developed in the eastern Aral Sea region, and from the beginning of the 7th century BCE, in the Sarykamysh–Aral Sea territories. Their emergence was significantly influenced by factors such as the pastoralists' need to protect their territories, pastures, and livestock herds from external invasions, as well as to organize campaigns against rivals. In the life of the early Saka communities, the social institutions of the clan system were preserved, and the governance system had not yet largely attained the status of political authority.

In the late 7th century BCE to the first half of the 6th century BCE, the division of the Khorezm population into settled pastoralists and agriculturists, the expansion of their territorial

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settlement range, the appearance of agricultural uy-qo‘rg‘ons and fortresses, the emergence of new branches in handicraft production, and the development of external economic relations– these factors testify to positive changes occurring in societal life.

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