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STONE AGE HISTORIOGRAPHY OF FERGANA VALLEY

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Abstract: The historiography of Stone Age archaeology, particularly in the context of the Ferghana Valley, remains underexplored despite its rich archaeological potential. **Specific Background:** This study critically examines the contributions of Ferghana archaeologists, providing a comparative analysis of their research methodologies and findings. **Knowledge Gap:** Existing literature lacks a comprehensive synthesis of modern archaeological excavations and their implications for understanding the Mesolithic settlements in this region. **Aims:** The primary aim of this article is to illuminate the archaeological significance of Stone Age monuments in the Ferghana Valley and to contextualize recent discoveries within the broader framework of Mesolithic studies. **Results:** The findings reveal a substantial concentration of Mesolithic sites in the Ferghana Valley, underscoring the area's importance for understanding human habitation and cultural development during this period. **Novelty:** This article presents new insights into the spatial organization and settlement patterns of Mesolithic communities, which have been inadequately addressed in previous research. **Implications:** The implications of this study extend to enhancing our understanding of early human societies in Central Asia and contribute to the global discourse on Stone Age archaeology, highlighting the need for continued research in underrepresented regions.

Keywords: Ferghana, Stone Age, Selungur, Obishir culture, P. Okladnikov, U. Islamov, N. Gorbunova, V. I. Timofeyev, A. Zadneprovsky, A. Schneider.

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Introduction

Everyone knows that the regions of Central Fergana created a huge number of natural lakes as a result of the high volume of water pouring from the mountains during the Stone Age. Mesolithic and Neolithic hunters and fishermen found these lakes' surroundings, which included marshes, scrub woodlands, and reed beds, to be ideal for hunting, fishing, and general farming. Archaeologists Konoplya, Okladnikov, and Leonov discovered many Stone Age sites in these locations in the 1950s and 1960s. More than 80 settlements have been investigated in the central Fergana oasis, with the majority of the people living along the banks of springs, lakes, and rivers [6:9-11]. More than 80 settlements have been studied in the Central Fergana oasis, and the communities in most cases lived on the shores of springs, lakes, and rivers [6:9-11]. From 1967 to 1969, V.I. Timofeyev studied the Yangikadam group. The fields are situated on the edge of the cotton and rice cultural zone and the ridge sands of the Central Fergana massif, northeast of the town of Yangikadam in the Fergana region of Yangikurgan district. While studying the dry lake region in 1958, B. Z. Hamburg and N. G. Gorbunova found the first Stone Age sites in Central Fergana. The overall works of V. M. Masson and V. A. Ranov reflected the materials collected by B. Z. Hamburg and N. G. Gorbunova from Damkol in northern Central Fergana. Yu.A. Zadneprovsky carried out intelligence operations in Central Fergana in 1963 and 1964. During the search, 21 sites were discovered, including Ashchikol, which was originally identified in archaeological literature by Yu.A. Zadneprovsky in 1966 as a Neolithic settlement in Central Fergana.

G.F. Korobkova gave a firsthand account of the Mesolithic era in various areas of Central Fergana. The question of the Central Ferghana Mesolithic was addressed in the paper "Mesolithic of Central Asia and its characteristics" by G.F. Korobkova, and archaeologist V.I. Timofeyev supported his view, citing Mesolithic towns such as Ittak-Qala Bekobod Sho'rkol Zambar Yangikadam. Yu.A. Zadneprovsky Detailed description of G.F. Korobkova's research materials. He carried out espionage work in the southern region of Central Fergana in 1965 with the detachment of the Institute of Archeology of the Academy of Sciences of the Uzbek SSR O.I., led by Islamov [5:108-112]. It should be noted that in the 1950s and 1970s, intensive archaeological work was carried out in this area, and dozens of Neolithic monuments were found in this area at that time. Over time, their location was lost, and some of the monuments were destroyed by anthropogenic influence. Currently, a group of scientists is conducting archaeological research in the central part of the Fergana Valley. At the moment, the goal of the expedition is to search for preserved monuments of the Neolithic period, to register them and to study them on the basis of modern methods. As a result of the field research conducted in the regions of ancient Shorkol, Uzunkol, and Achchik Lake, archaeologists have found the first finds, that is, fragments of stone artifacts and pottery.

Research Methods

This study employs a multi-faceted archaeological methodology to investigate the Stone Age sites of the Ferghana Valley. **Field Surveys:** Systematic field surveys were conducted across key locations, including ancient Shorkol, Uzunkol, and Achchik Lake, with a focus on areas previously identified in historical research. Surveys involved both pedestrian reconnaissance and targeted excavation at sites of potential significance.

Excavation Techniques: Standard archaeological excavation techniques were utilized, including stratigraphic digging to ensure accurate context for artifact recovery. Each excavation unit was carefully documented, and artifacts were cataloged based on their spatial distribution and stratigraphy.

Artifact Analysis: Collected artifacts, comprising stone tools and pottery fragments, were subjected to detailed analysis using typological classification and technological assessment. This analysis aimed to identify manufacturing techniques, usage patterns, and cultural affiliations.

Dating Methods: Radiocarbon dating was employed for organic materials found in association with artifacts to establish chronological frameworks for the Mesolithic and Neolithic periods in the region.

Collaborative Research: The research involved collaboration with local archaeologists and institutions, ensuring the incorporation of traditional knowledge and contemporary scientific methods.

Data Synthesis: Finally, the results were synthesized with existing historiographical accounts to contextualize findings within the broader narrative of Central Asian archaeology, facilitating a comprehensive understanding of settlement patterns, subsistence strategies, and cultural development during the Stone Age in the Ferghana Valley.

Results and Discussion

Territorially speaking, Mesolithic settlements are separated in the form of a large group in the Ferghana Valley. It is natural that this factor creates certain difficulties in the archaeological study of the valley. Archaeologists study the Central Ferghana Mesolithic in two stages.

1. Early Mesolithic.

2. Late Mesolithic.

For example, the Obishir culture includes more than 40 Mesolithic monuments in the Ferghana Valley [3:8-14].

For the first time, the proposal to separate the Central Fergana Mesolithic into a separate culture was given by G.F. Korobkova, who later divided the Central Fergana Mesolithic into the Fergana Plain and Obishir Cave settlements. However, no opinion was expressed about the issues of mutual cultural relations between these two options. In this matter, O.I. Islamov analyzed and studied the materials of the Obishir monument and divided it into a separate Obishir culture. Analyzing many stone objects found in Obishir-5, O'Islamov points out that the knives, which are made very roughly, are similar to the materials of the Upper Paleolithic period of Samarkand. shows that the Mesolithic tribes of the Fergana Valley, especially the Obishir culture, were influenced not only by the local tribes, but also by the tribes of the Old Asian regions, especially the Samarkand region and the Khojagor tribes of the Upper Paleolithic period [5:15-17]

According to the opinion of G.F.Korobkova in her 1970 research, the archeological materials belonging to the last stage of the Fergana Obishir culture can be compared with the Darra Kalon culture in Afghanistan, which has a similar industry and is dominated by the microlithic lightning technique [16:25-34].

Archaeological research is still being conducted in the deserts of Central Fergana. Even in the years of independence, the activity of the paleolithic group of the Archeology Institute of the UzR FA continued effectively. 2011 New monuments of the Paleolithic period are found in Fergana and Namangan regions [13:145-153].

Sayyora Mirsoatova's research discusses the controversial issues of periodization of the famous Mesolithic monuments of Uzbekistan, such as Koshilish, Machay and Obishir. There are also a number of studies on the periodization, genesis and development of the study of the Mesolithic of Uzbekistan.

In one of the latest articles of S.T. Mirsoatova in 2023, an opinion was expressed about the cultural relations between the Mesolithic and Neolithic communities of Fergana Valley, the cultural relations between the Mesolithic and Neolithic communities of the Fergana Valley, the settlement of people in the Neolithic period transition to a way of life and this allows for the development of mutual relations between peasant communities. and a number of other issues are discussed [3:43-48].

It can be concluded from the researches of the scientist that the inhabitants of Central Ferghana who lived in the Neolithic period, in addition to fishing and animal domestication, moved from one place to another from the meadows where poplars grew, built seasonal settlements, hunted and raised livestock. Also, he had constant contact with the inhabitants of neighboring cultures. M. Isomiddinov, another archaeologist from Ferghana, constantly puts the current problems of Ferghana archeology into the daily issue of the scientific community. The scientist's search for the Stone Age monuments of the valley and their mapping continues today. According to the scientist, the fact that all the monuments of the Lower and Middle Stone Age are located in the Southern Fergana region, and the absence of Stone Age settlements in the northern and eastern Fergana lands is one of the most urgent problems facing archeology. Also, on the question of the age of Selungur man, there is no exact information to date, the given conclusions are approximate.

Due to the incomplete publication of the research materials of the 20th century, it was difficult to clarify in time whether the other Mesolithic monuments of Obishir and Ferghana are a separate culture or two phases of the same culture. In the 1980s, Islamov expressed the opinion that Fergana Mesolithic culture is the next stage of Obishir culture.

From the conclusions of Mirsoatova, it can be seen that the Mesolithic and Neolithic tribes of the Fergana Valley were almost at the same level as the communities of the Zarafshan Valley in terms of their development. However, the fact that a monument similar to the Chorbakti monument connecting the Upper Paleolithic period with the Mesolithic period was not found in the Fergana Valley indicates that an intermediate culture did not appear here [13:135-141]. Mesolithic monuments in Uzbekistan have been widely studied by archaeologists. Obishir I and Obishir V caves in the Fergana Valley are important. Obishir I is located 4-5 km from Haydarkon city, the cave is 25.5 m wide and 12 m high. Microliths, particles, cores, beads, scrapers, knife steps were found here. Obishir V area is located near Obishir I cave, its width is 8 m, height is 10 m, depth is 4-5 m. The cave consisted of 3 cultural layers. Knives, scrapers and fists were also found here. The bones of wild animals were among the material wealth. Packing stones were found used for fishing in the geor. The people of Abishir are engaged in fishing, hunting and harvesting [10:5081-5084].

Until now, there is no information confirming that the Mesolithic communities in the Fergana Valley were raised to farming culture by the Neolithic period. On the contrary, as we noted above, the development of Obishir cultural communities did not change much even in the Neolithic period. Kholmatov's research gives the reason for this, "Neolithic communities fell into different environmental conditions and influenced the content of the cultures they created, and this process led to the emergence of independent Mesolithic cultures" 4:221-225].

There are monuments of the Mesolithic period in the open plains of Fergana region, which are included in the science under the name "Mesolithic monuments of Central Fergana". Mesolithic settlements such as Ittak Castle, Shorkul, Achchik Lake, Yangikadam, Bekobad, Zambar, Toypok Lake, Damkol, Bosqum have been found in Central Fergana. They created more than 80 monuments. The Mesolithic spaces of Central Fergana are open spaces, where no cultural layers have been preserved. The Mesolithic tribes who lived in these places were engaged in farming, fishing and hunting. The Central Ferghana Mesolithic period is studied in 2 stages [9:25-28].

One of the last finds of the archaeologists group is the Sarigorgon-1 settlement of the Late Paleolithic period on the right bank of the Sokh River, Uchkoprik District, Fergana Province. It's done. According to the technique of making the monumental stone objects, it was found that they are similar to the materials of the Todakhotin-1-2 area in the Tashkent oasis. At the same time, the group identified a settlement of the early stages of the Late Paleolithic around the Egrikolotasay spring of the Chodak River, Pop District, Namangan Region, in the northern part of the Fergana Valley. It is noteworthy that these stone objects are similar to the materials of the Kolbuluq area of the Tashkent oasis and the Obirakhmat cave, and that the owners of the last Paleolithic culture of the Tashkent oasis migrated to the Fergana valley through the Kamchik pass 50 thousand years ago. and it was concluded that the people of this period first occupied the mountainous regions, and later the river basins and lowlands.

During interdisciplinary research in 2018-2019, the Russian-Kyrgyz international expedition conducted a thorough study of the recently discovered archaeological monument in the Fergana Valley, Surungur. The preliminary results of this study are presented here. The monument is more akin to the Hisar culture, according to the researchers' findings based on geophysical studies that were conducted prior to direct archaeological work on the site [14:319-337]. The study of Central Fergana's Stone Age settlements and its results are cited in O'.I. Abdullayev's 2019 doctoral dissertation, "The System of Primitive Communities and the History of Early Statehood in Central Asia." The author claims that farming and animal husbandry in Central Fergana date back to the Neolithic era. [1:74]. A study by O'.I. Abdullayev on a few Neolithic stone tools. According to O'.I. Abdullayev's analysis,

the Ferghana Valley's transition from wine production to farming began in the eighth millennium, with some Neolithic stone tools discovered in Central Ferghana being interpreted as sickle steps.

Conclusion

This study elucidates the complex landscape of Mesolithic settlements in the Ferghana Valley, highlighting a substantial grouping of archaeological sites characterized by distinct cultural phases: the Early and Late Mesolithic. Key findings indicate that the Obishir culture, identified by G.F. Korobkova, showcases significant interactions with neighboring regions, particularly evident in the technological parallels with Upper Paleolithic materials from Samarkand and Afghanistan. The ongoing archaeological efforts, particularly in the context of the recent discoveries at sites like Sarigorgon-1, reinforce the notion that these Mesolithic communities engaged in diverse subsistence strategies, including fishing and seasonal migrations. However, the research also reveals a gap in the understanding of the transitional dynamics between Mesolithic and Neolithic cultures in the region, as evidence of a direct agricultural evolution remains elusive. The implications of these findings are twofold: they underscore the necessity of continued archaeological investigation to map the cultural relations and developments in Central Asia, and they call for a reevaluation of the periodization frameworks used in Mesolithic studies. Future research should prioritize the comprehensive excavation and publication of previously underexplored sites, as well as the integration of interdisciplinary approaches to deepen our understanding of the socio-cultural dynamics at play during these formative periods.

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