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MATERIAL CULTURE OF ANCIENT NORTHERN BACTRIA: PROBLEMS OF HISTORICAL ANALYSIS AND RECONSTRUCTION

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Abstract. This article analyzes the material culture of ancient Northern Bactria based on historical sources and archaeological finds. The study scientifically studies the ruins of cities, defensive structures, remains of dwellings, pottery, coins and other samples of material culture identified as a result of archaeological excavations in the territory of Northern Bactria. It also highlights the importance of these sources in the reconstruction of socio-economic, political and cultural processes of antiquity. The article analyzes the methodological problems encountered in the process of historical reconstruction, the lack of sources, various approaches to interpreting archaeological materials and the possibilities of modern research methods. The results of the study serve to clarify the place and role of Northern Bactria in the history of Central Asian civilizations.

Keywords: Northern Bactria, antiquity, material culture, historical reconstruction, archaeological sources, urban planning, pottery, numismatics, cultural heritage, archaeological monuments, historical processes, Central Asia, Greco-Bactrian state, Kushan period, historical analysis.

Annotatsiya. Ushbu maqolada qadimgi Shimoliy Baqtriyaning moddiy madaniyati tarixiy manbalar va arxeologik topilmalar asosida tahlil qilinadi. Tadqiqotda Shimoliy Baqtriya hududida olib borilgan arxeologik qazishmalar natijasida aniqlangan shaharlar xarobalari, mudofaa inshootlari, turar-joy qoldiqlari, kulolchilik buyumlari, tangalar va boshqa moddiy madaniyat namunalari ilmiy jihatdan o'rganiladi. Shuningdek, ushbu manbalarning antik davr ijtimoiy-iqtisodiy, siyosiy va madaniy jarayonlarini qayta tiklashdagi ahamiyati ta'kidlanadi. Maqolada tarixiy qayta tiklash jarayonida duch kelgan metodologik muammolar, manbalarning yetishmasligi, arxeologik materiallarni talqin qilishning turli yondashuvlari va zamonaviy tadqiqot usullarining imkoniyatlari tahlil qilinadi. Tadqiqot natijalari Shimoliy Baqtriyaning Markaziy Osiyo sivilizatsiyalari tarixidagi o'rni va rolini aniqlashtirishga xizmat qiladi.

Kalit so'zlar: Shimoliy Baqtriya, antik davr, moddiy madaniyat, tarixiy qayta tiklash, arxeologik manbalar, shaharsozlik, kulolchilik, numizmatika, madaniy meros, arxeologik yodgorliklar, tarixiy jarayonlar, Markaziy Osiyo, Yunon-Baqtriya davlati, Kushon davri, tarixiy tahlil.

Аннотация. В данной статье анализируется материальная культура древней Северной Бактрии на основе исторических источников и археологических находок. Научно изучаются руины городов, оборонительные сооружения, остатки жилищ, керамика, монеты и другие образцы материальной культуры, выявленные в результате археологических раскопок на территории Северной Бактрии. Также подчеркивается важность этих источников для реконструкции социально-экономических, политических и культурных процессов античности.

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В статье анализируются методологические проблемы, возникающие в процессе исторической реконструкции, нехватка источников, различные подходы к интерпретации археологических материалов и возможности современных методов исследования. Результаты исследования служат для уточнения места и роли Северной Бактрии в истории центральноазиатских цивилизаций.

Ключевые слова: Северная Бактрия, античность, материальная культура, историческая реконструкция, археологические источники, градостроительство, керамика, нумизматика, культурное наследие, археологические памятники, исторические процессы, Центральная Азия, греко-бактрийское государство, Кушанский период, исторический анализ.

Introduction. In recent years, special attention has been paid to the study, preservation and scientific research of historical and cultural heritage in the Republic of Uzbekistan. In particular, one of the urgent scientific tasks is to deeply study the history of ancient civilizations formed on the territory of our country, determine their place in the development of world civilization, and reconstruct historical processes based on modern scientific approaches. In this regard, the study of the history of Northern Bactria, which is considered the northern part of the ancient Bactria territory, is of particular importance.

Northern Bactria has long been one of the major political, economic and cultural centers of Central Asia, and important historical processes took place on its territory from the 4th century BC to the 4th century AD. This region developed under the Achaemenids, Alexander the Great, the Seleucids, the Greco-Bactrian Kingdom, the Kushan Empire, and became an important center of cultural relations between Eastern and Western civilizations. As a result, a unique material culture was formed in the region, and many archaeological monuments have emerged that today serve as valuable sources of historical science.

Samples of material culture serve as an important source in the reconstruction of historical processes. Archaeological finds provide important information about the economic activities, social structure, cultural life, religious views, and external relations of ancient societies. Especially in regions where written sources are limited or insufficiently preserved, material culture is one of the main tools for restoring historical truth. Archaeological materials from the monuments of Kampirtepa, Dalvarzintepa, Holchayon, Qoratepa, Fayoztepa, and others found in the territory of Northern Bactria are of great scientific importance in the study of the history of antiquity.

However, the process of historical reconstruction is associated with a number of scientific and methodological problems. Archaeological finds cannot always fully reflect historical events and processes. The partial preservation of individual monuments, the destruction of cultural layers, the paucity of written sources, and the various scientific concepts put forward by researchers create certain difficulties in interpreting historical reality. Therefore, a comprehensive analysis of samples of material culture, the use of the achievements of archeology, history, anthropology, numismatics, and other sciences is an important factor in increasing the scientific reliability of historical reconstruction. The purpose of this article is to analyze the material culture of ancient Northern Bactria on the basis of historical sources and archaeological finds and to highlight the main problems encountered in the process of historical reconstruction. Also, the role and significance of samples of material culture in the reconstruction of the political, economic, and cultural development of the region in ancient times is scientifically substantiated. As a result, an opportunity is created to further understand the history of Northern Bactria and clarify its place in the development of Central Asian civilization.

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Literature review. Research on the history and material culture of ancient Northern Bactria has been one of the important directions in world historiography since the end of the 19th and beginning of the 20th centuries. While the initial studies provided general information about the geographical location, political history, and archaeological monuments of the Bactrian territory, later archaeological expeditions provided an opportunity to conduct a more in-depth analysis of the material culture of the region.

One of the scientists who made a great contribution to the study of the history of Bactria in world historiography is B.A. Litvinsky[3]. His scientific works extensively cover the urban planning, trade and economic relations, and cultural development of Northern Bactria in antiquity. The researcher tried to identify the stages of political and cultural development of the region through a comparative analysis of archaeological finds with historical sources.

E.V. The research conducted by Rtveladze is aimed at revealing the historical significance of Kampirtepa, Dalvarzintepa and other large monuments in the territory of Northern Bactria. According to the scientist, these monuments are an important source in studying the formation and development of urbanization processes in Central Asia. In particular, the coins, architectural remains and handicraft products found provide valuable information about the economic development of the region[2].

The scientific work of A.A. Askarov plays an important role in studying the history of ancient civilizations in Uzbekistan. The scientist analyzed the cultural processes that developed in Bactria and adjacent regions and scientifically highlighted the interaction of local and external cultural influences. In his research, special attention is paid to the importance of samples of material culture in historical reconstruction[3].

The archaeological research of T. Shirinov is also one of the important sources in studying the history of Northern Bactria. The researcher tried to restore the lifestyle, economic activities and cultural ties of the population based on a comprehensive study of the monuments of antiquity. His scientific conclusions serve to improve the methodology of historical reconstruction[4].

In recent years, the study and preservation of historical heritage in the Republic of Uzbekistan has become one of the priority areas of state policy. In particular, the decrees and resolutions of the President of the Republic of Uzbekistan aimed at protecting cultural heritage sites, supporting archaeological research and developing scientific activity have created new opportunities for the development of historical science. In particular, the resolutions on improving the system of protecting cultural heritage sites in 2018 and the Development Strategy for 2022–2026 set out tasks for the preservation and scientific research of historical heritage[7,8].

Also, the research of foreign scientists F. Holt[6], R. Frye[5], N. Sims-Williams[10] and P. Leriche[9] is of significant scientific importance in studying the political history of Bactria, the culture of the Greco-Bactrian kingdom and the Kushan period. As a result of their research, new scientific views have been formed regarding the place of Bactria on international trade routes, ethnocultural processes, and the system of state administration. In general, an analysis of the existing scientific literature shows that, although significant research has been carried out on the material culture of ancient Northern Bactria, the methodology of historical reconstruction, reanalysis of archaeological data based on modern technologies, and the relationship between material culture and social processes still remain one of the most pressing scientific problems.

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Methodology. This study used a complex scientific approach to analyze the material culture of ancient Northern Bactria from a historical perspective and to shed light on the issues of historical reconstruction based on available archaeological sources. The research methodology was based on the theoretical and practical achievements of the disciplines of history, archeology, source studies, numismatics, and cultural studies.

The main source base of the study was formed by samples of material culture identified as a result of archaeological excavations conducted at the sites of Kampirtepa, Dalvarzintepa, Holchayon, Fayoztepa, Qoratepa, and other ancient monuments located in the territory of Northern Bactria. These finds include the remains of architectural structures, defensive walls, ceramic objects, metal weapons, tools, coins, decorative items, and artifacts related to religious ceremonies, which served as an important scientific source in studying the socio-economic and cultural life of the region.

The principles of historicity and objectivity were used as the main methodological criteria in the research process. Based on the principle of historicity, the formation and development of the material culture of Northern Bactria was analyzed within the framework of certain historical periods. In this regard, the stages of development of the region related to the Achaemenid period, the Greco-Macedonian conquest, the Greco-Bactrian kingdom, the Kushan state, and subsequent political processes were consistently studied. The principle of objectivity allowed for a comparative analysis of various scientific views and concepts, abandoning a one-sided interpretation of existing archaeological and written sources.

The article widely used the comparative-historical method. With the help of this method, the similarities and differences of the samples of material culture identified in Northern Bactria with the monuments of other historical and cultural regions of Central Asia, including Sogd, Khorezm, Margiana, and Parthia, were identified. This allowed for a deeper understanding of interregional cultural ties, trade relations, and ethnocultural processes.

Also, based on the method of source studies, the works of ancient authors, historical written sources, and modern scientific research were analyzed. In particular, the information provided by ancient Greek and Roman historians was compared with archaeological finds and the level of reliability of historical events was assessed. This approach served to ensure the scientific validity of the historical reconstruction process.

Coins found in the territory of Northern Bactria were studied using the method of numismatic analysis. The images, inscriptions, names of rulers and periods of minting on the coins were identified, and conclusions were drawn on their basis about the political history of the region, economic relations and international trade relations. Numismatic materials also served as an important source in determining the chronological boundaries of antiquity.

The method of systematic analysis was also used during the study. With the help of this method, various components of material culture - architecture, crafts, trade, religious beliefs and elements of everyday life - were studied in an interconnected manner. As a result, it became possible to create a holistic historical picture of the society of Northern Bactria.

In addition, the results obtained on the basis of scientific generalization and interpretation methods were analyzed, and scientific conclusions were formed regarding the main problems encountered in the process of historical reconstruction and their solutions. As a result of the use of modern historical-archaeological approaches and the principles of interdisciplinary integration in the

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study, the scientific reliability and analytical scope of information on the material culture of ancient Northern Bactria were further expanded.

Results and Discussion. During the study, the analysis of archaeological and historical sources on the material culture of ancient Northern Bactria showed that this region was one of the most developed historical and cultural centers of Central Asia. Based on the studied monuments and finds, it was determined that a high level of economic, political and cultural development was observed in Northern Bactria from the 4th century BC to the 4th century AD.

The results of archaeological research confirm that monuments such as Kampirtepa, Dalvarzintepa, Holchayon, Fayoztepa and Qoratepa were not only centers of local importance, but also played an important role in international trade and cultural relations. In particular, the defensive walls, port structures and various farm buildings found in Kampirtepa indicate the strategic position of this region on the trade routes through the Amu Darya. This indicates that Northern Bactria actively participated as an intermediary region in economic relations between the East and the West.

Sculptures, decorative items, and architectural elements found at the Dalvarzintepa and Holchayon sites indicate the existence of developed arts and crafts traditions in the region. Analysis of the findings revealed that local cultural traditions developed in harmony with Greek, Indian, and Iranian cultures. This once again confirms that Northern Bactria was a region where various civilizations intersected in antiquity.

The study of numismatic materials yielded important results in reconstructing the political and economic history of the region. Among the coins found, it was found that there were specimens belonging to Greco-Bactrian kings, Kushan rulers, and representatives of local government, and it was concluded that a centralized state administration system and developed monetary circulation were formed in the region. The images and inscriptions on the coins provided important information about the political position, religious views, and international relations of the rulers.

The results of the study also showed that urbanization processes were highly developed in Northern Bactria. The construction of cities according to a clear plan, the presence of defense systems, the identification of craft workshops and religious complexes indicate the formation of a complex social structure in the region. This indicates that the ancient Northern Bactria occupied an important historical place as one of the first urban cultures in Central Asia.

During the discussion, it was revealed that there are a number of methodological problems in the issues of historical reconstruction. Firstly, the incomplete preservation of some archaeological monuments limits the possibility of a complete restoration of historical processes. Secondly, due to the small number of written sources and the fact that most of them were created by external authors, some contradictions arise in the interpretation of historical events. Thirdly, there are different scientific views among researchers in the periodization of samples of material culture and determining their functional functions.

At the same time, the use of modern archaeological technologies, geoinformation systems, 3D modeling, radiocarbon analysis and digital reconstruction methods is increasing the accuracy of historical reconstruction. These methods allow us to gain a clearer picture of the architectural appearance, population distribution, and economic systems of ancient cities.

The analyses show that the material culture of Northern Bactria is an important source not only for studying regional history, but also for understanding the development of Central Asian

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civilizations as a whole. Historical reconstructions based on examples of material culture allow us to scientifically shed light on the features of the political, economic, and cultural development of the region.

Conclusions and recommendations. The study of the material culture of Northern Bactria in antiquity shows that this region was one of the most highly developed political, economic and cultural centers in the history of Central Asia. Based on the archaeological monuments, architectural structures, ceramic objects, coins, religious complexes and other samples of material culture analyzed during the study, it was determined that a developed urban culture existed in Northern Bactria. The favorable geographical location of the region, its proximity to important branches of the Great Silk Road and its contacts with various peoples and civilizations had a significant impact on its economic and cultural development.

The results of the study show that Northern Bactria was not only a major trade center in antiquity, but also one of the regions where crafts, architecture and art were developed. Samples of material culture found in monuments such as Kampirtepa, Dalvarzintepa, Holchayon, Fayoztepa and Qoratepa provide important information about the lifestyle, economic activities, religious views and international relations of the population of the region. In particular, numismatic and archaeological materials confirm the high level of political stability and economic activity during the Greco-Bactrian and Kushan periods.

At the same time, it was revealed that there were some problems in the process of historical reconstruction. In particular, the incomplete preservation of many monuments, the limited number of written sources, and different scientific views on the interpretation of some archaeological finds complicate the complete restoration of historical reality. However, the use of modern archaeological technologies and interdisciplinary research methods makes it possible to eliminate these problems and increase the accuracy of historical reconstruction.

Based on the results of the study, it became clear that it is necessary to further expand scientific research on the material culture of Northern Bactria, organize new archaeological excavations, and re-analyze existing finds based on modern technologies. Also, strengthening cooperation between the disciplines of archaeology, history, anthropology, numismatics, and cultural studies will serve to increase the scientific reliability of the results of historical reconstruction. The protection of historical and cultural heritage sites, their digitization and wide involvement in scientific circulation are among the urgent tasks of today.

In conclusion, the ancient material culture of Northern Bactria is an important source in the study of the history of Central Asian civilizations, and its in-depth and comprehensive study will allow solving many scientific problems related to the ancient history of the region and more accurately reconstructing historical processes. Continuing research in this area is of great importance not only for national historiography, but also for the development of world science.

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