

SIGNS OF URBAN CULTURE OF THE BONZA PERIOD

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Article history:	Abstract:
Received: 10th April, 2026 Accepted: 8th May 2026	This indicates that religious and ideological changes occurred in ancient Bactria, particularly in Southern Uzbekistan, in the middle of the Bronze Age. The reflection of this spiritual and religious ideology in material culture is evident in archaeological finds and changes in the burial process at the monument. In the structural parts of the Avesta, it can be seen that the family, property, and ideological management system developed in Northern Bactria. Initially, eight patriarchal communities were formed, and Ancient Bactria developed into a Kavian state. Among the monuments studied in Northern Bactria, the Sopolli Tepa settlement was discovered and investigated in the Ulanbulaqsoy region of the Sherabad steppe in Uzbekistan's Surkhandarya region. The main goal of the research is to learn the historical knowledge left to us through the analysis of scientific literature and written source data of the metal symbol through finds. The burial processes of the Bronze Age Sopolli culture were proven with philosophical, religious views, Avesta ideas. Scientific views on the connection of Avesta ideas with the material culture of the Bronze Age were analyzed. Author's conclusions were developed about the spiritual vision, philosophical, and religious views of the population of Northern Bactria. The growth of the population demographics and the territorial expansion of monuments, the emergence of cities as their political, cultural, ideological, and economic centers simultaneously with the First States, the process of concentration of small monuments around the cities, the improvement of labor tools, artificial irrigation systems, water structures, granaries, as well as the increase in crop types, confirming the development of agriculture, were reflected in the presence of handicraft products indicating a high level of development of crafts and the observation of the process of centralization in production.
Keywords: Avesta, Sopolli tepa, Bactria, monument, technological methods	

INTRODUCTION

This settlement was initially registered in 1968. A. Askarov carried out archaeological research at the site in 1969–1974. The scientist later introduced the Sopolli and Ancient Bactrian cultures to the scientific community. [1] The Sopolli Tepe settlement was built on a block-based architecture in the corridor-simon trap style. It was a proto-city, a developing village, surrounded by three rows of defensive walls. [2] Its total area is estimated at four hectares. The outer perimeter of the site was incorporated into cotton fields and was developed. Its central citadel is well preserved. The square part measuring 82 X 82 meters has been preserved. The defensive walls of the settlement are 2 meters thick and made of raw brick with straw added. According to the structure of the defensive walls, they were built in the style of a full-fledged trap, with large corridor-like blocks. (Figure 1) The outer blocks were built in the inner part, adjacent to the residential areas through a corridor. The inner wall blocks served as a defensive trap, trapping the enemy. From the outside, these walls look like a gate leading into the castle. In fact, there was only one gate leading to the interior of the castle. This gate was located in the southern part of the castle. Similar gates built around the castle were trap gates. This indicated that it was built on a very complex architectural plan. The inner and outer blocks of Sopollitepa were used for residential purposes and pottery workshops in later periods. It has been determined that the construction periods of the Sopollitepa settlement were in three stages. The two construction periods use the same materials. There are some changes in the third period of the upper construction period. This change has been proven to be similar to the materials of the lower layer of the Jarkuton monument. Therefore, these stages are referred to as the two lower layers of the Sopolli stage and the upper layer of the Jarkuton stage at Sopolli Tepe.

The houses of Sopolli Tepe are divided into eight quarters. It is known that the quarters were formed based on clan communities. Eight clan communities lived in the monument.

The remains of two to three or more kilns were found in each quarter. According to research, the village population ranged from 155 to 200 people. Each family in the quarter had its own house. There were streets between the houses in the quarter that connected to the central square. The houses were multi-roomed and built of mud brick. A pottery wheel was used to produce pottery at Sopollitepa. The structure of the pottery kilns was two-tiered. Potters also made colorful, unique pottery. The finds include various types of tap pots, goblets, jugs, date pots, hoppers, cauldrons, and conical bowls. These finds indicate a high level of pottery development. No patterns are found on certain pieces of pottery. Only the jugs of the jug-holder from this period have horizontal lines.

The remains of clothing found during archaeological research in the tombs of Sopollitepa indicate that silk production and weaving were highly developed in the region. The results of the examination showed that the remains of clothing were made of cotton and natural silk, proving that cotton and silk production existed in the Bronze Age. It is believed that silk did not enter Central Asia from China 2000 years ago; rather, its history in Uzbekistan dates back 3.5 thousand years. Life at the Sopollytepa monument lasted about 200-250 years. In the later period, its population moved eastward to colonize new lands. It is shown that they moved and settled in the area of the village of Akkurgan near Sherabad. The tombs studied at Sopollytepa are described in the following chapters of the work.

In the first quarter of the 2nd millennium BC, ancient peoples migrated from the Kopetdag mountain regions to southern Uzbekistan via the Murghab Valley and northern Afghanistan. The arrival of peasant communities is observed. Later, the owners of this culture laid the foundation for the Sopolli culture and played an important role in the formation of the centers of the Oxus civilization. Of course, the northern steppe pastoral peoples also influenced these processes.

METHODS

Comparative analysis

A proto-city is a village-type city that was a pillar and foundation for the formation of cities and the spread of urban culture.[1] The proto-city in the territory of ancient Bactria is Sopolli Tepe. The monument was formed in the Ulanbulak stream basin. The factors that influenced the formation of such a city in the region may have been the following. The Bronze Age is considered a period characterized by drought in Southern Turkmenistan, climate change, and migration. The important factors in the formation of the first cities are as follows. Favorable natural conditions, economic and social factors, the stratification of urban cultural representatives, the formation of a city management system, and the development of crafts are important features. The socio-economic factor of agriculture and livestock farming is of great importance. In addition to the listed processes, historical conditions shape the city and its culture.

Favorable geographical conditions and water resources greatly influenced the formation of the first urban cultures at Sopolli Tepe and Jarkuton. For example, the analysis indicates that the region's rivers, streams, and geographical conditions are important factors. In this regard, the Ulanbulak stream and Sherabad river basins are of great importance in the territory of Bactria. Experiences in the development of agriculture and pastures have always led to the growth of the urban population. The fact that the main part of the territory of Bactria consists of pastures and mountain hills indicates a more precise approach to the issue. Areas with slopes exceeding a certain percentage have long been developed, and a farming economy was formed. The establishment of 2-3 harvests per year led to increased production and sales of agricultural products on the market. The discovery of a stone plow was the basis for this. As for the composition of the population, it shifted from young married families to family unions, and from tribes to tribal unions. In the process of stratification, a family leader was formed, up to a tribal leader. The archaeological evidence from Sopolli Tepe and Jarkoton in the formation of urban culture is reflected in the following analyses of that process.

Archaeological analysis

Initially, it is necessary to identify key signs based on a comparative analysis of city formation and the spread of their cultures.[2]

- surrounded by a defensive wall typical of the city,
 - the presence of monumental buildings and residential buildings,
 - the stratification of the population - the residence of craftsmen and peasants,
 - the presence of the ruling arch, the palace parts of the city,
 - the presence of religious ideas and temple complexes,
 - signs of trade relations, the use of seals and symbols,
 - the production of handicraft products and the development of the economy,
 - the emergence of writing and its buds,
 - the presence of signs characteristic of city administration and the spread of the formed urban culture to other regions.
- Archaeological evidence indicates that the earliest forms of these signs first appeared at Sopolli Tepe. Later, Jarkoton became the first city. In ancient oriental architecture, Sopolli Tepe, a square-shaped fortress-like proto-city surrounded by three rows of defensive walls, is considered to be a proto-city. (Figure 1) The walls of Spollitepe have a labyrinthine structure built on a complex architectural plan. The construction traditions are unique, with walls and some corridors built with plaster and straw. The house was protected by external blocks depending on its location. Also, the Sopolli Tepe and Dashtli monuments used an important engineering construction method in the Bronze Age - the labyrinth-trap method. The division of houses into quarters is also an important feature. The expression of the union of families in the Avesta source is observed in eight family units at Sopolli Tepe. Analysis of cultural layers indicates that the houses

were built in three chronological stages. In terms of crafts and trade, items made by urban craftsmen are also found in other regions.[3]

RESULTS

Initially, the production of household and collective-economy crafts relied on simple technological methods. Later, at the beginning of the Bronze and Early Iron Ages, the development and specialization of crafts are noticeable.[4] Information about ceramic cooking pots is found in the Avesta. In the handicraft industry, the number of ceramic products was small in the early period, but in the later periods (Kuzali, Molali, Bostan stages), the types of ceramic products increased. Pictographic signs representing writing were also found in the city. As the culture grew, the need for writing arose. Although pictographic writing existed during the formation of urban culture, this process corresponds to the period when the first educational ideas of the Avesta were spread. Examples of writing were reflected on the surface of ceramic objects. According to the conclusions, ceramic objects with examples of writing were used in everyday life by representatives of the upper classes and merchants. Examples of writing are not found on all ceramics.

The proto-city had signs characteristic of its governance. The ideas of governance presented in the Avesta, and in accordance with it, probably the assembly square (SP. Central part - anchumana) functioned. The analysis of the finds found in graves 14, 22, and 82 showed that the leaders who gave ideas to the proto-city were. At this point, there were 8 patriarchal-equal families in Soply Tepe, but the analysis showed evidence of ideas about their living together and uniting. In addition to the term "village chieftain" found in the scientific literature, in my opinion, the concept of proto-ruler is used. (In the Avestan language, one of the leaders of the Zoroastrian spreaders). Later, in Ancient Bactria, this system of governance became the basis for the formation of religious and secular rulers, the kavis. [5] As a scientific explanation, new conclusions were drawn from the analysis of the village elder seal.

Perhaps Soply Tepe and Jarqo'ton could have been among the first centers of Zoroastrianism. In religious terms, it is evident that the proto-city's population held a specific religious belief system. Initially, the inhabitants of Soply Tepe buried the deceased in the territory of the houses where they lived. [6] Later, significant changes also occurred in burial ceremonies. Research conducted at the Bostan-VI cemetery shows the existence of cremation traditions typical of the steppe population that entered the region. Relatively few finds distinguish the graves of ordinary residents belonging to the Sopolli culture. However, as a result of the development of urban culture, the tomb of the city's cathodo (who was considered a teacher of metallurgists and jewelers) was found on the 5th hill of Jarqutan. This person may have embodied religious and secular authority. Research conducted at the Jarqutan temple and cemeteries in the Bactria region has clarified many aspects of the population's religious views. To date, more than two thousand graves belonging to the Sopolli culture have been studied. As a result of the research, it was noted that there were traditions of burying bodies in sarcophagi, pits, cenotaphs, and humus.

DISCUSSION

The Sopolli culture achieved a high level of cultural development for its time. Archaeological materials confirm that their ideas about the soul and the creator were also highly developed. According to religious beliefs, polytheism during the period under study is reflected in terracotta figurines. According to the excavations of archaeologist A. Askarov and the analysis of archaeological finds, the transition from polytheism to monotheism in the Bronze Age in Northern Bactria was reflected in changes in burial rituals.

This historical process is reflected in the stages of the pottery culture. In the Jarqoton stage of the pottery culture, more pronounced religious and ideological changes are observed, and, in part, in the Kuzli stage. This can also be seen through the emergence of rituals such as collecting and burying the body in humus. Many researchers have studied issues related to human beliefs and the soul in different periods.

The inhabitants of the Sopolli culture seem to have used thread products sparingly. The graves where these needles were found contained the remains of local sedentary people. No finds typical of a nomadic culture were found in these graves. It is known that the leading branch of the economy of the Sopolli culture was sedentary agriculture based on artificial irrigation. The high creative abilities of the inhabitants of the Sopolli Tepe monument are evident in the cultural and economic products they created.

There was a unique economic method in agriculture: a thorough system for storing food. Their traces were identified by ceramic vessels collected on the floors of separate warehouses. Grain seeds typical of agriculture were also found. The development of natural resources and agricultural land was carried out in the regions of Southern Uzbekistan in different natural relief conditions for this period. That is, pastures for livestock farming also existed on land that was either favorable or unfavorable for farming. The areas that were developed show that our creative ancient farmers chose soil fertility and (water consumption) drainage systems well.[10] The population of Sopolli Hill needed 36,580 kilograms of wheat grain. This information is considered reasonable, since the Sopolli Hill monument has been fully excavated and the material culture of the region's population has been well studied. To meet this grain requirement, 73 hectares of cultivated land were needed, yielding 5 quintals per hectare.

It is known that this need indicator increased until the water shortage began in the region. Later, the activities of some farmers and the expansion of cultivated areas moved to the ancient city of Jarqutan. It has been proven that cultivated grain crops were wheat, barley, and millet. In this regard, information about wheat cultivation, crop production, and land cultivation is found during the formation of Avestan ideas. [9]

In particular, in 1907, Dr. Duncan MacDougall conducted experiments to determine changes in body weight at the time of death. [7] The results of the study indicate that there is a difference (21 g) between the weight of the body before

and after death. However, determining the weight of the soul through material measurements is a controversial topic in scientific circles.

CONCLUSION

The first buds of urban culture began on Sopolli Hill, and later the first city of Jarquton appeared. In the creation of cultures, the factors that united the population of the region - initially economic needs, religious ideas, and ideas of human creativity - are important. These historical processes played an important role in the creation of the Oxus civilization. The urban culture of the Jarquton monument later served as the basis for the development of ancient Bactrian culture. The renowned thinker Abu Nasr Farobi provided a philosophical definition of the concept of the soul in his works.[8] According to the scientist, everything that is "related to the basis and purpose in action" as a whole constitutes the essence of the soul. Although these views are based on philosophical ideas, they can be compared with the ideas of the Avesta and Bronze Age finds. Abu Nasr Farobi connects the human soul with the body and spiritual factors. According to his interpretation, if the "basis in action" is the human body, then goal-oriented activity is inextricably linked with emotional and spiritual experiences.

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