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OBISHIR CULTURE: STUDY, INTERPRETATION AND SIGNIFICANCE

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ABSTRACT

The article describes the study of the great Mesolithic culture of the Fergana Valley - Obishir culture, its stone industry, comparative analysis with the cultures of neighboring regions, the interpretation of culture and its role in archeology.

KEYWORDS: *Obishir, Mesolithic, Central Fergana Neolithic, Tashkomir Settlement, O. Islamov, Stone Industry, Microlith.*

INTRODUCTION

Fergana Valley is considered as one of the regions of Uzbekistan with Mesolithic monuments. A large group of these monuments stands out, and the plain part is divided into open spaces and cave settlements in mountainous areas. A quarter of a century of research in the valley: in 1958 B.S. Hamburg and N.G. Gorbunovas, in 1963-1964 U.A. Zadneprovsky (Zadneprovsky, 1966. P.85; Korobkova, 1969, P.127-142), in 1965-1966 O.I. Islamov (Islamov, 1972b. P.11), in 1967-1969 and 1970, as a result of V.I. Timofeev's research, more than 40 monuments of different stages of the Mesolithic were discovered and studied here (Islamov and ect., 1972. P.56). Usually, these monuments are grouped in the banks of the Syrdarya River, around old lakes such as DamKol, Ashi-Kol, Ittak-Kal'a, Sho'rkol, Uzunkol, Taypaqkol, springs, on the upper parts of Kyziltepa sand massifs.

Among the cave-type monuments here are Obishir 1, 2, 3, 5 and Tashkomir. Among them, Obishir 1 and 5 caves were first studied extensively and systematically by the Paleolithic group of Fergana (Kasymov, 1972. P.156), and then by the Institute of History and Archeology of the Republic of Uzbekistan (Yunusaliev, 1970a. P.24). These monuments are located in the valley of the Sokh River, in the southern foothills of Katrontog and on the right bank of Obishirsoy. According to the area, the largest cave here is Obishir 5, which is 30 m wide and 20 m high and a depth of 9 m. The size of Obishir 1 cave is quite small, 12x14x12 m (Yunusaliev, 1970a. P.9). In both caves, cultural layers lie on sandy soil. But in the layers of Obishir 5 cave there is also sand clay. Obishir 1 consists of one, and Obishir 5 consists of 3 cultural layers. Remains of hearth and ashes have not been identified in these caves. Cultural horizons are full of stone and bone remains. Also, jewelry made of shell, bone and stone was found in these lands (Islamov, 1980. P.9). The stone industry of Harbeshala caves was studied by typological method (Islamov, 1977. P.35).

Studying Tashkomir Cave was implemented by M. Yunusaliev (Yunusaliev, 1970b. P.11; Islamov, 1980. P.7). Tashkomir cave is located on the left bank of the Karasuv river, on the

limestone rocks of the Uzun Ahmed ridge. It is 14.5 m long, 6.5 m wide and 6 m high. The cultural layer rests on a layer with porous clay and animal bones. 50 siliceous stone objects were excavated from here, which are similar to those found in Obishir (Korobkova, 1968. P.16).

Based on the technical and morphological research of the collected materials of the found sites, G.F. Korobkova distinguishes a separate, unique Mesolithic complex (Korobkova, 1970. P.24-25; Korobkova, 1975. P.23-24). Later, with the opening of the Obishir 1-5 and Tashkomir caves, the issue of the second cave complexes tentatively named Obishir culture was put on the agenda (Islamov, 1977. P.27). However, due to the incomplete publication of the materials, it was difficult at the time to clarify the issue of whether the other Mesolithic monuments of Obishir and Ferghana are a separate culture or two stages of the same culture. At that time, it was suggested that Fergana Mesolithic culture was the next stage of Obishir culture (Islamov, 1980. P.27).

As a result of a deep scientific analysis of the materials of all the monuments in the Fergana Valley, O.I. Islamov tries to find the right solution to this issue. The Obishir Mesolithic culture was separated by him, and all the plains and cave settlements here were united to this culture. Also O.I. Islamov considers the materials of Central Ferghana to be the last stage of Obishir culture (Islamov, 1977. P.27). But the accuracy of the ideas put forward by the researchers can be determined only after the complete technical-typology of other complexes in Obishir and Fergana is developed and compared with each other (Mirsoatova, 2018. P.54).

The industry of Fergana cave monuments is characterized by the presence of microlithoid-type plates and flintware (2%). Medium-sized plates (48.5%), microplates (42.5%) and partial blanks (more than 6%) were used as the main commodity for making weapons. In the secondary processing of stones, impermeable retouching, performed on one side and sometimes on the opposite side, is the majority. Among the stone tools, there are different types of scrapers, cutters, sturgeon-shaped blades, long segments with an oblique point, triangular asymmetric legs, choppers, choppings, polished objects, bone beads, needles, polishers, and dog-toothed shovels (Islamov, 1980. P.108).

The materials of the Tashkomir cave are very similar to those of Obishir 1-5 monuments. Therefore, there is no doubt that the Toshkomir findings belong to the Obishir culture. However, the Coal industry has archaic characteristics. For example, the irregular shapes of the plates are found here, there are no microplates, the segments are very large, twice as large as Obishir's, and the retouches are rough and large. The edges are only thick. Technically morphologically, the Tashkomir industry is similar to the materials of layer 2a of the Tutkavul monument (Tajikistan) and is chronologically contemporaneous with the monuments that are about to begin the process of geometrization in the manufacture of stone tools (7 layers of Dam-Dam Chashma 2 and 4 layers of Dam-Dam-Chashma 1). The quoted parallels showed that Tashkomir is older than Obishir 1-5 monuments (Islamov and others, 1972. P.106). As for the classification of the monuments of the Fergana lowland, the stone industry of this group is characterized by a small number of large plates and a large number of elements of the microlithic technique. The leading type in the collection is microplates (60%). Secondary processing mainly used sharpening retouching. In addition, among his weapons, various scrapers are the majority. There are also some pointed uchirindis, chatelperron and gravetti-type blades, segments and small trapezoids,

large retouched plates, pencil-shaped and prismatic cores, and marbled limestone round bowls, while no flint tools are found (Islamov, 1980. P.34).

Thus, the cave and low-plain monuments of the mountain region of the Fergana oasis are very similar to each other, and their characteristic of a single culture type is indisputable. The differences between them are not big. This difference is felt in raw materials, proportions and sizes of some types. However, these differences indicate that they are seasonally different. Monuments of Obishir 1-5, Tashkomir and Fergana plain reflect different stages of a single culture. This allows us to consider the issues of their periodization. According to O. I. Islamov, the cave settlements here represent the first stage of Obishir Mesolithic culture, and the monuments of the Fergana plain represent the last period (Islamov, 1980. P.34). According to G. F. Korobkova, the monuments here can be divided into three stages of the Mesolithic period. In the first stage, the materials of Tashkomir cave, whose industry is relatively archaic, in the second stage, Obishir 1-5 industry and some plain monuments with signs of antiquity (2 points, Madyor), Ashi-Kol, Yangi-Kadam 21, Zambar 2, etc. can be included. The monuments of the Fergana plain (points 3, 5, 16, Sarik-Suv, Bahrabad, etc.) can be included in the third stage. The first (initial) stage is characterized by the technique of flashing plates without microlithoid elements. Also, the presence of large and rough retouching, some large obliquely pointed segments, chatelperron-type blades, macropalstinas and scrapers at the tips of uchirindis, large and uneven retouched plates, and flint tools are also the main features of the first phase.

The second (middle) stage is characterized by a combination of plate and shell lightning techniques. At this stage, 30-40% of the items are microplates. At the ends of large plates, the formation of coarse scrapers is lost and they start to be processed from small ones, including an increase in the number of micro-scrapers. Asymmetric trapezoids and segments are elongated, thin and small in size. Bifacial blades, sturgeon-type blades, cutters, tapered ends and cores, choppers, choppings and scrapers are characteristic elements of the secondary industry. Nuclei close to the narrow cuneate are typical for this stage. The third (last) stage is characterized by a large number of microplates lightning (more than 60%). In secondary processing, sharpening microretouch was used more. The number of types of scrapers, including micro scrapers, will increase. In some cases, curved, large and retouched plates, chatelperron and gravet type blades are found. Pencil-shaped and cylindrical nuclei develop. Round-shaped bowls made of marble-like limestone appear.

According to G.F.Korobkova, the materials of Fergana (the last stage of the Obishir culture) can be compared with Darra Kalon (Afghanistan), where the industry is similar and the microlithic lightning technique dominates (Korobkova, 1970. P.25). Its radiocarbon date is 7525±100 years B.C. As a result of such a comparison, the last stage of Obishir culture can be dated to the VII millennium B.C. According to O.I. Islamov's research (Islamov, 1980. P.23-24), Obishir 1-5 cave complexes should be dated to the Middle Mesolithic period, in numbers that corresponds to the IX-VIII millennia B.C. In this, the author’s opinion is based on a comparison with the materials of the 2a Mesolithic layers of the Kitchen and Tutkavul dated to 7580 ±130 years B.C. (Ranov and others, 1971. P.46). In our opinion, the lower date of Obishir 1-5 monuments is too old. Tutkavul layer 2a materials have relatively ancient elements: many large elongated segments, chatelperron-type blades, nucleus-shaped scrapers, thin-tipped uchirindis, and spear weapons. Compared to Obishir, Tutkavul looks older. In terms of the period, the second stage of

the Obishir culture can be compared with Kitchen materials and corresponds to the advanced Mesolithic period (8th millennium BC) (Korobkova, 1982. P.162).

Dating the monuments of the first stages of the Mesolithic of Ferghana is one of the most difficult issues. Its material can be compared with layer 2a of Tutkavul and other synchronous monuments in the mountains of Tajikistan. Unfortunately, they do not have an absolute date. The dates obtained for the top of horizon 2 of Tutkavul (6070-6310 thousand years BC) can be used to date the materials of the early Mesolithic period of Ferghana (Markov, 1981. P.75). Because Tutkavul's second horizon lies in direct succession with layers above dated to the IX-VIII millennia BC. The materials of the coal appear crude and archaic compared to the industry of Tutkavul layer 2: they include very large segments that are wide, oblique and counter-retouched along the rim, and similar chatelperron-type blades. These circumstances place the stone industry in the early stages of the Obishir culture and, therefore, the Mesolithic period allows dating to XI (IX?) millennia BC. Thus, Obishir culture is the land of the Mesolithic period that belongs to the chronological range limited to the IX-VII millennia BC.

The question of the genesis of the Obishir culture is difficult to determine. At present, it can only be said that this culture, especially its early stages of industry, has a close similarity with the Late Paleolithic site of Samarkand and Khojaghar materials (Korobkova, 1970. P.24-25; Islamov, 1980. P.137-140).

According to faunistic remains, paleogeographical and functional evidence from Obishir 1-5 monuments, the owners of this culture were hunters and gatherers. Animals such as Siberian goat, arkahar, gazelle, boar, deer, wolf were hunted as game. The main hunting weapon was a bow and arrow, some of which were found in Obishir and other monuments of Fergana. The found stone weapons also confirm that hunting was the main branch of the economy. In the economy of the representatives of this culture, processing of leather and making of articles from it took an important place. The ideas about harvesting are supported by some scythes and some scythes used to harvest plants and wild legumes found at 2 points (Madyor) (Korobkova, 1969. P.127-142; Korobkova, 1977. P.112). In general, the representatives of the Obishir culture engaged in darbadar hunting in the highlands and deserts (Korobkova, 1982. P.163).

Quantitative indicators of labor weapons here are long-term main settlements (Obishir 5, Sarik-Suv, etc.) and short-term seasonal settlements (point 3, Ittak-Kal'a 1, etc.), as well as places for distribution of hunting products abandoned by local communities (Ashi- It can be said that there were monuments such as Lake, Madyor 11, points 2 and 16, Toypoq 3).

Obishir culture played an important role in the formation and development of the Central Fergana Neolithic, which continued the traditions of its Mesolithic ancestors (Korobkova, 1969. P.127-142; Islamov and others., 1972. P.12; Islamov, 1977. P.32).

Monuments of the Mesolithic period were also found in the middle reaches of Zarafshan. They can include the lower layers of the Sazag'on 1 site and the Sazag'on 2 monument located in the Karatepa mountain massif of the Zarafshan mountain range. The Sazagon 1 site is located on the second terrace of the most flat left hills of the Sazagonsoy valley, and it was studied during the years 1966-1977. In the first stage of research, stratigraphic studies and collection of aggregate materials were carried out in the monument, which is being destroyed due to construction works. In 1971-1972, D. N. Lev, then excavations were carried out by M.J. Dzhorakulov. It is known

that the cultural layers of the area were mixed due to agricultural activities. Two cultural horizons were identified in Sazagon 1 site, and 2300 stone objects were collected from them. Among the materials are prismatic, conical, narrow cores, plates, microplates, sharpeners, retouchers, crushing equipment, knife-like tools, scrapers, cutters, retouched flakes and plates. The materials of Sazagon 1 consist of excavation finds and aggregates. They have the same assemblage of assemblages, with the exception of a single bifacially worked plinth found in cultural horizons. The souvenir industry can be said to be made of plastic (74% of plastic and 20.1% of plates). The proportion of microplates in the collection is very large and they make up 36.3% of all plates and 22.2% of the total stone objects. In this respect, the Sazaghon 1 industry differs from the "Mountain Neolithic" and approaches the culture of Central Fergana.

For the monument industry, it can be said that not geometric stone tools, but thick scrapers, pone-shaped tools and cutting-shaped objects are characteristic. Although these weapons are not the majority among the secondary processed items (most of the weapons consist of retouched plates and uchirindis), they are factors that determine the characteristics of the industry (Djurakulov and others., 1991. P.41).

The natural and climatic conditions in the Fergana Valley were similar to those in the Zarafshan Valley or South Kyzylkum. According to O.Islamov, who conducted archaeological research in this area for many years, in addition to local tribes, Old Asian tribes, especially Samarkand region and Khojaghar tribes belonging to the Upper Paleolithic period, had a great influence on the formation of Obishir culture. But O. Islamov admits that the historical process of the emergence of Obishir culture is abstract and that it is problematic to know from which cultures it originated. Nevertheless, thanks to his researches, it became known that the Obishir culture in its further development completely occupied the entire Ferghana Valley, especially its central parts.

In our opinion, the Upper Paleolithic culture of Samarkand was the main source that influenced the emergence of Chorbakti archaeological complexes in its development, and this culture can be one of the main factors that positively influenced the emergence of the Obishir culture.

But the Obishir culture did not develop as well as the tribes in the south in its further development. So far, 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 culture communities remained almost unchanged even in the Neolithic period. The reason for this is that "Neolithic communities fell into different environmental conditions and influenced the content of the cultures they created, and this process was a factor in the emergence of independent Mesolithic cultures" (Kholmatov, 2008. P.221-225).

In conclusion, it can be said that the Mesolithic and Neolithic tribes of the Ferghana Valley were almost at the same level as the communities of the Zarafshan Valley in terms of their development. However, in the Fergana Valley, no monument similar to the Chorbakti monument was found, which connects the Upper Paleolithic period with the Mesolithic period. In our opinion, if there was such a monument, there would definitely be an intermediate culture here, which showed that the cultures of the Mesolithic period emerged out of the cultures of the Samarkand settlement.

Spaces found in different geographical regions indicate that these lands had favorable climatic conditions for human habitation. The Mesolithic tribes who lived in these regions, adapted to different climatic conditions, continued their age-old cultural development and, being the creators and creators of the next New Stone Age, prepared a solid foundation for later times.

TABLE 1 PERIODIC CULTURAL TABLE OF MONUMENTS OF THE OBISHIR CULTURE

Monuments	**Dates (millennium)**	**Culture**
Tashkomir	XI (IX?)	The first stage of Obishir culture
Obishir I-V (2 points, Madyor, Achchikkol, Yangikadam 21, Zambar 2, etc.)	IX (VIII?) – VII	Middle stage of Obishir culture
Central Ferghana Mesolithic (points 3, 5, 16, Sariksuv, Bahrabad, etc.)	VII	The last stage of Obishir culture
Joining	X-IX	Tashkent version of Obishir culture

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