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STUDY OF THE MESOLITHIC PERIOD IN CENTRAL ASIA

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ABSTRACT

This article mainly discusses the climate conditions of the Mesolithic period, living conditions of that period, and the period of Mesolithic dominance in Central Asia and archaeological monuments.

KEYWORDS

Pamir, Mesolithic, archaeologists, Ayritom, Central Fergana, Qo'shilish, nucleus, Shanidar, Central Asia, Middle East.

Introduction

The Mesolithic period of the Stone Age is considered the Middle Stone Age and encompasses the 12th-7th millennia BC in Central Asia. By the Mesolithic period, humans had encountered significantly better natural conditions. This is because by this time, the glacial period that had begun in the Early Paleolithic had come to an end. As the climate warmed, glaciers melted. Therefore, the Mesolithic period is considered the era of human dispersal across the Earth's surface. During the Mesolithic period, people began to spread both northward and into high mountainous regions such as the Pamirs.

Several debates have arisen among scholars regarding the characteristics specific to the Mesolithic period, its boundaries, and its nomenclature.

Thus, some scholars recognize the Mesolithic period as a separate stage of the Stone Age, while others recognize the Mesolithic period as the final stage of the Stone Age. However, as a result of numerous studies, the change in the shape of stone tools, the method of their manufacture, and the features of their use were scientifically studied, and this period was recognized as a new stage of the Stone Age. When determining the upper and lower boundaries of the Mesolithic period, scientists paid special attention to climatic conditions, the manufacture of tools, and the lifestyle of people.

By the Mesolithic era, large glaciers shifted northward, and the climate became similar to modern conditions. As a result, significant changes occurred in the animal and plant world of Central Asia.

In particular, in this period, large-haired animals characteristic of the Paleolithic period were replaced by small-toed, fast-running animals - gazelle, saiga antelope, deer, mountain goat, and predatory animals such as lions, tigers, and leopards. Also, the number of heat-loving wild cereals increases in

the south. In Central Asia, the Mesolithic period relatively covers the 12th-6th millennia BC. One of the greatest achievements of the Mesolithic period is the discovery of the bow and arrow. It would not be an exaggeration to say that the invention of the bow and arrow is one of the greatest achievements of the Mesolithic period. As a result, people gained the opportunity to hunt swift animals and birds.

In addition, the discovery and study of small stone tools - microliths - from Mesolithic sites is noteworthy. Among such weapons, the tips of spears and rainbow arrows are quite widespread. One of the greatest achievements of the Mesolithic period was the beginning of the domestication of wild animals such as dogs, sheep, and goats.

During the 9th-7th millennia BC, the transition from hunting to animal husbandry and from gathering to agriculture to a productive form of economy began in the Near East. This process did not begin at the same time in history, but rather occurred much earlier in some places and somewhat later in others. According to the results of archaeological research, in some places in the Near and Middle Asia, a transition began from gathering to the domestication of wild plants, and from hunting to animal husbandry. This process was directly related to the level of development of advanced, productive productive forces and the natural-geographical climate.

Monuments dating back to the Mesolithic period have been discovered and studied in various parts of Central Asia. One such monument is the Machay (Boysun) cave site in the Surkhandarya oasis. According to our scientists, the Machay settlement is located at an altitude of about 70 meters above sea level. This site contains two cultural layers with thicknesses ranging from 40 cm to 1 meter, from which numerous bone and stone tools have been excavated and studied. Bone tools consisted of awls, needles, and pins, while stone tools included knives, serrated implements, scrapers, spear points, and arrowheads.

Although the tools found at the Machay settlement have distinctive features, they resemble stone tools discovered at Mesolithic sites in Southern Kazakhstan and the Middle East. The most significant findings from the Machay settlement are anthropological remains - including human skulls, teeth, jaws, and other bodily fragments. The study of these finds has enabled researchers to determine that the Mesolithic people of southern Central Asia belonged to the Europoid race. In addition to human bones, the remains of wolves, foxes, rabbits, gazelles, and squirrels have also been discovered and studied in the Machay area. According to research by archaeologists, more than 20 animal bones were found here, most of whose remains were small, broken, and burned in fire. This indicates that the people of the Machay cave widely used fire and cooked and consumed the meat of birds and animals.

Another Mesolithic site in Central Asia is the Bozsuv 1 Mesolithic site. Primitive people of the Mesolithic period lived on the banks of the Karakamysh gorge not only in the Mousterian or Late Stone Age, but also in the Middle Stone Age - the Mesolithic. Scrapers, nuclei, compact plates, and geometric tools were found and studied at Shoykuprik, not far from the place where the ancient Bozsuv canal flows into the Karakamysh ravine. Of these discovered and studied stone tools, two were cores, three were scrapers, and four were blades, which differed from Mousterian and Late Stone Age tools in their compact and delicate craftsmanship.

Another Mesolithic settlement in southern Uzbekistan is the Ayritom site, located 18 km from Termez. In the multi-layered strata of this monument, stone drills, cores, stone flakes, and arrowheads were found. The Obishir cave site was discovered in the Fergana region of the Republic of Uzbekistan. Awls, scrapers, and knife blades have been discovered and studied at the Obishir cave site. Among the finds were also bones of wild animals, which were broken and crushed, as well as notched stones used for

fishing. Based on the study of the discovered artifacts, we can say that the people of Obishir were engaged in gathering, hunting, and fishing.

Over the past 30-35 years, our archaeologists have identified about 80 Mesolithic sites in the Central Fergana region, such as Shurkul, Achchikkul, Yangikadam, Bekabad, and Zambar. Most of these monuments were located around lakes, from which we can understand that the lakes had all the amenities for human habitation. Most of the tools and stone objects found in these monuments differed from the tools of the Paleolithic era in their fineness and compactness. In the economic life of the tribes of the Mesolithic period in the territory of Central Fergana, hunting, fishing, and gathering prevailed, and favorable natural and geographical conditions created favorable conditions for people to live in these territories.

The Central Fergana Mesolithic period of Central Asia is studied in the following stages:

1. Early Mesolithic - Ittak-Kala, Achchik-Kul, Yangi-Kadam, Taypak-Kul, which date back to the 9th-8th millennia BC.
2. Late Mesolithic - the settlements of Achchik-Kul, Yangi-Kadam, Zambar, Madiyar, Shurkul, which date back to the 7th millennium BC.

In the west of Tashkent, on the banks of the ancient Bozsuv canal, the Kushilish Mesolithic site was discovered and studied. In this settlement, flint cores, small flakes, spikes, scrapers, tools of various shapes, stone knives, and polished stone tools were found. We can see that these tools, found in the cultural space of the union, are distinguished by their compactness, refinement, as well as a variety of types of tools compared to Muste and later stone tools. The nuclei and scrapers found in the fusion are in many ways similar to the nuclei and scrapers found in Obishir I, V, Achchikkul II, III, Taypak I, and Machay in Fergana. However, as a result of research, scientists have determined that these weapons in Kushilish are quite ancient. There is also a peculiarity in the discovered and tested weapons. This difference is primarily evident in the geometric shapes of the tools found in the fusion.

In none of the aforementioned settlements are there triangular tools, and, in turn, knife-shaped flakes are not found in Kushilish. Some of the fusion materials resemble some of the tools found in Shanidar, Paligavr, Gari-Kamarban in the Near and Middle East. The finds of the junction site date back to the 11th-10th millennia BC, and the ancient tribes living here engaged in hunting and gathering. The junction is the first well-studied Mesolithic site in the present-day Tashkent oasis.

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