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SOLUTIONS

ETHNO-CULTURAL PROCESSES IN THE KHOREZM  
OASIS DURING THE BRONZE AGE

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**Abstract:** *This article analyzes the Bronze Age, the geographical location of Khorezm during that period, and the daily lives of the people inhabiting the oasis, based on materials obtained from archaeological research.*

**Key words:** *Bronze Age, Khorezm, Amu Darya, archaeological sites, cultural layers, material sources, ethnic relations, cultural life, Akchadarya, Suvorgan culture, Tazabagyab culture.*

According to archaeological research, the development of socio-economic relations in the Khorezm oasis during the 5th–4th millennia BCE differed from the processes occurring in the southern regions. In the 5th millennium BCE, the right bank of the Amu Darya, specifically the northeastern part of the Yonbosqala hills, became one of the earliest cultural and economic settlements of humanity. After the water level of the Amu Darya's Akchadarya tributary rose, natural water basins formed in the low-lying areas, and settlements were established along their shores and on the slopes of nearby hills. By the 4th millennium BCE, new settlements had spread around the water basins in the southwestern and southeastern regions.

These findings highlight the unique development of Khorezm during the Bronze Age, shaped by its geographical conditions and the adaptation of its inhabitants to the natural environment. The archaeological evidence provides valuable insights into the cultural and economic practices of the people who lived in this region during this formative period<sup>12</sup>.

At the same time, new settlements emerged along the shores of the Kaparas oasis. During these historical periods, the tribal communities were matriarchal, and their economic foundation was based on subsistence farming. Fishing and gathering primarily formed the economic backbone of these societies. By the 3rd–2nd millennia BCE, the socio-economic and ethnic relations in the Lower Akchadarya basin underwent significant changes. Specifically, the population living around the Akchadarya tributary began to adopt a lifestyle that included animal husbandry and the early stages of agricultural practices.

These developments marked a transition in the way of life for the inhabitants of the region, as they gradually shifted from a predominantly fishing and gathering economy to one that incorporated domestic animal husbandry and rudimentary farming. This shift

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<sup>12</sup> Толстов С.П. Древний Хорезм. – М.: МГУ, 1948, С.84.





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reflects the adaptability and evolving economic strategies of the ancient communities in response to changing environmental and social conditions<sup>13</sup>.

In the construction of dwellings, the traditions of the Neolithic and Eneolithic periods continued. However, ethnic changes began to occur. According to members of the Khorezm expedition, during the Bronze Age, nomadic tribes from the northeast and agricultural tribes from the south migrated into Khorezm. These groups mixed with the local population, leading to the formation of a blended economic culture, exemplified by the Tazabagyab and Suvorgan cultures. Historical records indicate that the creators of the Andronovo culture had indeed penetrated deep into the central part of Central Asia.

This period marked a significant transformation in the region, as the interaction between nomadic and agricultural communities, along with the local population, gave rise to new cultural and economic practices. The blending of these traditions laid the foundation for the diverse and dynamic societies that would continue to evolve in Khorezm and the broader <sup>Central Asian region.</sup><sup>14</sup> This ethnic process was no exception in the Khorezm oasis. In this regard, we can agree with S.P. Tolstov's view. According to our conclusion, the sharp rise in the water level of the Amu Darya created a powerful flow that cut through the sand hills, forming water basins. These basins were named "Suvorgan" by the local population. Due to the high population density around the water basins near Yonbosqala, some of the inhabitants migrated to the newly formed water sources.

This migration and adaptation to the changing environment reflect the dynamic relationship between the people of Khorezm and their natural surroundings. The formation of the Suvorgan culture and the settlement patterns around the water basins highlight the resilience and resourcefulness of the ancient Khorezmians in responding to environmental changes<sup>15</sup>.

If we consider the southward migration of the Suvorgan tribes, certain observations arise. Specifically, if the tribes from the south applied their architectural and engineering knowledge in new environments, it would be a natural progression. We know that the tribes inhabiting the southern borders had extensive experience in irrigated agriculture and clay craftsmanship, and they could have continued these practices in the new region. Unfortunately, there is no evidence that such knowledge and practices were reflected in the Lower Amu Darya basin.

This lack of evidence suggests that the transfer of technological and cultural practices from the southern tribes to the Khorezm oasis may have been limited or did not take root as expected. The reasons for this could be attributed to differences in environmental conditions, the adaptability of the local population, or other socio-economic factors that influenced the integration of these practices. This highlights the complexity of cultural

<sup>13</sup> Виноградов А.В. Неолитические памятники Хорезма // МХАЭЭ. – М.: Наука, 1962. Вып. 8. – С.145.

<sup>14</sup> Толстов С.П. Қадимги Хоразм маданиятини излаб. – Т.: Фан, 1964, Б.56.

<sup>15</sup> That author, Б.59.







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and technological exchange in ancient societies and the challenges of adapting to new environments<sup>16</sup>.

Thus, the socio-economic and ethno-cultural relations in Central Asia during the Neolithic and Eneolithic periods did not develop uniformly. By the beginning of the 2nd millennium BCE, a group of archaeological sites in ancient Khorezm (near the southern Aral Sea) emerged, known in scholarly literature as the Kamlyk monuments. These sites are linked to the late Neolithic complexes of Kaltaminor and reflect strong southern influences. The Kamlyk monuments are characterized by flat-bottomed pottery, the transition to a productive economy, and the introduction of metalworking. Some researchers believe that the Kamlyk complexes represent the initial stage of the local Suvorga culture of the Bronze Age in the southern Aral region.

A significant portion of ancient Khorezm's settlements belonged to the Tazabagyab culture, which emerged as a result of migrations from the southern Urals. These regions became a zone of interaction between the Yaghnoband and Andronovo tribes. The newcomers often intermingled with the ancient Khorezmian tribes, leading to the formation of the Tazabagyab culture, which combined elements of Yaghnoband, Andronovo, and early Suvorga components. The development of the Tazabagyab culture can be divided into three chronological stages: early (15th–14th centuries BCE), middle (14th–12th centuries BCE), and late (13th–12th or 12th–11th centuries BCE). The Tazabagyab people adapted to their environment by settling in the inner basins of the ancient Amu Darya tributaries, which provided fertile areas for agriculture and seasonal pastures for animal husbandry. Traces of irrigation canals have been identified near Tazabagyab settlements, indicating the presence of agricultural practices and irrigation systems. According to researchers, this distinguishes the Tazabagyab culture from the Eurasian steppe cultures of the Bronze Age.

In summary, the transition to metalworking accelerated socio-economic development, leading to the separation of pastoralists from agriculturalists in the steppe and foothill regions of Central Asia. This historical process marked the first major division of labor in human society and played a crucial role in the emergence and development of early urban centers.

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<sup>16</sup> Гулямов Я.Г., Исламов У., Аскарлов А. Первобытная культура и возникновение орошаемого земледелия в низовьях Зарафшана. – Т.: Фан, 1966, С. 92.

