

**THE ANCIENT STATE OF BACTRIA IN WRITTEN SOURCES.**

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Annotation. *This article provides a brief overview of the Ancient Bactrian state, including when it was founded and the territories it encompassed. It also discusses its ancient cities, socio-economic structure, and economic life. Furthermore, the article presents concise information derived from the accounts of ancient Greek scholars and the findings of modern scientific research conducted on the Ancient Bactrian state.*

Keywords. *Ancient Bactria (Bakhdi, Bakhtrish, Bactriana, Bactria, Balkh, Bahlika, Tukhara), Shahnameh, Avesta, Vara, Kuchuktepa, Jarqoton, Bandikhan, Qiziltepa, "Bakhtar".*

Introduction.

The territories located in northeastern Afghanistan and southwestern Tajikistan are referred to in various written sources by names such as Bakhdi, Bakhtrish, Bactriana, Bactria, Balkh, Bahlika, and Tukhara. In modern literature, it is commonly acknowledged as Bactria (in the Shahnameh as the land of Bakhtar, and in ancient Turkic sources as the land of heroes). Archaeological evidence suggests that by the mid-2nd millennium BCE, a process of transition towards early statehood began in the Surkhan Valley, driven by the rapid development of ancient agricultural culture. This process had its own unique characteristics and patterns of gradual development.

Methods.

Considering that urban culture forms the basis of statehood, this process began as early as the first half of the 2nd millennium BCE in the southern part of Uzbekistan, in the Bactrian region, exemplified by the proto-urban settlement of Sapallitepa.



According to A. Askarov, while Sapallitepa, with all its characteristics of ancient urban planning culture, resembles a proto-city—that is, the "vara" structure mentioned in the Avesta—the Jarqoton site was the first true city to take shape within the territory of Uzbekistan. Jarqoton does not differ structurally from ancient cities of the East.

Arrian identified Aorn and Bactra as the largest cities in Bactria¹. Although various opinions have been put forward regarding the localization of the city of Aorn, E.V. Ritveladze identifies it as Oltyntepa². Researchers believe that there is sufficient evidence to compare ancient cities like Jarqoton with the forms of nomos-states in the ancient East. However, the existence of writing in Jarqoton, a key characteristic of Mesopotamian nomos-states, remains a subject of debate. Overall, there is scholarly basis to suggest that political entities of the nomos or oasis type began to form in the territories of ancient Bactria by the last quarter of the 2nd millennium BCE.

The first half of the 1st millennium BCE witnessed numerous historical and cultural changes in the Bactrian territories. These changes were associated with the following processes:

1. The emergence and widespread distribution of iron artifacts.
2. The emergence of fortified villages and their subsequent transformation into cities.
3. A significant change in material culture.
4. The migration of Eastern Iranian tribes.

From an archaeological perspective, the period mentioned above corresponds to the Yaz I culture of the Margiana type. Researchers date the Yaz I culture to the turn of the 2nd to 1st millennium BCE – the 8th-7th centuries BCE. Numerous sites resembling this culture have been discovered and studied in the Surkhan Valley. During this period, four oases of Bactria – Ulanbulaksoy, Bustonsoy, Urgul, and Khalkajar – were developed, and archaeological research suggests that Kuchuktepa, Jarqoton, Bandikhan, and Kiziltepa served as their centers. It is possible that these

¹ Арриан. III. 29.1.

² Ртвеладзе Э.В. Александр Македонский в Бактрии и Согдиане. – С. 26 – 28.



oases were the estates of settled agriculturalists and pastoralist-warriors under their military leaders, and the centers were their residences.

Results.

In The Histories by Herodotus, the 'Father of History,' the Bactrian people are mentioned alongside major powers such as Egypt and Babylon³. The Greek historian Ctesias of Cnidus provides valuable information about Bactria. The historian recounts the numerous cities in the region, the fortified capital city of Bactra (Balkh), the Bactrian king Oxyartes, and his inexhaustible wealth. Researchers suggest that the ancient Bactrian kingdom was considerably more powerful than neighboring regions, holding a prominent position among them. Bactria's natural resources were also renowned beyond its borders, extending as far as the Near East. In particular, the lapis lazuli and spinel from Badakhshan were highly valued. Approximately 30 sites dating to the 4th century BCE have been identified in northern Bactria⁴.

In the oldest sections of the Avesta, the phrase "Bakhdi, the beautiful land with high-raised banners, as the fourth among the best lands and countries created by Ahura Mazda" is found. Some scholars believe this corresponds to the term "Bakhtar." Later ancient accounts of Bactria appear in the cuneiform inscriptions and relief carvings of the Achaemenid kings. For example, on the palace walls of Persepolis, one of the centers of the Achaemenid kings, Bactrians are depicted in relief carrying vessels and with two-humped Bactrian camels. Therefore, Bactria, as an independent satrapy, played a significant role in the economic and cultural life of the Achaemenid state. According to the research of A. Sagdullaev, various accounts of Bactria are also found in the works of ancient Greek historians such as Herodotus, Ctesias, Arrian, Strabo, Quintus Curtius Rufus, Diodorus, and Pliny. These historians provide information about the antiquity and advanced cultures of these states. In particular, Ctesias of Cnidus offers accounts of the Assyrian king Ninus Belus's campaign into Bactria, his marriage to the Bactrian woman Semiramis, and the Bactrian king Oxyartes and his wealthy treasury. Ctesias's information about Bactria's borders is

³ Геродот. История. том VII, 66.

⁴ Ўша асар. – С. 16.



also of interest. He reports that mountains block the path to the Bactrian plains from the west, allowing access only through mountain passes. Bactria stretches from the Tanais (Don) River to the Indus River, with the Tanais separating it from Europe and the Indus separating it from India.

Herodotus mentions Bactria and the Bactrians 45 times in his work *The Histories*. The term "Bactria" also appears in Aeschylus's tragedy *The Persians*, which was staged in the 5th century BCE. Another ancient historian, Strabo, describes Bactria as "the jewel of Ariana." In many cases, the information from written sources is corroborated by archaeological evidence. Archaeological findings indicate that cities had already formed in Bactria by the 7th-6th centuries BCE. Ancient cities such as Oltyndilyortepa (Aorn), Bactria (Bolo Hissar), and Kiziltepa were surrounded by strong defensive walls, which served as the foundation for the development of statehood in these regions.

E.V. Ritveladze, summarizing research pertaining to this period in Bactria, identifies the following ten oases of settlement in these territories⁵: These – Ulanbulaksoy, Sharabad, Urgul (Bandikhan), Khalkajar, Upper Surkhan, Middle Surkhan, Amu Darya, Vakhsh, Lower Kafirnihan, Boytudasht are settlements.

Discussion.

Thus, by the middle of the 1st millennium BCE, numerous socio-economic changes occurred in the southern part of present-day Uzbekistan. Each of the oases listed above likely formed a distinct territorial-political entity, possessing its own name, administrative center, and major cities. For example, the ancient fortified houses (Qizilcha) built in a square shape around ancient cities in the Surkhandarya region consisted of 3-4 neighboring houses, forming a separate rural community. Each large family community owned specific housing, livestock, and land, and was to some extent economically independent. The territorial, economic, and social consolidation of village communities, fundamentally different from primitive tribal associations, indicates the emergence of early forms of statehood.

⁵ Ртвеладзе Э.В. Александр Македонский в Бактрии и Согдиане. – С. 57.



During the 7th-6th centuries BCE, territorial divisions took shape in Bactrian society, and the processes of settlement became more intense. Ancient cities had agricultural hinterlands, fortresses appeared, and strongholds were built along important trade routes. Defense structures played a leading role in the construction of various buildings. The structure of ancient Bactrian agricultural regions varied depending on natural-geographic location and conditions. Based on the number of settlements and the total area of cultivated land, cultural-economic oases were divided into several groups. The boundaries of the oases were closely linked to the boundaries of irrigated agricultural areas and irrigation networks. Historical analysis shows that, in many cases, statehood emerges and develops within a society, based on its internal laws. The statehood of Bactria, the formation of which began no less than 3,500 years ago, and this is scientifically proven, is a prime example of this.

Conclusion.

In conclusion, initial information about the emergence of early forms of statehood in the territory of ancient Bactria can be found in the works of Herodotus, Arrian, Strabo, Ctesias, Quintus Curtius Rufus, and Diodorus. All of this information dates from the 7th century BCE to the 2nd century CE. In later years, E.V. Ritveladze also researched the works of Greco-Roman historians and summarized this information. A. Sagdullaev, in his research, also provides information about the antiquity and advanced cultures of the ancient Bactrian state.

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