

**THE RESULTS OF STUDYING NEOLITHIC PERIOD SITES IN CENTRAL ASIA  
(A Case Study of the Territory of Uzbekistan)**

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**Abstract:** This research paper analyzes the process of studying archaeological sites dating to the Neolithic period in Central Asia and examines the scholarly conclusions drawn from these studies. In exploring the urban development and cultural traditions of this era, the works of archaeologists such as S.P.Tolstov, A.P.Okladnikov, V.M.Masson, Y.Gulyamov, A.V.Vinogradov, U.Islamov, A.Askarov, A.Muhammadjonov, M.Djurakulov, E.Bijanov, R.Sulaymonov, M.Kasimov, T.Mirsoatov, V.A.Ranov, V.A.Zhukov, A.G.Amosova, A.Yusupov, G.F.Korobkova, T.G.Filimonova, V.V.Timofeev, N.U.Kholmatov, D.M.Djurakulova and others are reviewed.

**Keywords:** agriculture, animal husbandry, primitive society, sedentary lifestyle, material culture.

## **INTRODUCTION**

At present, large-scale research is being conducted on the material culture of Neolithic communities within the borders of Central Asia. Archaeologists from Samarkand State University have discovered a number of Neolithic sites in the Middle Zarafshan Valley. In Surkhandarya, the Tuda Neolithic settlement has been investigated, while in the Lower Zarafshan region the Ayokag'itma Neolithic site has been studied.

Research on Neolithic sites in Uzbekistan has been carried out through major international scientific expeditions, including joint Uzbek–Russian, Uzbek–French, Uzbek–Polish, and Uzbek–Japanese projects. These expeditions employ modern research methods, technologies, and technical equipment. As a result, valuable scientific data have been obtained on paleoenvironments, paleogeography, climatic conditions, and the interaction between humans and nature during the Neolithic period. Furthermore, these studies provide insights into the social organization, daily life, economic activities, religious beliefs, art, dwellings, origins of cultures, and inter-community relations of Neolithic societies [1].

In the study of the material culture of Neolithic communities in Uzbekistan, the Kaltaminor culture occupies a special place. Not only within Uzbekistan but also across Central Asia as a whole, the Kaltaminor cultural-historical communities play a significant role in understanding Neolithic material culture. This culture was first discovered in the late 1930s by the renowned archaeologist S.P. Tolstov and was later comprehensively studied by A.V. Vinogradov [2].

The Kaltaminor communities of the Lower Zarafshan Valley were studied by U. Islamov [3]. These studies demonstrate that Kaltaminor communities inhabited not only the Akchadarya basin of the Amu Darya delta but also adjacent regions such as the Uzboy, ancient channels of the Zarafshan River, the Ustyurt Plateau, the inner regions of the Kyzylkum Desert, southwestern Kazakhstan, the eastern Caspian region, the Aral Sea area, Balkhan, and Mangyshlak. Across this vast territory, they developed a distinctive culture collectively referred to in scholarship as

the Kaltaminor cultural-historical community. Research has also identified several local cultural variants within this broader cultural complex [4].

### **MAIN PART**

The principal sites of the Kaltaminor culture are located in the Akchadarya basin, which was thoroughly investigated by A.V. Vinogradov. Based on these studies, Kaltaminor sites were divided into three chronological groups:

1. Early stage – Jonbos-4, Tolstov site, layer 5, Kunak-19
2. Middle stage – Jonbos-32, layer 7, Tojiqazg'on, and others
3. Late stage – Jonbos-5, 11; Tojiqazg'on-2, 3, 6, 10, and others

The Jonbos-4 site, located near Jonbosqala in the Akchadarya basin, was discovered and studied in 1939 by S.P. Tolstov [5]. The site yielded valuable archaeological materials, including various stone tools, animal, bird, and fish bone remains, pottery fragments, and dwelling remains.

Due to its importance, it remains a key reference site to this day.

A dwelling structure measuring 24 × 17 meters and covering approximately 320 square meters was uncovered at the site. This oval-shaped, framework (wattle-and-daub) structure contained a large central hearth and several smaller hearths around it. It is estimated that 100–125 individuals, representing a matrilineal clan community, resided in this dwelling.

The Tolstov site, located south of Jonbosqala in the Akchadarya basin (below Jonbos-4), has been studied by A.V. Vinogradov since 1976 [6]. The cultural layer is well preserved, and more than 12,000 artifacts have been recovered, including stone tools, animal, bird, and fish remains, and pottery fragments. Particularly significant was the discovery of three dwelling structures and associated household areas, which contributed greatly to understanding the site's material culture [7].

The dwellings are similar in construction to those at Jonbos but are rectangular in shape and measure approximately 110–120 square meters. Radiocarbon analysis of materials from the site played a crucial role in determining its absolute chronology.

### **The Inner Regions of the Kyzylkum Desert**

Between 1965 and 1972, comprehensive archaeological surveys were conducted in the Lavlakan, Qaraqata, Beshbuloq, and Mingbuloq depressions, resulting in the discovery of more than one thousand prehistoric sites. Based on archaeological analysis, A.V. Vinogradov classified these sites into three chronological phases:

1. Mesolithic – Early Neolithic: Small sites yielding stone tool assemblages reflecting Mesolithic traditions
2. Early Neolithic (Neolithic I): Sites with relatively few geometric tools and an absence of Kaltaminor-type arrowheads
3. Middle (developed) and Late Neolithic (Neolithic II): Sites characterized by a high frequency of Kaltaminor-type arrowheads

The discovery of the Lavlakan-26 site, with a partially preserved cultural layer, was particularly significant. Located in the Lavlakan depression, this site was thoroughly studied by A.V. Vinogradov between 1965 and 1972. Along with archaeological materials, remains of a dwelling were identified. The structure was a framework-type house; however, due to partial destruction of the cultural layer, its exact dimensions and shape could not be fully determined.

#### The Lower Zarafshan Valley

In the Lower Zarafshan Valley, three ancient river channels (northern, central, and southern) have been identified. Most of the prehistoric sites discovered there lack preserved cultural layers.

The Ayokag'itma site, located in the eastern part of the Ayokag'itma basin—part of the ancient northern channel of the Lower Zarafshan—was investigated between 1995 and 2005 by a joint Uzbek–Polish expedition, and between 2005 and 2012 by a joint Uzbek–French archaeological expedition.

#### CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the data presented above provide strong scientific evidence that the Neolithic period constituted an independent historical stage in the development of Stone Age societies in Central Asia, during which communities created distinct and original cultures. To date, archaeological research has identified Neolithic cultural complexes such as Joyitun in southern Turkmenistan, Hisor in Tajikistan, Kaltaminor in the lower reaches of the Amu Darya and Zarafshan rivers and the Kyzylkum Desert, Central Fergana in the Fergana Valley, Sazog'on in the Middle Zarafshan Valley, and Ustyurt Neolithic communities on the Ustyurt Plateau.

Recent research demonstrates that the genesis of these Neolithic cultures is rooted in local historical traditions and that they developed in an autochthonous manner, a conclusion firmly supported by archaeological evidence.

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