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ARCHAEOLOGICAL RESEARCH ON BOTAI SETTLEMENT IN 2020

The article discusses the archaeological finds discovered during the Botai Archaeological expedition in 2020. The main goal of the Botai Archaeological expedition was to find a burial ground where the ancient inhabitants of the Botai culture could bury their dead. During 40 years of international research, no mass graves have yet been found on the Botai settlement and other settlements of the Botai Culture. And it remains a mystery where and how the ancient Botai people buried their dead. The Botai culture is known for the first evidence of the domestication of the steppe horse and the construction of multi-faceted rounded dwellings. The authors highlight the results of the Botai Archaeological expedition in 2020, the main goal of which was to search for burial grounds and burials to solve critical scientific problems.

Key words: Botai, archeology, excavations, Eneolithic, burial, burial ground.

Introduction. In June 2020, the Botai Archaeological expedition began its work on the Eneolithic settlement of Botai, which is located on the right bank of the Iman-Burluk River in the North-Kazakhstan region Aiyrtau district, in which students of the 1st year of Kostanai State Pedagogical University named after U.Sultangasin actively participated (Fig.1). The archaeological excavation area was 56 sq.m. on the high part of the right bank of the river, where the Eneolithic settlement of Botai is located. The excavation scheme implied a breakdown into squares of 4*4 meters. The excavation was carried out far away from the borders of the botai dwellings and actually on the border of the settlement itself.

The Botai culture has been opened in 1980 by participants of the North Kazakhstan Archaeological expedition led by Zaibert V.F. In 1990th years of

settlement Krasny Yar, Roshchinskoe, Vasilkovo, Botai dug out already separate Botai Archaeological expedition. As a result of decades of research, important discoveries were made. The Botai culture that existed in the 4th millennium B.C. had certain peculiarities. Thus, the Botai managed to domesticate a wild steppe horse. In the course of research of domestic and foreign paleozoologists it was possible to find out that 10% of horses kept by the Botai were used as transport [1, 24 p.]. This is confirmed by the found cheekpieces made of animal bones. The rest of domesticated horses could be used as a source of meat and koumiss. On the walls of the ceramic tableware, scientists from Great Britain found traces of koumiss, preserved by being at the bottom of the cultural layer.

Materials and methods. In the course of archaeological research, special historical and general



Fig.1. Students of the U.Sultangasin Kostanai State Pedagogical University are at Botai settlement, June 2020.

philosophical methods were used to determine the functional features of archaeological finds - retrospective, causal, analytical, modelling. During field laboratory studies, a typological method was also used to determine chronological dating.

Results and discussion. Under the guidance of Professor Zaibert V.F., archaeological excavations were conducted on the high part of the right bank of the Iman-Burluk River, where there could presumably be a burial ground with buried botais. In Kazakh archeology, an important little-known aspect of the burial of their dead by the Botais stands out from a large number of scientific problems related to the conceptual aspects of the Botai culture. During 40 years of international research, no burial sites belonging to the Botai culture have been discovered. And the discovery of collective burials or burials of the Botais would open up to modern science - the early stages of formation of worldview contexts of the Eneolithic culture, funeral rites and traditions of the first horse breeders, religious views of the Botais.

There are several hypotheses of how the inhabitants of the Botai culture buried their deceased relatives. The first hypothesis presented by the Botai Archaeological expedition archaeologists - Magzumov A., Ilderyakov N. - implied the presence of cannibalism among the inhabitants of the Botai settlements when younger relatives could eat the

old, sick generation. During the last few years of research, several fragments of limbs belonging to a human being, especially phalanges of fingers, were found in the Botai settlement. In the archeological season of 2020, a fragment of a human skeleton, the phalanx of the finger, was also discovered outside the borders of the botai dwellings (Figure 2). The bone reaches 3 centimeters in length and presumably could belong to an adult male.

The second hypothesis, presented by Professor Zaibert V.F. himself, suggests the burial of the dead botais within the borders of their own homes. This version is confirmed by the burial of 2016-2017, when near the wall of a botai dwelling was discovered the skeleton of a botai woman at the age of 46 years, and near another dwelling the skeleton of a newborn baby aged about 3-4 months. Mazhitov S.F. assumes the existence of burials that are conditionally located



Fig. 2. The phalanx

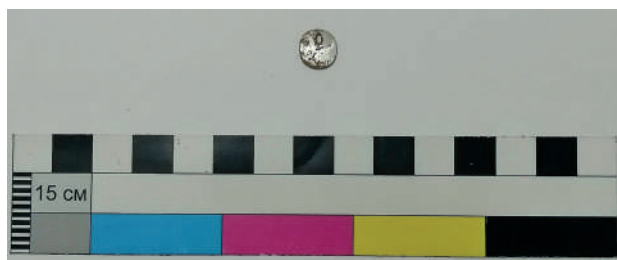


Fig. 3. Bead



Fig. 5.



Fig. 4. Ornamented fragment of a tool for spinning



Fig. 6.

under the floor of the botai dwelling, that is, the burials can be located in the mainland zone.

There are also several other versions that claim that the botais could bury their dead by dumping the dead bodies into the Iman-Burluk river, waters of which were carried away by the remains far away from where the botais lived. The version that old people could have been ostracized - expelled from their ancestral community where they could become victims of wild predators - also has a right to exist. In the history of ancient tribal associations and communities, such traditions of getting rid of old people are known to modern historical science.

The presumed location of the burial site at the settlement of Botai in 2020 did not close the question of the traditional system of burial of the botais. During the archaeological excavations, several fragments were found that could prove the existence of a burial site on the border of the settlement of Botai. A bead was found as a possible element of a certain burial rite, as the archaeological excavations were carried out outside the housing structures and as an element of a woman's attire, which was casually thrown, is not appropriate (Fig. 3). The location of the bead in

the extreme square A-I, almost at the edge of the river bank as a possible element of a certain ritual, the supposed funeral ceremony.

The second unique artifact of archeological excavations was an ornamented fragment of stone tool for spinning using a mesh diamond-shaped style (Fig. 4), which was also found at the river bank's edge. The ornamentation indicates the ritual purpose of the tool. The tool is made of sandstone, with an estimated tool diameter of 7-10 cm. Thickness of the tool is 2.9 cm.

Conclusion. During the archaeological excavations in 2020, the Botai Archaeological Expedition discovered 221 artefacts. The expedition members found many ditches, which is 62% of the total number of finds. Also were found fragments of ceramics with a comb stamp, end and circular scrapers, plates with and without retouching, fragments of arrowheads, cutting tools, in particular, blanks of axes, adzes, and core-shaped fragments (Fig. 5). There are also findings related to osteological material. Bone remains belonging to the wild fauna were found, which means that the Botais were hunting for wild animals (Fig.6).

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2020 ЖЫЛЫ БОТАЙ ЕЛДІ МЕКЕНІНДЕГІ АРХЕОЛОГИЯЛЫҚ ЗЕРТТЕУЛЕР

Мақалада Ботай археологиялық экспедициясының 2020 жылғы жұмысы барысында табылған археологиялық олжалар қарастырылады. Ботай археологиялық экспедициясының басты мақсаты-Ботай мәдениетінің ежелгі тұрғындары өз өлгендерін жерлеуі мүмкін қорымды табу болды. Халықаралық зерттеулердің 40 жылы ішінде Ботай елді мекенінде және Ботай мәдениетінің басқа елді мекендерінде



әлі де жаппай жерлеу орындары табылған жоқ. Ежелгі ботайлықтар өздерінің өлгендерін қайда және қалай жерлегені құпия болып қала береді. Ботай мәдениеті дала жылқысын қолға үйретудің және көп қырлы дөңгелек тұрғын үйлер салудың алғашқы айғақтарымен танымал. Авторлар Ботай археологиялық экспедициясының 2020 жылғы нәтижелерін жариялайды, оның басты мақсаты маңызды ғылыми міндеттерді шешу үшін қорымдар мен жерлеу орындарын іздеу болды.

Түйін сөздер: Ботай, археология, қазба жұмыстары, энеолит, жерлеу, бейіт.

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АРХЕОЛОГИЧЕСКИЕ ИССЛЕДОВАНИЯ НА ПОСЕЛЕНИИ БОТАЙ В 2020 ГОДУ

В статье рассматриваются археологические находки, обнаруженные в ходе работы Ботайской археологической экспедиции в 2020 году. Главной целью Ботайской археологической экспедиции было обнаружение могильника, где древние жители Ботайской культуры могли хоронить своих покойников. В течение 40 лет международных исследований на поселении Ботай и других поселениях Ботайской культуры еще не было обнаружено массовых захоронений – могильников. И остается загадкой где и как древние ботайцы хоронили своих умерших. Ботайская культура известна первыми свидетельствами одомашнивания степной лошади и строительством многогранных округлых жилищ. Авторы освещают результаты Ботайской археологической экспедиции 2020 года, главной целью которой был поиск могильников и погребений для решения важных научных задач.

Ключевые слова: Ботай, археология, раскопки, энеолит, погребение, могильник.