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Glyptics of Bactria in the Bronze Age

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Since half a century ago, The Bronze Age of Central Asia is being studied, and much is known on its remarkable culture - the Oxus Civilization, also known as Bactria-Margiana Archaeological Complex.¹ The Oxus Civilization developed between ca. 2300 and 1500 BCE on a huge territory covering the territory of modern Turkmenistan, Tajikistan, Afghanistan, and Uzbekistan (also called Bactria).

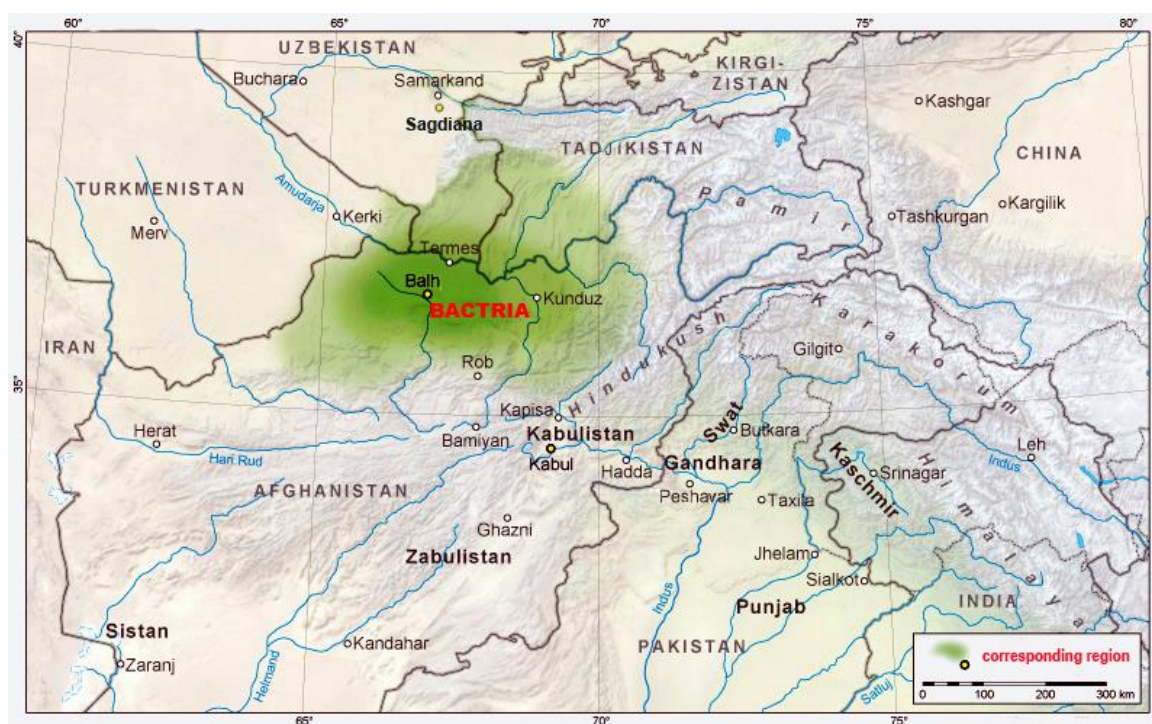


Fig.1. Map of Bactria.

Despite a long history of research, yet one of its finest craft production has been understudied: glyptics. This is all the more surprising that glyptics are a very useful source of knowledge for the history of Ancient Mesopotamia, Anatolia, Elam, Syria and India, giving us a

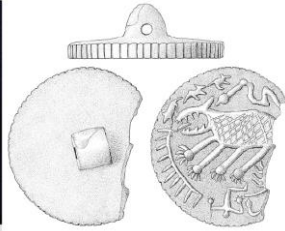
¹ Askarov A.A. 1977. *Drevnezemledel'cheskaya kul'tura epokhi bronzy Yuga Uzbekistana*, Tashkent, 209; Askarov A.A, Shirinov T.SH. 1993. *Rannaya gorodskaya kul'tura epokhi bronzy yuga Sredney Azii*, Samarkand; Lamberg-Karlovsky C. 1989. *The Bronze Age of Bactria*, in: G. Ligabue, S. Salvatori (eds) *Bactria: An Ancient Oasis Civilization from the Sands of Afghanistan*, Venice, 13-24; Tosi M. 1989. *The Origins of Early Bactrian Civilization. Bactria // An Ancient Oasis Civilizations*. – Roma-Venezia, 69-71; Sarianidi V. 1998. *Margiana and Protozoroastrism*. – Athens, 190.

glimpse into the system of public administration, as well as on the emergence and evolution of fine arts.

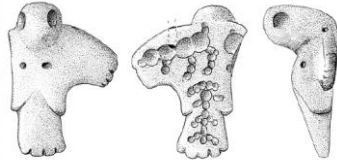
Glyptics (from the ancient Greek, “*glypho*” - cutting, hollowing), the art of carving on metals, precious and semiprecious stones, is one of the most ancient arts. Carved stones from ancient times served as seals, stamps, amulets and ornaments. They were made of soft or hard rocks of stone by hand or with the help of simple machines with rotating incisors. The oldest known works of glyptic created in Mesopotamia, Near-Eastern Asia and Egypt in the 4th millennium BC. Nearly 2,000 seals and stamps of glyptics were found in the regions of the Oxus Civilization. Most of the materials (nearly 1,700) of the glyptics belong to the Bactrian part of the Oxus Civilization (fig.1). Only 7 % of more than 1,700 seals and stamps have been found in cultural stratigraphic layers of sites during archaeological excavations (on such sites as Dashly (Afghanistan), Sapallitepa, Dzharkutan, Tillabulak (Uzbekistan)). Unfortunately, others were restored after looting. Antique connoisseurs had collected them from the Kabul bazaar in Afghanistan. The great archaeological heritage of Afghanistan has a universal importance. However, nowadays it is under a serious risk from organized destruction and plundering at the hands of criminals. The Archaeological sites of Afghanistan was looted and the great part of its artefacts, which had found its way into the art market, is being missed. Ancient sites and monuments that are ranging from the Old Stone Age to the 20th century are being attacked and systematically looted. Due to the true antique connoisseurs, archaeologists were able to compile a summary description of Ancient Bactrian seals and amulets.

Geometric patterns, figures of animals and people, genre and mythological scenes are often found on the seals, stamps and amulets of Bactria (fig.2). The scenes of reflecting ideas about cosmogony, the origin of life on earth and views on the universe, are related to important questions of the history of a particular spiritual culture that has not yet been fully studied. The relevance of the research topic is based on the analysis of the glyptic of Bactria, the mythology, religious views, and the spiritual culture of the Bronze Age of Central Asia.

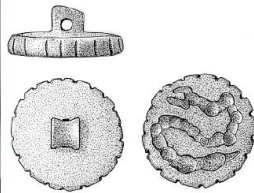
In my PhD, which I defended in 2018, I was able to clarify the usage of minerals and metals in the history of the seals and amulets, and to set up the basis for the problems of typology, classification, function, distribution and cultural interaction of the glyptic sources. Using an innovative, experimental approach, I questioned the use and function of the so-called seals and I concluded that only a small part of the corpus could really be interpreted as real seals, while most of them are in fact amulets, stamps, medallions, and symbols. It thus seems that they reflect the vision of the world and the mythological and religious beliefs of ancient peoples.



Seal. Stone. D – 7,0 cm
Site: Tillabulak / Uzbekistan
Kaniuth 2010, AMIT 42, fig. 17



Amulet. Stone. D – 3,0 cm
Site: Tillabulak / Uzbekistan
Kaniuth 2010, AMIT 42, fig. 18



Seal. Wood. D – 2,0 cm
Site: Tillabulak / Uzbekistan
Kaniuth 2010, AMIT 42, fig. 18



Seal. Gold.
Site: Unknown / Afghanistan
Ligabue, Salvatori p.202. fig.58



Seal. Silver
Site: Unknown / Afghanistan



Seal. Silver. D – 6,0 cm
Site: Unk / Afghanistan
Louvre collection.
Amiet 1986, fig.183



Seal. Copper. D - 6,8 cm
Site: Unk / Afghanistan
Anahita gallery.
Sarianidi 1986a, fig.1

Fig.2. Samples of seals and amulets of Bactria

Although the subject matter does not have a long history, it can be divided into two periods. The first one is covering the period between the 1960s and 1980s. It is characterized by the accumulation of sources on glyptics, the detection of the chronological period and increasing geographical distribution (Geoksyur. Anau, Namazga-Tepe, Altyn-Depe, Gonur-Tepe, Dashli,

Sapallitepe, Dzharkutan).² From the 1990s to the present time, the subject started to appear in international scientific spheres.³

The main controversial issue is the problem of the timeline of the Bactria-Margiana glyptics. Based on Mesopotamian textual sources, it is contemporary to the third dynasty of Ur of Mesopotamia, the Elamite culture of Western Iran and the Indus civilization of India and Pakistan.⁴ In this broad chronological sphere of almost 8 centuries, it is quite difficult to know the chronology of Bactrian glyptics.

Another main issue that is widely discussed in Central Asia and foreign literatures is the function of the Bactria-Margiana seals and the typology of glyptic images expressed in them.⁵ This problem can be confronted with the typology of seals.⁶ A correlated problem is the identification of the features and semantics of the images represented in the Bactria-Margiana glyptics.⁷

The cultural impact of the Ancient Eastern centers on the Bactrian glyptics is also questionable.⁸ Initially, P. Amiet has proposed the issue of the influence of Syrian and Hittite cultures on the Bactrian glyptics⁹. In his opinion, winged people and animals of the Bactrian glyptics originated in Asia Minor and spread to Bactria through Iran and Southern Turkmenistan. Interestingly, S. Salvatori, M. Tosi, V.I. Sarianidi had supported this proposition as well¹⁰. Some scholars connect the images of snake, dragon and scorpion in the Bactrian glyptics with the Mesopotamian Glyptic School¹¹. E. Porada concluded that the images of the Iranian (Elam)

² Masson V.M. 1981. *Altyn-Depe* // Trudy YUTAKE. T. XVIII, Leningrad, 88; Sarianidi V.I. 1998. *Myths of Ancient Bactria and Margiana on its seals and amulets*, Moscow, 327; Askarov A.A. 1977. *Drevnezemledel'cheskaya kul'tura epokhi bronzy Yuga Uzbekistana*, Tashkent, 209; Francfort H.-P. 1989. *Fouilles de Shortughai. Recherches sur l'Asie Centrale protohistorique. Mémoires de la Mission archéologique française en Asie centrale I-II*, Paris, 239.

³ Baghestani S. 1997. *Metallene Compartimentsiegel aus Ost-Iran, Zentralasien und Nord-China*, *Archäologie in Iran und Turan* 1, Leidorf, 427.

⁴ Salvatori S. 1995. *Protohistoric Margiana: on a Recent Contribution*. Review of IASCCA Information Bulletin 19, *Revista di Archeologia* 19, 38-55.

⁵ Khlopin I.N. 1978. *O tak nazivayemykh pechatyakh (Indikator sobstvennosti ili shtampa)* // *Problemy arkheologii*. Vyp.II, Leningrad, 33-38; Lamberg-Karlovsky C.C. 1975. *Third Millenium Models of Exchange and Modes of Production*, in: J. Sabloff (ed.) *Ancient Civilizations and Trade*, Albuquerque, 362; Frankfort P.-P. 1997. *Pechati Oksa: raznoobraznye formy i izmenyayemost' funktsiy* // *VDI*. № 4, Moskva, 65; Antonova Ye.V. 1984. *K probleme funktsiy pechaty rannikh zemledel'tsev Vostoka* // *SA*. № 4.

⁶ Shaydullayev A.Sh. 2018. *Sopolni madaniyati gliptikasi va sfragistikasi*, Ph.D. dissertatsiyasi. Toshkent, 162.

⁷ Amiet P. 1972. *Glyptique susienne des origines à l'époque des Perses achéménides: cachets, sceaux-cylindres et empreintes antiques découverts à Suse de 1913 à 1967*, *Mémoires de la Délégation archéologique en Iran* XLIII, Paris, 41-67.

⁸ Antonova Ye.V. 2009. *K probleme formirovaniya Baktriyskogo-Margianskogo arkheologicheskogo kompleksa* // *KSIA RAN*. № 223, 202-223

⁹ Amiet P. 1972. *Glyptique susienne des origines à l'époque des Perses achéménides: cachets, sceaux-cylindres et empreintes antiques découverts à Suse de 1913 à 1967*, *Mémoires de la Délégation archéologique en Iran* XLIII, Paris, 41-67.

¹⁰ Tosi M. 1969. *Excavations at Shahr-i Sokhta. Preliminary Report on the Second Campaign, September-December 1968, East and West 19/3-4*, 283-386; Sarianidi V.I. 1999. *Siro-Khettskoye proiskhozhdeniye Baktriysko-Margianskoy gliptiki* // *VDI*. № 1, Moskva, 53.

¹¹ Winckelmann S. 2000. *Intercultural Relations between Iran, the Murghabo-Bactrian Archaeological Complex (BMAC), Northwest India and Failaka in the Field of Seals, East and West 50-1/4*, 43-95..

glyptics were the closest to the images of the Oxus civilization.¹² Conversely, H.-P. Francfort inferred that Bactria and Margiana's cylindrical seals are the inventions of the local people.¹³

I believe that we have to question the overestimating importance of the influence from neighboring Near-Eastern centers, and try to determine if it is only an iconographic influence, or it has been based on common, shared beliefs. Indeed, local traditions are also known through other archaeological sources (in particular, mortuary practices, closely linked to beliefs, are particular in Central Asia).¹⁴

In my opinion, there is a number of scientific and methodological shortcomings in the extant research on Central Asian glyptics. Specifically, *the typology of these artifacts has not been created in relation with the archaeological data*, which is gathered during proper excavations at a chosen archaeological site, and it created an important bias in the determination of their function, which is closely linked to its semantics. The context of discovery of the seals has never been properly examined, nor well investigated the sources of mineral deposits of seals, and it created an important bias in the determination of ancient migrations and communications.

For the systematic and detailed study, an important corpus have already been at my disposal, consisting of seals and amulets, which were discovered in good context at several Bactrian sites: Sapallitepe, Dzharkutan, Tilla-Bulak¹⁵. I have also included another corpus of the artifacts which was published by V.I. Sarianidi as well as that were sold in the bazaars of Afghanistan and passed through the hands of private collectors (Sarianidi V.I. 1998. Myths of Ancient Bactria and Margiana on its seals and amulets, Moscow).

These sites are the main parts of the so-called Sapalli culture in Central Asian archaeology. The Sapalli culture is the Southern Uzbek variant of the Late Bronze Age Namazga VI complex. This culture was proposed by scientists in the following sequence: Sapalli (XXII-XX centuries BC.), Dzharkutan (XIX-XVII centuries BC.), Kuzali (XVI century BC.), Molali (XV century BC.) and Bustan (XIV century BC.) periods. It is a culture of sedentary farmers settling along the tributaries of the Surkhandarya River. This region is also referred to as Northern Bactria in the archaeological literatures (fig.3).

¹² Porada E. 1995. Man and Images in the Ancient Near East, London; Fevlioli P., Fiandra E. 1979. The administrative Functions of Cley Sealings in Prehistoric Iran. Iranica. – Napoli, 34-41.

¹³ Frankfort P.-P. 1997. Pechati Oksa: raznoobrazniye form i izmenyayemost' funktsiy // VDI. № 4, Moskva, 67.

¹⁴ Pittman H. 1984. Art of the Bronze Age. Southeastern Iran, Western Central Asia and the Indus Valley, New York, 128; Dzhoan Aruz. 1998. Obrazy sverkhchuvstvennogo mira: Baktriysko-Margianskiye pechati v ikh svyazi s Blizhnim Vostokom i dolinoy Inda // VDI. № 2, Moskva. 81-98; Amiet P. 1978. Antiquités de Bactriane, La revue du Louvre et des Musées de France XXVIII, 153-164.

¹⁵ Shaydullayev A.Sh. 2018. Sopolli madaniyati gliptikasi va sfragistikasi, Ph.D. dissertatsiyasi. Toshkent, 162.

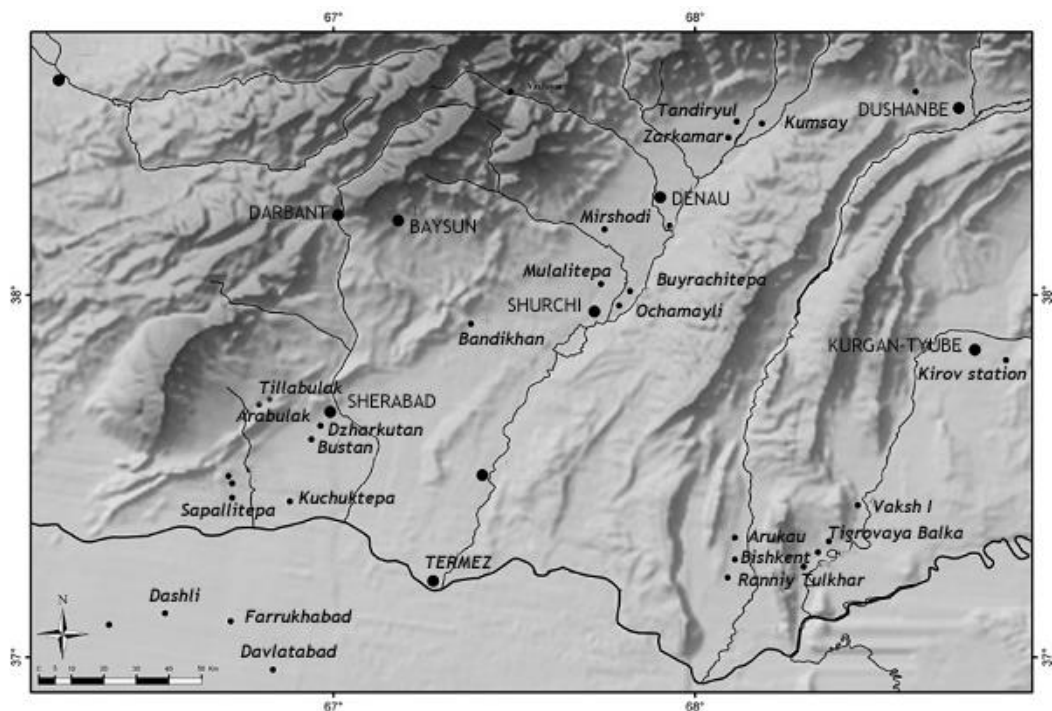


Fig.3. Map of the sites of Sapalli culture (Northern Bactria) by K. Kaniuth

It is known that presently these seven sites, which are Sapallitepa, Dzharkutan, Mollalitepa, Bustan, Tillabulak, Arabulak and Tulkitepa, have been studied since the 1970s. Besides, surface finds were made near Denau and in the Zerafshan valley. In addition, to say that Material culture of it closes on existing relations with both Western Tajikistan (Tandyrjul) and Northern Afghanistan (the oasis of Dashly).

Sapallitepa is a square building with 80m to the side (equivalent of a surface of 0,7 ha). The settlement was populated only during the initial phase of the Late Bronze Age, the 20th-19th centuries B.C . The remains of residential architecture were found from the settlement, and altogether 138 burial sites were explored there. All of 22 seals were found from Sapallitepa (among which one ceramic seal, seven made of stone and 14 of bronze). The main part of these artifacts is stratigraphically corresponding to all the construction horizons of Sapallitepa, and only eight of them were obtained from graves. Among them, seven were found in female burial sites and one in a male tomb. Twelve seals were made in the form of petals. 29 nail-shaped hairpins were revealed, five of which were included in the category of seals by A.A. Askarov. A total of 39 amulets, which were made of various types of stones, were discovered from Sapallitepa, 35 of them were found from burial grounds, 4 of them were found from cultural layers of the settlement.¹⁶

The site of Dzharkutan covers a much larger area of at least 60 ha. Here, traces of several building were found and vast necropolises with more than 1000 burial sites were excavated. In

¹⁶ Askarov A.A. 1973. Sapallitepa, Tashkent; Askarov A.A. 1977. Drevnezemledel'cheskaya kul'tura epokhi bronzy Yuga Uzbekistana, Tashkent. .

Dzharkutan, the entire Late Bronze Age sequence is represented. A total of 32 seals was discovered from Dzharkutan, which are distinguished by a variety of raw materials and are rich in images.¹⁷ Statistically, the largest finds of seals are related to the Dzharkutan period that were found on the citadel (10 pcs.) and in the temple (6 pcs.). All graves with similar artifacts belonged to female graves. Three bullas with prints of seals or stamps were also identified in Dzharkutan. One impression of a cylindrical seal, others with one-sided stamps.¹⁸

Tillabulak where were found 5 seals and 3 bullas with identical prints is chronologically corresponded to the Late Sapalli and Dzharkutan periods. Images on seals are individual and stratigraphic in all building horizons. Tillabulak seals are made of a variety of materials, such as bronze, stone and wood.¹⁹

Typology by form of glyptics of Northern Bactria.

In order to characterize the seals of the Sapalli culture and determine their functions, each form of seal was subjected to an experimental test, by pressing them on plasticine. It was determined that individual products were not a tool for impressions on clay bullas. During the experiment, some forms of glyptics left a very rough impression due to their almost flat surface. There was no clear pattern results after pressing some type of glyptics. An important argument is that the bullas with pattern of such artifacts were not found on any site of the Oxus civilization. The Bullas are known only with impressions of seals in the cylindrical shape; on top of that, the fragments of clays with impressions of seals in the cylindrical shape are revealed in Dzharkutan. The results of experimental work allow us to conclude that only a small part of archaeological artifacts was identified as seals - directly served as seals. Basically, these products had the functions of an amulet, stamp, medallions and symbols. This category of products, despite the similarity of forms and manufacturing method, were completely different from each other in terms of functionality. Consequently, seals and stamps were tools for pressing prints on clay bullas, and amulets, medallions and symbols that were intended to be worn.

1. Seals. A typology of all categories of glyptics artifact has been developed - seals, stamps, amulets, medallions and symbols. All of the artifacts of glyptics, which were found on the sites of the Sapalli culture, are presented in the study, only one is a seal (found on Tapa No. 5 of Dzharkutan).²⁰ The seal is made of white gypsum in the form of a cylinder (fig.4.1). Also from tapa number 6 (Dzharkutan)²¹ is received a bulla with an impression of a cylindrical seal

¹⁷ Askarov A.A., Abdullayev B.N. 1983. Dzharkutan, Tashkent; Askarov A.A. Drevnezemledele'cheskaya kul'tura epokhi bronzy Yuga Uzbekistana. - Tashkent, 1977.

¹⁸ Shaydullayev A.Sh. 2018. Sopolli madaniyati gliptikasi va sfragistikasi, Ph.D. dissertatsiyasi. Toshkent, 59; Meytarchiyan M.B. 1984. Amulet epokhi bronzy s poseleniya Dzharkutan // IMKU. № 19. Tashkent, 41-45.

¹⁹ Kaniuth K., Gruber M., Kurbanaliev A., Sachs F., Sajdullaev A., Makki M., Biro P. 2010. Tilla Bulak 2009 - Vorbericht zur dritten Kampagne, Archäologische Mitteilungen aus Iran und Turan 42, 129-163.

²⁰ Meytarchiyan M.B. 1984. Amulet epokhi bronzy s poseleniya Dzharkutan // IMKU. № 19. Tashkent, 41-45.

²¹ Shaydullayev SH.B. 2009. Etapy vozniknoveniya i razvitiya gosudarstvennosti na territorii Uzbekistana. Avtoref. diss. ... dok. ist. nauk. - Samarkand, IA AN RUz.

(fig.4.2). Book I. Sarianidi dedicated to seals and amulets from Afghanistan and presented 74 cylindrical seals, which are made mainly of hard stones (fig.4.3).²² This is another evidence that the cylindrical artifacts of glyptics in Late Bronze age functioned as a real seal. It was difficult to merge them from bronze or copper, because it made possible to keep in the original version of any cylindrical seals.

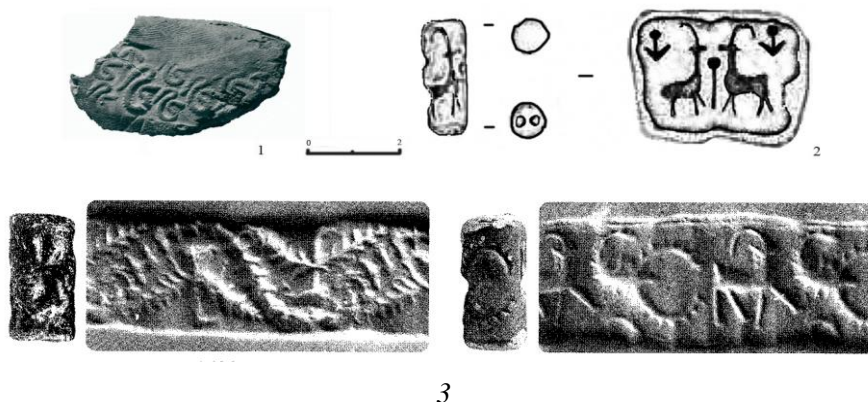
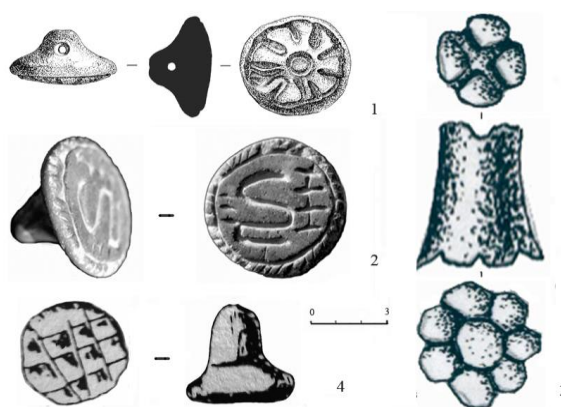


Fig.4. Samples of cylindrical seals of Bactria

2. Stamps. A stamp is a hand tool, which was made from various types of materials, capable of performing the function of marking or recording an event in the form of a convex image or transfer of dye to various materials: clay, metal, wax, sealing wax, leather, as well as dough. Using them, patterns were applied to various surfaces. Hunter-gatherers, artisans, pastoralists, farmers and traders put their stamps on their products. However, the usage of stamps in the Sapalli culture was widespread; they were made of ceramic, stone and metal. The forms of stamps of Sapalli culture are divided into four types: pyramidal, cone-shaped, square and disk-shaped (fig.4).²³ In addition, they were probably used to mark things for storage or in a trading system, because we can follow some ceramics with stamp marks (fig.5.5).



²² Sarianidi V.I. 1998. *Miths of Ancient Bactria and Margiana on its seals and amulets.* – Moscow, 260-272.

²³ Shaydullayev A.Sh. 2018. *Sopolli madaniyati gliptikasi va sfragistikasi*, Ph.D. dissertatsiyasi. Toshkent, 61-62.

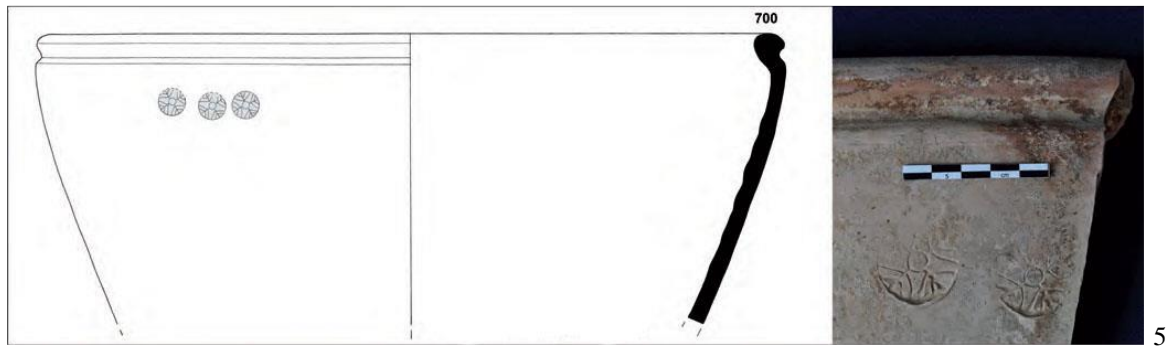


Fig.5. Samples of cone-shaped stamps of Sapalli culture

3. Amulets. An amulet, also known as a good luck charm, is an object believed to confer protection upon its possessor. The word "amulet" comes from the Latin word "amuletum", which Pliny's Natural History describes as "an object that protects a person from trouble". Apart from this some items such as gems, statues, coins, drawings, plant parts, animal parts, and written words can function as an amulet²⁴. On the sites of the Sapalli culture, a large number of amulets was revealed. They are divided in form into the following types: abstract; cruciform, stepped; rectangular, flat, with two surfaces; convex, disc-shaped, button-shaped (fig.6).²⁵ Findings from settlements and burial grounds indicated that people had used amulets as saving that can prevent misfortune and bring good luck.

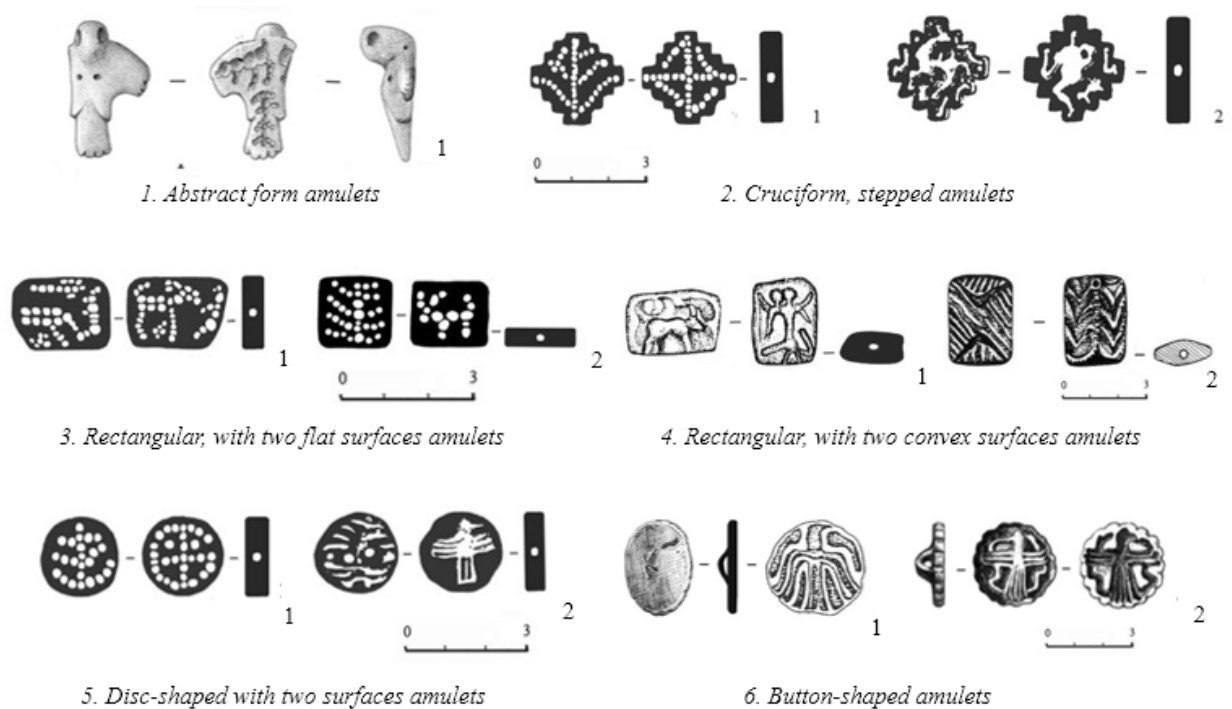


Fig.6. Samples of amulets of the Sapalli culture

4. Medallions. A medallion is a carved or engraved circular piece of metal issued as a souvenir, award, work of art or fashion accessory. Findings from settlements and burial grounds

²⁴ Gonzalez-Wippler, Migene. 1991. Complete Book Of Amulets & Talismans. Sourcebook Series. St. Paul, MN: Lewellyn Publications.

²⁵ Shaydullayev A.Sh. 2018. Sopolli madaniyati gliptikasi va sfragistikasi, Ph.D. dissertatsiyasi. Toshkent, 62-65.

are indicated that people had used medallions as amulets that could ward off misfortune and bring good luck. The petal medallions were made of bronze and differed in the number of petals, as well as the design of the decoration in its central part.

In the communities of the Sapalli culture it was accepted to wear medallions that had a cloisonné surface and made of bronze. They have very different characteristic from the sites of the BMAC (fig.7).²⁶ Such products had a rounded surface on which a geometric silhouette was created through geometric lines. The center of the medallions of this category was decorated with a cross, and the space between its faces was filled with crescent (half) moon signs. As a result, a composition with a cross and a crescent (half) moon was created.

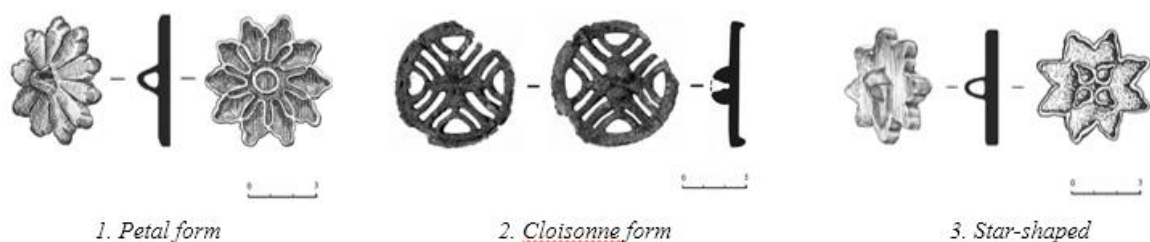


Fig.7. Samples of medallions of the Sapalli culture

Star-shaped medallions which were a local variant, are only characteristic of the Sapalli culture, not common in other territories of the Oxus Civilization. The entire category of these medallions is consisted of octagonal products and differed from each other only in the design of the central part of the stars. The medallions intended to be worn had a special opening.²⁷

5. Symbols. A symbol is a mark, sign or word that signifies, or is understood as representing an idea, object, or relationship. Symbols allow people to go beyond what is known or seen by creating linkages between otherwise very different concepts and experiences. All communication (and data processing) is achieved through the using of symbols. Symbols are taken from the form of words, sounds, gestures, ideas or visual images and are used to convey other ideas and beliefs. The excavations which were found from the graves proved that some people had worn symbols among the inhabitants of the Sapalli culture . As well as that The hairpins with various shapes of tops (disk-shaped, star-shaped, petal, square, abstract, with a certain symbolism on the surface of them) were also found from the sites of the Sapalli culture(fig.8).²⁸

²⁶ Salvatori S. 2000. Bactria and Margiana Seals, East and West 50, 97-105..

²⁷ Shaydullayev A.Sh. 2018. Sopolli madaniyati gliptikasi va sfragistikasi, Ph.D. dissertatsiyasi. Toshkent, 65-66.

²⁸ Askarov A.A. 1977. Drevnezemledelcheskaya kul'tura epokhi bronzy yuga Uzbekistana. Tashkent; Askarov A.A., Abdullayev B.N. 1983. Dzharkutan. Tashkent.



Fig.8. Samples of hairpin symbols of Sapalli culture

Typology by image of glyptics of the Sapalli culture (Northern Bactria).

Images on seals, stamps, amulets, medallions and symbols of the Sapalli culture can be divided into the following groups according to their content: 1. Geometric. 2. Plants. 3. Anthropomorphic images. 4. Images of snakes. 5. Images of dogs. 6. Images of birds.²⁹

1. Geometric (fig.10). According to the glyptics of Sapalli culture, the following conclusions can be made:

- The design of the glyptics of Margiana and Bactria, as in the Ancient East, is initially dominated by geometrical patterns (fig.9);
- During the developed glyptics period of Mesopotamia, Syria, Ancient India and Elam, geometric patterns were forgotten, anthropomorphic images are widespread. However, in the Sapalli culture, completely opposite processes can be traced, geometric patterns were improved and became more complicated;
- In the Sapalli culture, the number 8 was considered sacred and, probably, that is why most of the medallions and amulets were made in the form of an octagonal star. This is confirmed by archaeological discoveries - the defensive system of Sapallitepa had 8 labyrinths - perverse structures, and the settlement itself consisted of 8 quarters, Dzharkutan consists of 8 hills-tepa, 8 corridors were found in the temple of Dzharkutan.

²⁹ Shaydullayev A.Sh. 2018. Sopolli madaniyati gliptikasi va sfragistikasi, Ph.D. dissertatsiyasi. Toshkent, 72.

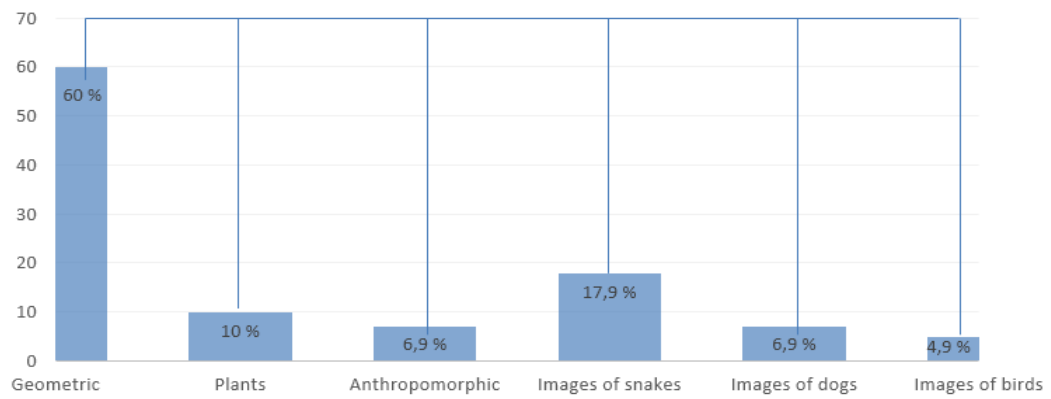


Fig.9. Main images and patterns on glyptics of the Sapalli culture

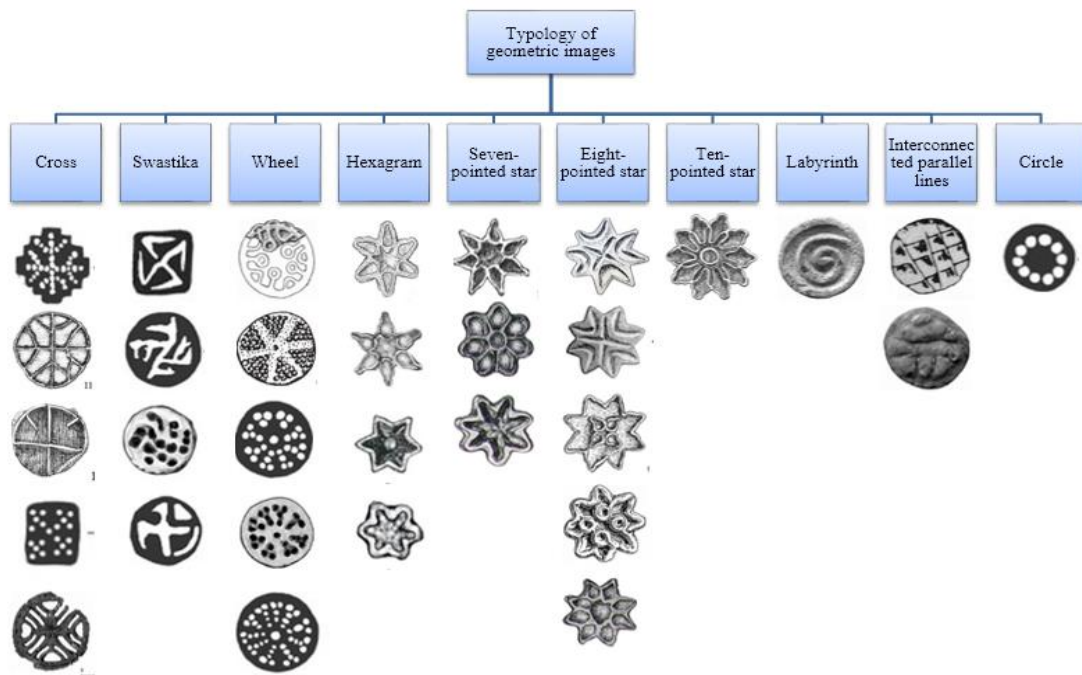


Fig.10. Samples of Geometric images and patterns on glyptics of Sapalli culture

2. Plants. The image from the plants world was common among the Ancient Bactrians. However, not all types of vegetation became a topic for glyptics. The images on the amulets are represented by ephedra, anasha and poppy reeds (fig.11), their usage allowed one to enter in a trance state.³⁰ Images of these plants with a goat indicated the sacred drink haoma. Apparently, in the communities of Dzharkutan, even before Zoroastrianism, haoma was widely used.

³⁰ Abdullayev K., 2009. Kul't khaomy v drevney Tsentral'noy Azii, MITSAI, Samarkand.

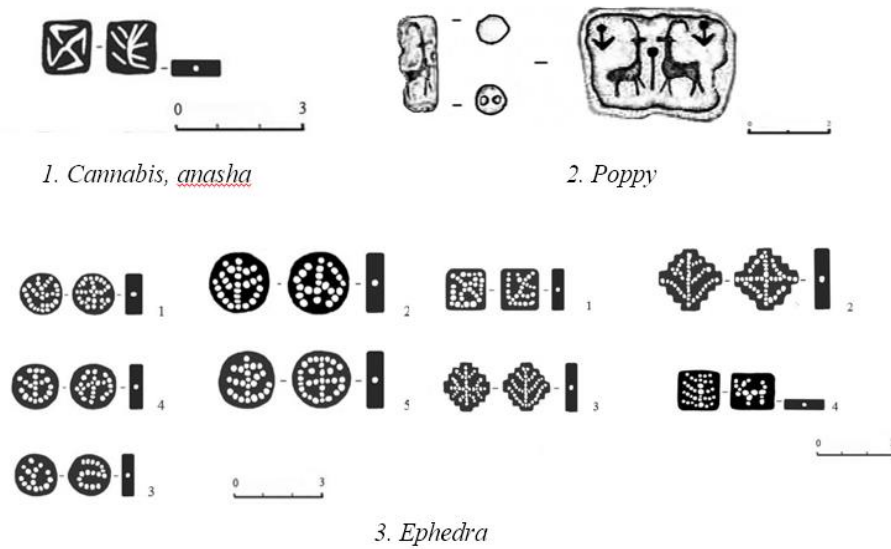


Fig.11. Samples of Plant images on glyptics of the Sapalli culture

3. Anthropomorphic images - unlike the glyptics of the Ancient East, anthropomorphic images in the Sapalli culture were not the main theme (fig.12). In the collected collection, the image of a person is conveyed generically and no more than a silhouette. The distinct transmission of the human face was not important, the reason of simplicity and naturalness are prevailed in the images.

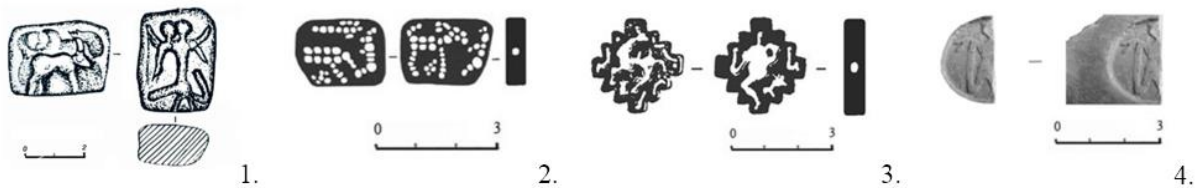


Fig.12. Samples of images of plants on glyptics of Sapalli culture

4. Images of snakes. Among glyptics, the image of a snake is widespread. It is presented in various forms and combinations, sometimes as the ruler of the world, and as a black force that brings misfortune, and sometimes along with the creatures of nature - plants. There is no doubt that in every culture there was a peculiarity and traditionalism in the transmission of the image of snakes. The image of reptiles in the glyptics of the Sapalli culture is developed in continuation of the tradition that was formed in the Neolithic and Eneolithic ages of Central Asia and has survived to this day (fig.13). A peculiarity of the Bactrian glyptic that is not found in other cultures is that snakes are depicted at the feet of animals and, as if they were climbing on their bodies.

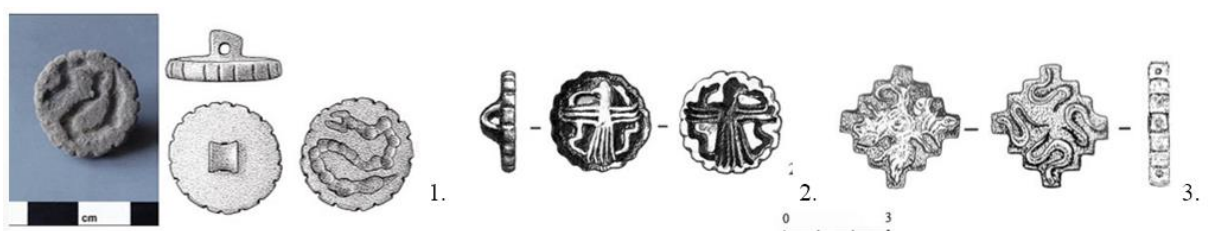


Fig.13. Samples of images of snake on glyptics of the Sapalli culture

5. Images of dogs. Dogs are very close to humans among animals. In the glyptics of the Sapalli culture, dogs were depicted separately, and represented with plants, people, snakes and virgins (fig.14). The Bactrian glyptics show that the dog was a helper of man. Dogs before Zoroastrianism had a special status in Bactrian mythology.

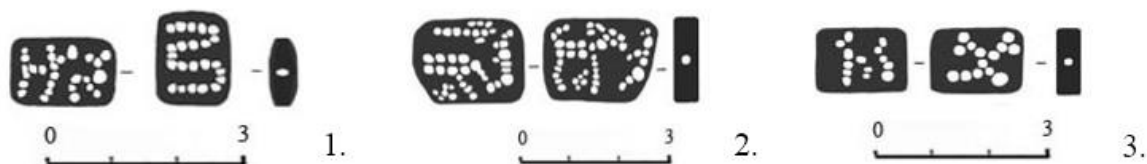


Fig.14. Samples of images of dogs on glyptics of the Sapalli culture

6. Images of birds. The images of birds in the glyptics of the Sapalli culture were one of the widespread heraldic images (fig.15). Eagles were depicted as proud birds with wings spread wide and were sacralized as “birds of the sun”.

In the mythology of Ancient Bactrians, the cosmogony worldview played a leading role, which led to the formation in the minds of people of the concept of the sun god.

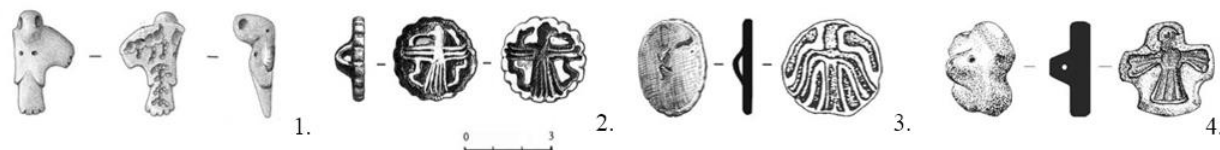


Fig.15. Samples of images of birds on glyptics of the Sapalli culture

Chronology of glyptics of the Sapalli culture (Northern Bactria).

An analysis of the scientific literature, as well as the result of new archaeological excavations, suggests that seals, stamps, amulets, medallions and symbols were used only in the early (Sapalla, Dzharkutan) stages of the Sapalli culture. In the cultural layers of the sites of subsequent (Kuzali, Mulali, Bustan) stages, the artifacts of glyptics were not found (tab.1). It seems that the glyptic materials which have the same form and style also belong to the same period, were found from other territories of Ancient Bactria.

The chronological range of this period corresponds to the time of the existence of Akkad and the dynasty of Ur III, as well as the cultures of Elam in Western Iran, Hisar III in northwestern Iran, Namazga V, VI in Turkmenistan and the Harappa civilization in Indus valley.

Chronological stages and periods of Sapalli culture

Chronological stages and periods		Period BC
<u>Sapalli</u> culture	<u>Sapalli</u> period	XXII-XX centuries BC.
	<u>Djarkutan</u> period	XIX-XVII centuries BC.
	<u>Kuzali</u> period	XVI century BC.
	<u>Mulali</u> period	XV century BC.
	<u>Bustan</u> period	XIV century BC.

Table.1. Chronology of glyptics of the Sapalli culture (Northern Bactria)

As a result of the study, the following main conclusions were made:

1. The functional tasks of archaeological artifacts are identified, referred to in the scientific literature as seals. The functions of the seals were performed only by cylindrical products, and the rests were brands, amulets, medallions and symbols.
2. Seals, stamps, amulets, medallions and symbols were used in Bactria only in the period of the Sapalli and Dzharkutan stages of the Bronze Age culture. In the later stages of the Sapalli culture, they were withdrawn from circulation.
3. Ancient Bactrian glyptics were formed on the basis of local and Ancient Eastern traditions.
4. Sites of the Sapalli culture were located in the immediate vicinity of the Hujaikon salt mine. The salt which was an important product in trade was one of the main occupations of the population of the Sapalli culture. It provided the natural salt of the Bactria region. Apart from this, in the Bronze Age, construction and architecture, craft and agricultural culture were developed intensively in Bactria.
5. The leading place in glyptics of the Sapalli culture is occupied by geometric ornaments. The mythological and religious views of the population in the Bronze Age were directly related to the heavenly bodies. Research shows that the Ancient Bactrians revered solar symbols.
6. In glyptics of the Bronze Age culture, the sacralization of number eight is observed. Most of the medallions and amulets were made in the form of an octagonal star. Unlike the glyptics of the Ancient East, anthropomorphic images in the Sapalli culture were not the main theme. In the mythology of the Bactrians, widespread snake image, dog, eagle, as well as the figure of ephedra and poppy characterize the images of glyptics. The study of glyptics allows us to determine the level of development of the spiritual culture of the Bronze Age.
7. The results of the study of glyptics allow us to conclude that the ancient agricultural population of the Sapalli culture worshiped the cults of fertility, water and fire, as well as haomas. However, the supremacy in this cult and beliefs of the Bronze Age apparently belonged

to the sun god. It is possible that the temple of Dzharkutan was erected in honor of the solar deity.

8. In the Dzharkutan society, along with the cults mentioned above, abstract mythical creatures - virgins, which later transformed into an image of evil power, were also worshiped.

9. The most common image on the seals and amulets of Bactria is the image of the sun. The symbol of the sun god : Mithras is conveyed by the shape of a cross in a circle, which is also the most common sign in the pictography of Sapalli and cultures close to it.

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