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# **Great Silk Road**

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If to speak about the history of Silk Road, the beginning of contacts and exchange links is referred to the III – I millennium BC, these links were worked out in connection with exploitation of deposits of lazurite in the mountains of Badakhshan and of deposits of nephrite in the upper stream of river Yarkent-Daria, in Khotan region. Lazurite, extracted in Badakhshan was exported to Iran, Mesopotamia, Anatolia, Egypt and Syria. This part had the name "Lazurite Road". It connected Central Asia and Middle East with Mediterranean and India. Also existed so-called "Nephrite Road" which connected East Turkestan with China. This road delivered the nephrite, so popular in the yards of Chinese Emperors, to China. 1)

In the middle of I millennium BC "The Steppe Road" began to function. By the description of Herodotus, we can follow its direction: from Black Sea region to the shores of Don River, than to the lands of Sauromates to South Ural region, to Irtysh and lake Zaisan. Furs and leather, Iranian carpets items of pressure stones were spread by this road.<sup>2)</sup>

Not long ago it was considered that invention of silk and trade of silk is referred to the I millennium BC. But the Chinese archaeologists, who excavated in the province Chzhetszyan, near the lake Taikhu, found silk fabrics, belts and yarn, referring to the epoch of neolith. The age of fabric – 2750 (+- 100) year BC. Its analysis is the evidence that almost five thousand years ago silk growing was already developed. In the VI-V cc BC the Chinese silk began to be exported to the other countries, including west. Silk horse-cloth with the embroidered phoenixes on it was found during excavations of one of "Tsar" burial mounds of Pazyryk in

Altay (V c. BC). Silk fabrics are discovered in the burials of VI-V cc. BC in the region of South and West Europe.

The nomadic tribes of precious silk, through them the remarkable goods entered Central Asia and Mediterranean. But the researchers consider that there is no reason to spend about existence of Silk Road in VI – IV cc. BC. More obviously, it was the delivery of prestige goods through the steppe zone. Delivery was carried out by the route near the 40 parallel and, starting in a big bend of Khuankhe-river, crossed east and north spurs of Altai, steppes of Kazakhstan and Black Sea region and reached the land of Greeks and ethrusks

At the same time silk reached India and only in the middle of II c. BC Silk Road began to function as regular diplomatic and trade way. In 138 year from Khan Capital the ambassadorial caravan started, which accompanied the duke Chzhan-Tszyan, who was sent by the emperor U-Di to unknown countries of West. After 13 year Chzhan Tszyan returned back. He was the first who walked on the direct route from inner regions of China to Central Asia and who could reach current Afghanistan. Following him, by this route caravans with silk went to the west, and to China – goods from Mediterranean, near and Middle East, Central Asia. 3)

#### Silk Road in the South of Kazakhstan.

The international trade was transferred to the hands of Sogdian traders very soon. Sogdians had the trade colonies in towns of East Turkestan and in the towns of China such as Lonchzhou, Dunkhuan, Chanian. The Sogdians entered Japan, where Silk Road had the end and reached the ancient Japanese capital Nara. Here, in one of the temples there is the manuscript written in Sogdian language.

In the II - V cc. Silk Road, if to follow from the East, started in Chanian (ancient capital of China) and went to the passage through Khuankhe in the region of Lanchzhou, then along the northern bend of Nan Shan to the west border of the Great Chinese Wall. Here the united road was divided into parts,

rounding the desert Takla-Makan from the north and south. The northern went through the oasises of Khami, Turfan, Beshbalyk, Shikho to the valley of Ili river, middle – from Chaochan to Karashar, Aksu and through the pass Bedel to the South shore of Issyk-Kul, South – through Dunkhuan, Khotan, Yarkerd to Bactria, India and Mediterranean – it's so called "South Way". Northern way was from Kazhgar to Fergana and then through Bukhara, Samarkand, Merv to Khamadan and Syria. 4)

In the VI – VII cc. the most lively became the way which passed from Chine to the west through Semirechie and South Kazakstan, though the previous way through Fergana was starter and more convenient. Transference of way can be explained by the following reasons. Firstly, the headquarters of Turkic Kagans were located in Semirechie and they could control the trade ways through Central Asia. Secondly, the way through Fergana became dangerous because of the intestines of local rulers. Thirdly, the rich Turkic kagans and their encirclement became the big consumers of the overseas gods. <sup>5)</sup>

So, this way became the main, the most part of embassy and trade caravans in VII – XIV cc. Passed here. This direction of Silk Road was not something frozen. During hundreds of the years the most important became one or another parts or branches, another were disappeared and towns and trade stations came to decline. So, in VI – VIII cc. The main was the route Syria – Iran – Central Asia – South Kazakstan – Talas valley, Chu valley – Issyk-Kul hollow – East Turkestan. The branch of this route, more clear, one more route, entered on the above route from Bysantine through Derbent to Precaspian steppes – Mangyshlak – Prearal region – South Kazakstan. It passed in turn of Sasanidian Iran, when to counterbalance to it, the trade diplomatic union of west Turkic Khanate and Bysantine, was concluded. But later, in IX – XII cc., than that which passed through Central Asia, Middle and Near East, Small Asia to Syria, Egypt and Bysantine.

But the political situation on the continent defined the choice of routes by diplomats, merchants and other traveling people, and in XIII – XIV cc. It became more brisk. What was the

south of Kazakstan and Semirechie on the eve of there including into the sphere of Silk Road? Here, the original culture was developed by nomadic tribes and settled people. Ethnically nomads and settled people were the homogeneous or united in the frames of state units of same type.

Interaction and interenrichment of cultures - settled and nomadic – was the main line of the world progress. In the depths of such synthesis many achievements of world civilization lay, created by people of Kazakstan and Central Asia. There are also the sources of ethnogenesis of people living on this territory. In VI - III cc. BC the nomadic and seminomadic tribes of sakae lived. the culture of which is known by excavation of numerous burials, among them Besshatyr, Issyk, Tegisken, Uigarak. Already at that time there were the links of sakaes with China, India, Near and Middle East. The Chinese mirrors, imported trig developed items from Central Asia, Iran, found in the burials of Sakae nobles are the evidences of the above. During the existence of the states of usuns and kangues in the II c. BC – first half of the I millennium AD when Silk Road began to function actively, the Rome glass and coins, Chinese silk, mirrors and varnished dish, European fibulas - fasteners and carved stones - signets from Sasanidian Iran were entered here. 6)

In the period, in the valleys of rivers Chu, Talas and Syr-Daria the trade centers were being formed, the predecessors of which were the agricultural settlements surrounded by walls, which towers. More of them are discovered now by the archaeologists in the premountainous zone of Tien-Shan, in the valleys of Arys River, in middle and low flow of Syr-Daria River. In a dry desert zone of Prearal region, in Djetyasar natural boundary these tows were especially well-remained and till now its yellow walls dried out by the sun are staying and arrow shaped loop-holes are looking at the plain, and the huge ancient necropolis are under the takyrs.

In the second half of VI c. Semirechie and South Kazakhstan were included into the Turkic khaganate, the large

nomadic empire, which covered the territory from Korea up to Black Sea.

At the end of VI c. the khaganate was divided into two parts: West-Turkic and East-Turkic. The center of the last became Semirechie, and its capital – Suyab.

Just at that time, there was the reviving of that part of Silk Road, which played the important role in development of town feudal culture of Semirechie and South Kazakhstan. In Semirechie thanks to it the whole row of town centers appeared and in the South of Kazakhstan it promoted the quick grow of that towns which were on the route of way itself, or were connected with it by trade branches.

If in the sources of the first half of the I millennium BC it were mentioned only two towns – Chigu in Semirechie – residence of usun rulers and Bytyan in South Kazakhstan – capital of kangues, than already it the beginning of VII c. Auan-Iszyan inform on a several tens of towns the largest of them were Suyab, Taraz and "town on a White river", called later as Ispidjab. In Chinese route guides of VII-VIII cc. and the Arabian route guides of VIII-XII cc., there were accounted already tens of towns located along Silk Road. Silk Road through Central Asia, South Kazakhstan and Semirechie functioned till XIV c. But the civil strife and wars, which caused the destruction of town culture here, and also, the investigation of sea routes to China, brought to its failure. The sum of the sum o

## Directions and routes of the Great Silk Road.

The Kazakhstan part of Silk Road was from the West to the East. From Shash (Tashkent) the road went through the pass on Turbat to Ispidjab, as it was already noted, and was known on the Chinese route guides as "Town on White River", and in the XI c. Makhmud Kashgarian explained that Sairam – the name of White is called "Ispidjab".

The first big town on Silk Road in Talas valley was Djiuwikat, after passing of which, the caravans reached Taraz, one

of the ancient towns of Kazakhstan, known already in the VI c. Right here, the Turkic kagan Disabul in 568 received the Diplomatic Embassy of Yustinian II from Byzantine headed by the strategist Zemarkh.

Near Taraz there was town Djamukat, established by the immigrants from Bukhara. It was mentioned already in the VI c. and was established by the Sogdians of Bukhara.

In Talas valley and its mountainous part, where were situated the silver mines, such known town were located as Sheldji, Kul and Tekabket.

In the plain part of valley there was situated town Atlakh, behind the walls of which there was a battle in 751 between Arabians and Chinese for the sphere of influence. Not far from Taraz, on the trade road, going down Talas river to the north, there were located such towns as Adakhket and Dekh-Nudjikes, and in the Mongolian time the sources note such towns as Yanchi, Yanchi – Balyk and Kendjak.

From Taraz there was the route on the desert territory to Kulan town. Territory between Taraz and Kulan belonged to karluks. It was necessary to pass Kasribas, Kul-Shub, and Djul-Shub on the way to Kulan.

Further to the east from Kulan on the distance of 4 farsakhs from each other Mirky and Aspara town were situated. The road from Djul went to Saryg, then to the "Settlement of Turkic kagan" and to Kirmirau.

From Kirmirau the road brought to one of the largest town of Semirechie Nawaket.

From Nawaket the road brought to the largest town of Semirechie Suyab. In the X c. the role of capital was transferred to the town Balasagun, known as the capital of Karakhanides.

From Suyab Silk Road went on the northern or on the south shores of Issyk-Kul. On the South part the caravans passed the big town Upper Barskhan, and the remains of small caravansarai noted the northern. Then these ways were joint near the pass Bedel, and through it the Silk Road brought to Kashgar and Aksu.

From Issyk-Kul basin through the pass Santash and valley of river Karkara, the road went to Ili valley, then along the right bank of Ili river through the valleys of river Usek and Khorgos brought to Almalyk, and then on the northern end of Takla-Makan desert, through the oasis's of Khami and Turphan went to Dunkhuan and to China.

Ili route of Silk Road in X-XI cc. – one of the branches of Silk Road crossed all Ili valleys from southwest to northeast. The branching started in Nawaket, and then went to Bundjikat and through the pass Kastek brought to the northern slopes of Zailyisky Alatau.

The route of Silk Road passed through small towns, located on the place of Kastek, Kaskelen and Almaty and reached town Talkhiz, which was situated on the northern border of current town Talgar.

In Talkhiz the Silk Road was divided into branches the south way went through Issyk, Turgen, Chilik to the pass through Ili river in the region of Borokhudzir, and then along the right bank of Ili river went through Khorgos to Almalyk, joining with the route coming here from the valley of Issyk-Kul lake. In the region of modern Kok-Tal town Ilibalyk was situated.

The northern way from Talkhiz went up to the pass of Ili River, which was situated in the region of Kapchagai canyon. After it the road went to Chingildy, then through the pass Altyn-Emel the road went down the valley Koksu and reached town Iki-Oguz. From Iki-Oguz the road went to Kayalyk – capital of Karlukian rulers djabgu. The town was famous for its bazaars and there, except Moslems, lived Christians, having their own Church. The Ambassador of French King Ludowic IX to Mongol khan Munke Wilgelm Rubruk, who visited this town, informed it.

Not far from Kayalyk, by the note of Rubruk, there was situated the "Christian settlement", through which the Silk Road passed. Then it followed to the valley of river Tentek and rounding the lake Alakul, through the Djungarian gates, brought to the valley Shikho and from there, through Beshbalyk, it went to Dunkhuan and inner China.

In the southwest end of Alakul there was town, which was called by travelers in XIII c. "the capital of region".

One of the main points in Kazakhstan part of Silk Road was town Ispidjab – Sairam. From Ispidjab the caravan road went to Arsubaniket on river Arys, to Otrar (Farab) and then down Syr-Daria river went to Prearal region.

On the caravan route, which went along Syr-Daria, the largest towns were Otrar (Farab) and Shawgar.

Near Otrar there was town Keder, which was in the X c. the main in Otrar Oasis.

From Shawgar the road went to the towns Sauran, Sygnak, Djend and Yangikent, which was the capital of Ogus State. From here the road went through desert Kyzyl-Kum to Khorezm.

From Shawgar and, later, from Yassy, through the pass Turlan, the road entered the northern slopes of Karatau and went strictly parallel to that road, which was prolonged along Syr-Daria. This way was particularly revived in the XIII – XIV cc right along it from the Northern Prearal region to Mongolia went the Armenian tsar Getum and monk Rubruk. On this way such towns were located as Suzak, Urosogan, Kumkent, Sulgulkent, Beruket and Taraz.

From the main route of Silk Road, which passed through South Kazakhstan and Semirechie, the road went to the north and northeast. They brought to the regions of Central and East Kazakstan to the country Dasht-i-Kypchak, later known as Sary-Arka, to the banks of Irtysh, to Altai and Mongolia. Not only nomads populated the steppe regions of Kazakstan. Here, in the suit ale place a for agriculture – valleys of rivers Sarysu, Kengir, Djezdy, in the foothills Ulutau, on the banks of Irtysh, in the period of middle Ages appeared and developed the oasis's of agricultural and town life. Rich deposits of copper, tin, lead, silver were exploited here since the epoch of bronze, and in the latest period appeared the villages of miners, metal founders, coppers and silver masters. The regions of Kazakstan rich in row resources were involved into the systems of trade links, including

international ones, and were included into the system of Silk Road by many caravan routes.

From Taraz through the towns Adakches and Dekh-Nudjikes, according to information of Ibn-Bakhr and Al-Idrisi, there was the trade road to kimaks on Irtysh – residence of kimak Khan and then to the country of Kyrgyz's to Enysei. Each three years the caravan with Silk was gone to Kyrgyz's.

Ili valley joined with central Kazakstan by the road, which went along the northern slopes of Chu-Ili Mountains, then along river Chu to its lower parts and to the banks of Sarysu. One more important road went out from the north – Ili route to the region of Chingildy and went to Prebalkhash Region and then along river Ortasu, Ili Channels, to the shore of Balkhash, and then along the peninsula Uzun-Aral, which almost join the south and north shores of the lake, Leaving the strait with the width a little more then 8 km. We can suppose, that caravans in the old days waded the strait or passed on ice to the mouth of Tokrau River and then along its both banks went to the foothills of Ulutau.

From the north-Ili route, which went to Djungarian gates, there was going out the branch, which rounded like Alakul from the Westside and through Tarbagatai range brought to river Irtysh, to the lands of Kimak state. The kimakian towns Banjar, Khanaush, Astur, Sisan and "capital of Khacan" were situated in Tarbagatai and on the banks of Irtysh. 8)

### Trade and Goods.

In the beginning the Silk Road served for export of Chineese silk to the countries of the West. To the East from Rome, Bysantine, India, Iran, Arabic Khaliphat, and later from Europe and Russia went the goods produced in these countries. The list of these divine exotic goods is inexhaustible. They are myrrh and incense, jasmine water and ambergris, nutmeg, ginseng and bile of python, carpets and linen, colours and mineral raw material, elephant bone, silver ingots and gold bullions, furs and coins, bows with arrows, swords and spears and many others.

The horses of Fergana, Arabian racers, camels, elephants, rhinoceroses and lions, hepards and gazelles, hawks and falcons, peacocks, parrots and ostriches were lead or carried for sale along Silk Road.

The cultural plants – grapes, peaches and melons, spices and sugar, vegetables, fruit and greens were spread along Silk Road. 9)

But the main tem of trade was silk. Silk together with gold was transferred into the international currency; they were gifted to the tsars and ambassadors, given as salaries for the hired troops and the state debts

It's naturally that silk and part of goods carried along Silk Road were subsided in towns situated on Kazakstan part. The archaeological findings are the bright evidence of it.

During excavations of the burial Mardan in Otrar Oasis, in one of the burials there were discovered seven coins "U-Shu", referring to the I-IV cc.  $AD.^{10)}$  The coinsappeared hear with the trade caravans, which went to the West, including on Syr-Daria, where the capital of Kangues state was situated.  $^{11)}$ 

Among the precious goods coming to the West were silver jugs from Semirechie, made as imitation of the Byzantine ones. The Byzantine golden of Yustinian I was found in Taraz. (12)

The findings of imported goods, found on Talgar town say that they appeared in Talkhiz as the goods from China at the end of XII – early XIII cc. they are four porcelain Chinese bowls, adorned from inside by the engrave pictures of childish figures in framing of mushroom – symbol of longevity. There was the piece of fience bowl in the treasure. The golden nimbus was above the head of people. Man, staying in the centre, was bigger than the others, there was the golden crown on his head, in the right hand kept the sword, the spearhead of which was on the level of shoulder.

On the head of white-skinned woman there was headdress, from which the long hairs fall on the shoulders. The lamellar body of dragon was wriggling between the figures. The same human figures in two rows, divided by white lamellar body of dragon on

black background were on the outward side of the bowl. The oval stamp with hieroglyphs was on the bottom of bowl. <sup>14)</sup>

To the same time fragments of three Iranian copper dishes are referred. One of them, remained well than the others has the diameter 49,5 cm. The inner surface of dish is cut for several circles. In the center of medallion there were two winged beings with bodies of lions, female face, the heads of which are crowned. Sphinxes are staying on back pads, with backs to each other; the narrow arched wings are raised up.

The bronze mirrors from China and Iran, bone items from India were found on town Talgar (town Talhir), the Chineese ceramics, Iranian luster (ceramics with pearl brightness) were found on town Antonovka.

The imported goods were found also during the excavations of Syr-Daria Medieval towns, particularly, in Otrar.

They are the nephritis number plate of Chinese production with the relief portrayal of tiger or snow leopard rolling up into a ball. The time of production of number plate – the epoch of Tan or Sun VI - X cc. <sup>15)</sup>

Among the rare by importance findings, confirming the international trade is silver treasure from Otrar. It is represented by the coins of east – Turkic towns – Almalyk, Pulada, Emel, Ordu al-Azam; from Crimea; from Siwas, Konia, Tebriz. The coins were stamped in 40-60 years XIII c. Among silver items of treasure – number plates from the composed belt with Uigur inscriptions; spiral bracelets from Central Asia and watt led ones from Volga region; belt claps from handicraft workshops of one Small Asia town. The treasure contains of the specific "visit cards" of towns, situated along Silk Road. <sup>16)</sup>

The part of bronze mirrors of the XIII – XIV cc., found during excavations of Otrar was melted here by the copies, taken from the imported mirrors and which appeared in town by Silk Road from China and Persia, for example, mirror with picture of "animals' heat" on the rear side and the Chinese with picture of animals of twelve-year calendar cycle. <sup>17)</sup>

The bronze inkpot, engraved luxuriantly, was found. On the walls of inkpot and on the removable cover on the background of vegetable ornament in medallions there were the pictures of duck and the benevolent inscriptions on the cover. The similar inkpots were made in late12 – early XIII c. in Central Asia and Khorasan.

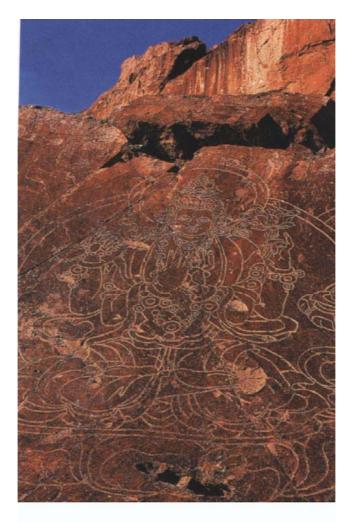
The fine glass decanter is referred to the same time. It is made of white transparent glass and painted by colorful enamels of blue, red and green colors. Ornament – geometrical. The shoulder – steeps of vessel are covered with gilding. This glass vessel appeared in Otrar from Syria – traditional center of glass making.

Not only goods but the fashion on the artistic styles entering the definite ethno-cultural environment were spread along Silk Road and got the wide diffusion there is point of view that the Timurid style in ceramics, differing by the blue range of paintings on white background, was being spread exactly along Silk Road. Appeared in the Emperor's workshops of China during Yuan dynasty (1279-1368), it was widely spread in Iran, Turkey, and Central Asia. The beautiful samples of ceramic cups, vases, painted with cobalt decorate expositions of many world museums. <sup>18)</sup>

Silk Road was the bright phenomenon of the world civilization. The excellent monuments of culture, monuments of ordinary life and art. Subjects of cult belonged to different religious were discovered in oasis's and towns.

There is the reason to underline the complication of the historical and spiritual life of middle ages giving the characteristics to the trade ways, which went from Europe to Asia and back, crossed the high mountains and the endless space of Kazakstan steppes, went down to the fertile valleys and also describing the divine goods, ancient art and the ways of religions. In towns of Kazakstan, where went and East met, Europe and Asia, it was established the favorable soil for mutual penetration of non-similar cultures. The settled citizens and the nomadic tribes could create the surprising culture in the result of interaction, which is

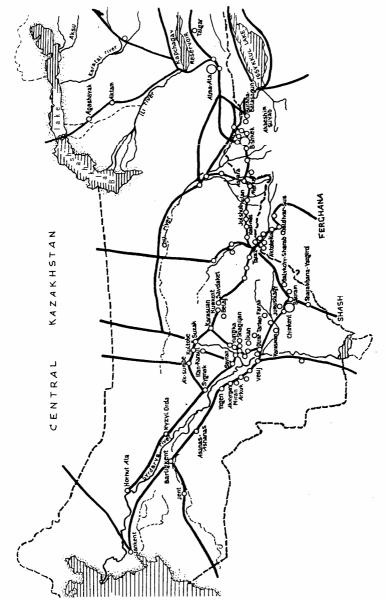
sparkling as the bright pearl in the necklace of ancient cultures of mankind.



Picture of Budda.



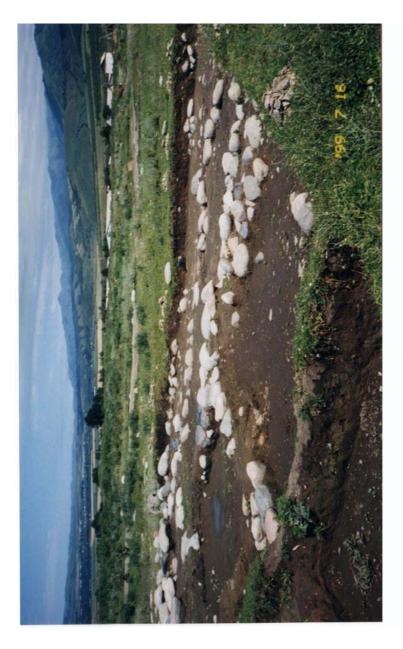
Kajalyk. Excavation of buddish temple.

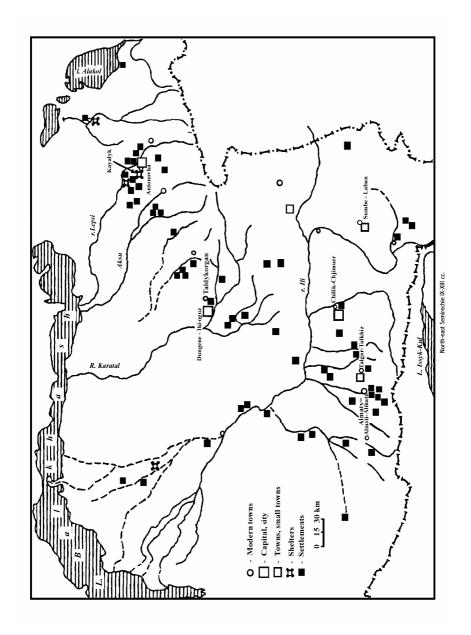


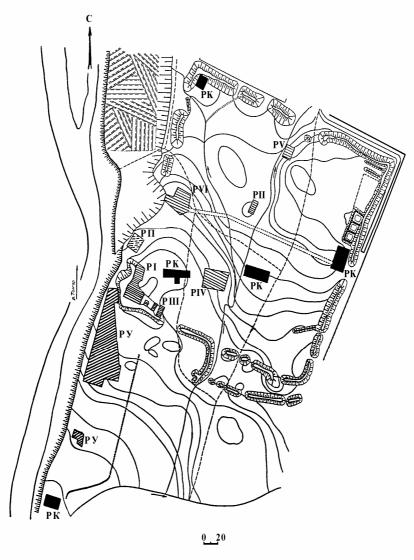
Map of the Great Silk Road on the territory of Kazakhstan.



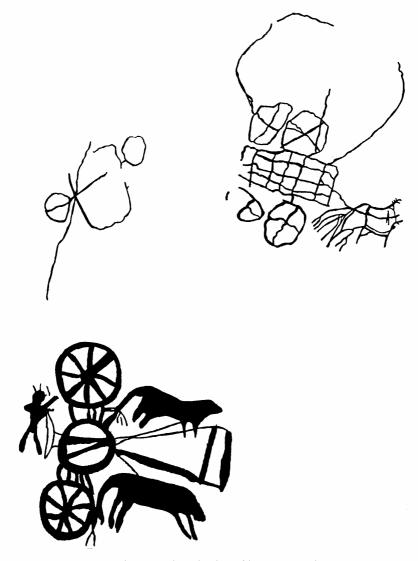




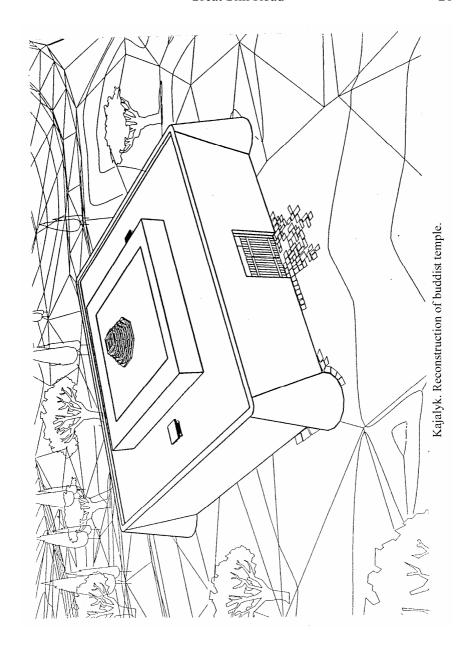




Topographic plan of medieval age Talgar town



Tamgaly-Tas. The Chariot of bronze epoch.



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<sup>15)</sup> Akishev A.K. Reznoi nephrit iz Otrara // Archaeologicheskie issledovaniay v Otrare. Alma-Ata, 1977. P.34-42.

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