



Aral Sea Region In The System Of Roads Of The Bronze Age And Early Iron Age

Salamat Kudaybergenov

Karakalpak State University, PhD Researcher, Uzbekistan

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ABSTRACT

The article examines the formation and development of the Aral Sea culture in the Bronze Age and the Early Iron Age, describes the direction of the ancient routes that served the migration of pastoralist tribes and the economic relations of the Aral Sea region with adjacent regions. The importance of minerals in the development of the region is indicated.

KEYWORDS

Bronze Age, Early Iron Age, South Aral Sea region, Tazabagyab culture, Andronov culture, ancient roads, trade and economic relations, migration routes, Ustyurt plateau, Murgab rivers, minerals.

INTRODUCTION

In the Bronze Age, there was an intensive cultural and economic exchange between the tribes of different regions of Central Asia - the sedentary farmers of the southern oases and the steppe cattle breeders of the northeastern regions.

The increase in the role of exchange was facilitated by the development of bronze metallurgy, the growing level of productive

forces and handicraft production, the formation of centers for the extraction of minerals and transport materials, as well as long-distance trade in copper, tin, gold and silver, lapis lazuli and turquoise.

THE MAIN RESULTS AND FINDINGS

Economic and technological contacts, cultural ties, and migration processes of the Bronze

Age are studied mainly on the basis of an analysis of archaeological data.

The Aral Sea region was geographically located on the boundaries of the vast territory between the Volga and the southern Siberia where the cattle-breeding tribes lived. In the Bronze Age, cattle breeding also developed in the Southern Aral Sea region, with the skills of farming based on an irrigation system (Tazabagyab culture) [1]. And in the scientific literature, for a long time, the point of view of the agricultural and cattle-breeding type of the Tazabagyab culture with a developed irrigation system prevailed [2], recently these views have been revised.

According to new data, the quantitative indicators of the sown areas of the southern Aral region of the Bronze Age and the degree of land used for agricultural purposes were somewhat exaggerated, in addition, the types of sowing crops have not been identified and cereal grains have not been found [3]. This allows us to attribute the ancient population of the Aral Sea region, to a greater extent, to the pastoral tribes of the steppe circle. This is evidenced by the cultural traditions and way of life of the Tazabagyab people, studied on the basis of archaeological materials.

In the middle of the 2nd millennium BC, the processes associated with the migrations of the steppe cattle-breeding tribes of the Andronov culture begin. A number of sites of representatives of this culture have been discovered on the territory of the Eastern and Southern Aral Sea region. The absence of stationary dwellings at the sites testifies to the temporary stay of the tribes of the Andronov culture in the Aral Sea region [4]. These facts show that the Aral Sea region served as an intermediate territory for the migration of steppe cattle breeders to the southern regions of Central Asia.

Among the main factors of migration, researchers distinguish the following: an increase in livestock, the search for new pastures, the widespread use of horses and wheeled vehicles, the growth of surplus product and the desire for exchange, the development of bronze metallurgy [5].

In our opinion, among the reasons for migration the demographic factor can be noted - the growth of the population in the pastoralist environment, the limitation of pasture areas, due to the increase in the livestock population. Periodic drought, lack of rain in the steppe, leading to drying out of the soil and death of vegetation, also contributed to the resettlement of the population, the search for new pastures and water sources.

The pastoral tribes of the northeastern steppes penetrated into the southern Aral Sea region through the Ustyurt plateau and the lower reaches of the Syr Darya. On the northern outskirts of Ustyurt, camps of cattle breeders of the Bronze Age were discovered [6]. From here the steppe tribes penetrated into the lower reaches of the Amu Darya. Further, their path was divided into the direction of the Middle Uzboy - the foothills of the Kopetdag, and also went along the right bank of the Amu Darya to the lower reaches of the Zarafshan River.

The problems of relations between the steppe and agricultural tribes of Central Asia were studied at different times by a number of researchers (A.V. Zbrueva, S.P. Tolstov, M.A.Itina, V.M. Masson, B.A. Mandelstam, E.E. Kuzmina, A.A. Askarov, V.I.Sarianidi, etc.). However, the issues of the formation and development of the roads of historical and cultural ties, including migrations of the Bronze Age passing through the territory of the Aral Sea region, have been studied insufficiently.

The penetration of the steppe population from the north into the territory of Central Asia is documented not only by the presence of temporary, intermediate sites, but also by finds of ceramics and individual bronze items of the steppe culture. In the Eastern Caspian region, burial grounds of cattle breeders of the Bronze Age have been discovered, representing groups of mounds with a stone embankment [7].

Archaeological materials indicate two centers, from where the migrations of the pastoralist tribes of the Bronze Age began. These are the Volga region - the Urals and northwestern Kazakhstan [8]. The routes of the Northern Aral Sea region and the Ustyurt plateau were of particular importance in the resettlement of pastoral tribes [9].

In the 50-60s of the last century, the issue of the territory of distribution of monuments of steppe cultures of the Bronze Age in Central Asia was studied [10]. Based on the geography of archaeological sites, the routes of movement of shepherd tribes along the Ural and Emba rivers to Mangyshlak and the Ustyurt plateau, as well as from the Urals and northwestern Kazakhstan to the Northern and Eastern Aral regions, have been marked [11]. From here, the steppe cattle breeders reached the Kyzyl Kum and Karakum deserts.

An important route that connected the northern and southern regions passed along the left bank of the Amu Darya in the direction of Margiana and Bactria. The archaeological characteristics of the path that passed in the Middle Ages through Khazarasp, Dzhigarband and Dargan to Merv (lower reaches of the Murgab River) is presented in the monograph by M.E. Masson [12]. In the archaeological and topographic respect, the study of the trade route from Merv to Khorezm, which ran along the lower reaches of the Murgab delta, showed that there were dozens of settlements

of the Bronze Age and Early Iron Age along the direction of the former medieval caravan road for about 70 km deep into the desert [13].

Further research confirmed that in the lower reaches of the Murgab in the Bronze Age, the population lived on the territory of eight ancient agricultural oases, where more than 100 settlements were found [14]. In the middle of the 2nd millennium BC the decline of ancient Margian agricultural oases began, apparently due to changes in environmental conditions, desertification of irrigated lands. At the same time, on the borders of the oases, the camps of the Andronovsky culture cattle breeders appeared [15].

The steppe tribes penetrated into Margiana from the Southern Aral Sea region. Then they moved along the paths, along the channel of the Kelif Uzboy to Bactria [16], and also to the south, down the river Murgab. In the middle reaches of this river, ceramics of steppe cattle breeders were found in the vicinity of the wells Karakhanbai, Yakhbil, Cherkezli, Dortkuduk and others, connected by old paths. Some of the campsites of the Late Bronze Age pastoralists are 70-80 km away from the valley of the middle Murgab and were located in areas of pastures on gray soils [17].

The development of copper mines, which were located in the Kyzylkum mountains, was of great importance in the economic life of the population of the Aral Sea region. As the study of the metal of the Zamanbaba culture shows, the development of the Kyzylkum mining region began at least at the end of the 3rd and the beginning of the 2nd millennium BC [18]. In addition, the deposits of turquoise and workshops for the manufacture of beads from this mineral have been discovered there [19].

In the districts of Tamdytau and Bukantau (Central Kyzylkum), the camps of cattle breeders of the Bronze Age were investigated

and traces of copper smelting were found [20]. The ancient trails that led from the Aral Sea region to the Inner Kyzyl Kum and the Zarafshan valley were also intensively used in earlier times (the Mesolithic-Neolithic era).

Thus, the above data allow us to conclude that in the Bronze Age, transit routes crossed in the Aral Sea region, which connected the Eurasian steppes, southern regions of Central Asia, Iran and the Indus valley. Their routes passed through steppes, deserts, river crossings and mountain passes. These roads were used not only for transit, but also for local traffic, as well as for pack transport, exchange and economic ties. There were also traditional routes for driving livestock to summer and winter pastures. Attention is drawn to the formation of caravan roads associated with the extraction and transportation of natural resources.

In the Bronze Age, the camel, horse and donkey served as transport and cargo transportation. For example, the bones of a camel and a horse were found in the Tazabagyab settlements of the Southern Aral Sea region [21], and the bones of a donkey were also found in the settlements of the lower reaches of the Murgab [22].

According to archaeological data, the directions of the routes of the Bronze Age and Early Iron Age practically coincided with each other. This is evidenced by the geography of the Aral Sea archaeological sites.

In the 10th - 8th centuries BC, the Amirabad culture herders, who had the skills of irrigation farming, lived in the southern Aral Sea region [23]. In the lower reaches of the Syr Darya (Eastern Priaralye), a culture of semi-sedentary pastoralists was formed, studied based on materials found during excavations of the mausoleums of Northern Tagisken [24].

At the same time, in the area of the middle reaches of the Amu Darya, on the way from Margiana and Bactria to Khorezm and the Bukhara oasis, the settlement of Odoytepa was built, fortified by defensive walls [25]. Researchers associate these processes with the beginning of migrations to the lower reaches of the Amu Darya of certain groups of the population of Margiana (farmers, craftsmen, builders), which had a significant impact on the further development of the Khorezm oasis and led to ethnocultural synthesis. As a result of this, starting from the end of the 7th century BC, in Khorezm, the Kyuzeligyr culture was formed, which had no genetic similarity with the previous Amirabad culture, as well as with the local cattle-breeding culture of the Saks – Khorezmians [26].

In the 7th - 5th centuries BC, the territory of the Ustyurt plateau acquired great importance, through which seasonal movements of nomadic tribes, known from written sources as Dakhi, Massagets and Saki, took place. In the early stages, they roamed between the Ural and Emba rivers to the Eastern Caspian and the Amu Darya - Uzboy channel [27].

Ustyurt has seasonal forage resources (wormwood, salsola), the plateau served as a wintering place for nomads and winter grazing, as well as hunting wild animals (onager, saiga antelope, gazelle). From the middle of the 1st millennium BC, the nomads of Ustyurt used special structures for hunting - stone fences with pits. The hunters drove wild animals into these fences [28].

CONCLUSION

In the early Iron Age, the ancient routes of the Aral Sea region performed various functions of an economic nature and contributed to the widespread dissemination of cultural innovations. However, in the context of a changeable political situation, these routes

were increasingly used for military raids and long-distance campaigns, for example, the Saks to Media, information about which was preserved by the messages of ancient authors.

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