



## On The Formation And Development Of Early Roads In The Aral Sea Region

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Journal Website:

<https://theamericanjournals.com/index.php/tajssei>

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### ABSTRACT

The article discusses issues related to the development of the Aral Sea region by ancient hunters and fishermen, describes the geography of archaeological sites in the Aral Sea region, the ancient deltas of the Amu Darya as well as studies the foundations of the formation of ancient routes that connected the South Aral Sea region with adjacent territories and their importance in the development of the region.

### KEYWORDS

Ustyurt Plateau, Sultanuizdag Ridge, Eastern Pre-Caspian Region, Aral Sea, Akchadarya, Sarykamysh, Barsakelmes Hollows, Kyzylkum Deserts, Ancient Hunters, Fishermen, Hunting For Steppe Animals, Early Routes.

### INTRODUCTION

The history of ancient routes is closely related to the problem of human settlement in certain regions and the development of the anthropogenic landscape. According to archaeological data, human development of the Aral Sea region began from the territory of Ustyurt, in the Middle Paleolithic. This is

evidenced by the finds of stone tools at Paleolithic sites located on the southern and northern outskirts of the Barsakelmes depression of the Ustyurt plateau (Esen 2, Karakuduk, Shakhpakhty, Churuk).

## THE MAIN RESULTS AND FINDINGS

In the late Paleolithic era, the expansion of the territories of settlement of primitive communities took place. At this time, the northwestern and southern spurs of the Sultanuzdag ridge (Southern Aral Sea region - Khorezm oasis) were developed. Tools of the Late Paleolithic era were also found in the Kokcha area in the area of the ancient Akchadarya delta of the Amu Darya.

At the end of the middle to the beginning of the Late Paleolithic, Ustyurt and the southern Aral Sea region, apparently, found themselves in the zone of large-scale migrations in Eurasia, which were associated with evolutionary processes - the replacement of one type of hominid with another, the formation of a modern person, as well as a tribal community.

During the Mesolithic, and especially the Neolithic, there was a large-scale development of the territories between the Eastern Caspian and the Aral Sea, the regions of the Southern and Eastern Priaralye, as well as the Kyzyl Kum desert. The geography of numerous monuments of the Mesolithic and Neolithic times, the nature and features of the settlement of ancient hunters, fishermen and gatherers show that their sites are located in places where human habitation is now extremely difficult or impossible. Attention is drawn to the supply of fresh water to desert areas. At present, the sites of ancient sites are practically devoid of not only surface water, but also groundwater suitable for consumption.

In the process of studying the Mesolithic and Neolithic sites in the Inner Kyzyl Kum, geological, geomorphological and soil studies were carried out, which made it possible to raise the question of a noticeable humidification of the climate in the Mesolithic

and especially in the Neolithic, the so-called Lalyakan pluvial. Special analyzes of a series of ancient soils showed that they could not have formed under modern landscape and climatic conditions. At that distant time, a significant amount of precipitation fell on Ustyurt, in Kyzylkum and adjacent territories, there were lake reservoirs with fresh water. More humid and cooler climatic conditions in the deserts, in comparison with the modern dry and hot climate, contributed to the development of rich herbaceous and shrubby vegetation and a diverse composition of the animal world. All this created favorable landscape and climatic conditions for human settlement in the steppe regions of Central Asia.

The nature of the development of human relations with the surrounding nature, the peculiarities of paleoecology and the territorial settlement of ancient communities, the construction of dwellings and settlements, methods of obtaining food and raw materials for labor tools are of great importance for studying the issue of the formation and development of ways to develop natural resources and intercommunal ties.

It is known that the most important way of obtaining food in the Stone Age was hunting, which was associated with a specific territory and determined the nature of the camps. It was the location of the hunting territory and natural outcrops of the silicon rock necessary for the manufacture of tools that determined the directions of the early paths. So, in the south-west of the Barsakelmes hollow, in the area of the Esen Upland, sites were discovered - workshops for the extraction and primary processing of flint. Natural outcrops of black quartzite and tools made of this stone were found in the spurs of Sultanuzdag.

These data indicate that already in the Late Paleolithic in the Ustyurt and in the southern

Aral Sea region, directions of paths were formed that connected human sites with the hunting territory, sources of raw materials for stone tools, as well as with freshwater lakes.

The archaeological monuments of the Stone Age discovered in Ustyurt are open-type sites, without a preserved cultural layer. Ustyurt, devoid of natural shelters, was not a place of permanent residence of man in the Paleolithic era. This situation continued in subsequent periods. More than 200 sites and locations (Karakuduk, Aydabol, Churuk, Aktaylak, etc.) dating back to the Mesolithic and Neolithic times are known on the Ustyurt plateau. However, the remains of ancient dwellings and traces of permanent, long-term settlements have not been found here.

All this testifies to the fact that communities of hunters came to Ustyurt from neighboring territories. These are the Eastern Caspian Sea during the Mesolithic period and the South Aral Sea region during the Neolithic period, where there were more favorable conditions for long-term settlements. The fact itself shows the presence of both internal and external paths that connected various, distant territories.

Mobile hunting groups could come to Ustyurt to hunt large steppe animals (onager, saiga antelope, gazelle). This is confirmed by the study of stone tools intended for hunting and cutting hunted prey. According to the analysis of materials from the sites of Aydabol, Churuk, Isatay, tools intended for cutting hunting prey make up from 33 to 57 percent of all tools, stone scrapers used at various sites for processing skins - from 8 to 20%, tools related to hunting activities - 36-46- 60 percent.

The Neolithic epoch (VI-IV millennium BC) is characterized by a wide distribution of sites and settlements of the Kelteminar culture in the lower reaches of the Amu Darya and Syr

Darya, in the Kyzyl Kum and the lower reaches of the Zarafshan. At this time, there was a large-scale development of the flat territories of the vast steppes and deserts of Central Asia. The geography and cartography of archaeological sites testifies to the formation of sustainable paths that linked different parts of the region.

During the Neolithic period, the Amu Darya river had two deltas - Akchadarya (South Aral) and Sarykamysch. From Lake Sarykamysch, the waters of the Amu Darya filled the channel of the Uzboy and flowed into the Caspian Sea. At the same time, part of the water was discharged into Akchadarya.

The Akchadarya delta was a wide, watered plain with numerous channels and lakes, rich in fish and waterfowl. At this time, fishing was intensively developed, which contributed to a certain degree of settlement of the population. The Kelteminar sites were tribal settlements, which consisted of large ground dwellings of a frame structure. At the same time, a significant part of the population was engaged in hunting, led an active lifestyle outside the delta plains.

Other areas of economic and industrial activity of the Neolithic communities were the extraction and processing of stone raw materials for tools. At the sites of Beshbulak 1 and Lavlyakan in Kyzylkum, traces of a workshop of the Late Neolithic and Early Bronze Age were found, where beads were made of onyx and turquoise.

On the basis of archaeological data, one can single out the main factors that had a significant impact on the development of the directions of ancient routes. This is the hunt for seasonally migrating herds of mobile wild animals (kulan, saiga, gazelle, deer, wild bull), as well as the extraction of flint, quartzite,

onyx, turquoise - raw materials for the manufacture of tools and jewelry.

Particularly noteworthy is the presence of exchange – the primitive trade. The need for exchange was the motive for the emergence of intercommunal ties and mutual economic and cultural influences. The specificity of the archaeological material makes it possible to distinguish the exchange of raw materials, jewelry and tools. Moreover, these types of exchange developed at an earlier time - in the era of the late Paleolithic and Mesolithic.

The territory of the Aral Sea region, bounded in the west by the Ustyurt-Sarykamysh line, in the south by the Zaunguz Karakum desert and in the southeast by the dunes of the Kyzylkum desert, in ancient times constituted the geographical part of the economic and cultural region between the Caspian Sea and Central Kazakhstan, as well as the lower reaches of the Volga and the South Urals. Findings in different areas of the indicated region of stone arrowheads of the Kelteminar type make it possible to determine the paths of propagation of these arrowheads in the northern direction. According to researchers, arrowheads of the Kelteminar type are a specific component of the stone inventory of the Neolithic sites in the desert zone of Central Asia. According to the published map of finds of arrowheads, the direction of distribution of these tools through the Eastern Ustyurt and the Northeastern Aral Sea region to the Volga region and the Southern Urals is highlighted.

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In this regard, it is noteworthy that it was through the Ustyurt plateau in the Middle Ages that an important trade road passed, which led to the Volga region, Eastern Europe, Transcaucasia and the Northern Black Sea region. Information about it is contained in the works of F.B. Pegalotti (1290-1350), Ibn Battuta (1304-1377) and Russian authors of the 19th century. In the 1946-1947s the archaeological and topographic study of the Ustyurt road was carried out by the staff of the Khorezm expedition, as a result of which caravanserais, fortresses and guard objects of the early and developed Middle Ages were examined along this route.

During the research of the expedition, monuments of an earlier time were not revealed. It is now known that the sites of the Mesolithic and Neolithic eras were found in the vicinity of the old wells Churuk, Karakuduk and others, located on the ancient path of the Ustyurt plateau. On the northern cliffs of and the heights of Ustyurt, seasonal settlements of cattle breeders of the beginning of the 2nd millennium BC (Toksanboy, Aitman, Manaysar) were found and their dwellings - dugouts - were studied. All this testifies to the antiquity of the routes passing through the territory of the Aral Sea region in the northern direction. Obviously, the routes of the southern and

southeastern directions were also formed very early.

The trails that led to Ustyurt were apparently used by the communities of the Mesolithic-Neolithic hunters who lived in the caves of the limestone mountain of the ancient coast of the Eastern Caspian Sea (Damdamchashma, Kailu, Dzhebel). Research of the Khorezm archaeological expedition showed that in the VI millennium BC the waters of the Amu Darya flowed into the Caspian Sea along the Uzboy, which had a permanent channel. More than 20 monuments of the Neolithic period and briefly temporary sites of the Bronze Age were discovered on the banks of the middle and upper Uzboy. The locations of ancient archaeological materials coincide with the location of large, fortified medieval caravanserais - Devkala, Ortakuyu, Talaykhanat and Akyayla, built on the trade route from Khorezm to Khorosan.

This road connected the Khorezm oasis with the southwest of Turkmenistan and northeastern Iran. Apparently, this path was used by the troops of the ancient Persian kings Cyrus II and Darius I in campaigns against the Massagets and Sakas of Tigrahauda, respectively, in 530 and 519. BC. In both the first and second campaigns, the Persians reached the river, which is named in the "History" of Herodotus Araks, and in the Behistun inscription - Arakhsha. It draws attention to the fact that the ancient Greek and ancient Persian names of the river (hydronyms) are in many ways close to each other. Considering that the Massagets and Saki Tigrahauda lived in the territory between the Caspian and the Aral Sea, the Araks or Arakhsha river is the Amu Darya - Uzboy, as the only ancient river in the Karakum desert.

In the Neolithic era and the following periods of ancient history in the southern Aral Sea

region - the Khorezm oasis, the paths that led to the Central Kyzyl Kum and the lower reaches of the Zarafshan (South-Western Kyzyl Kum) began. These territories were inhabited by tribes with a similar culture. In the Central Kyzyl Kum there were deposits of turquoise and copper ores. At the Beshbulak site, the remains of copper-smelting furnaces, fragments of foundry molds and accumulations of copper ore were found. Metallurgical sites of the 2nd millennium BC were also found in the Tamdytau and Sangruntau mountains. As a result of the analysis of fragments of copper ore found in ancient workshops, in its composition, along with copper, increased contents of silver, as well as tin and gold were established.

Thus, in the Bronze Age, the Kyzylkum center of copper and tin mining was formed. At this time, the horse and camel were domesticated, and vehicles - wheeled carts - appeared. Using stable caravan trails, cattle breeders of the Southern and Eastern Aral Sea regions, as well as the Zarafshan valley, came to the Central Kyzyl Kum. They were engaged in the extraction of copper ore, copper smelting and transportation of metallurgical raw materials. Analysis of the chemical composition of bronze items found at the Aral Sea sites showed their origin from a single Kyzylkum metallurgy center.

## CONCLUSION

During the Bronze Age, large migrations took place associated with the search for new sources of raw materials for the developing metallurgy (copper, tin, lead). They were also determined by the need to develop deposits of rare minerals and metals (lapis lazuli, turquoise silver, gold). All this contributed to the development of long-distance trade, a significant expansion of the territories of



settlement of ancient farmers and pastoralists, as well as broad cultural and economic ties.

The ancient paths passing through the Aral Sea area served the interactions between tribes with different economic bases, the development of exchange, technological and cultural achievements in general.

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