

## HISTORY AND ARCHEOLOGY, ARCHIVAL STUDIES

### The history of the silk road in the Mangistau region

**Korkem Seilhan<sup>1</sup>, Kurmanova Gulzhanat Turegalieвна<sup>2</sup>**

<sup>1</sup> A student of the 8 «D» class;  
*The Nazarbayev Intellectual School of Chemical and Biological direction;*  
Republic of Kazakhstan

<sup>2</sup> scientific adviser, history teacher;  
*The Nazarbayev Intellectual School of Chemical and Biological direction;*  
Republic of Kazakhstan

**Abstract.** The article discusses the history of the Great Silk Road in the Mangistau region of the Republic of Kazakhstan. The regional features of the Silk Road have been little studied, and the emergence of the cities of Kyzyl Kala and Ketik Kala are of interest in studying the history of the region. In the article one can find the etymology of Mangistau and its mention in medieval sources, also notes the key role of the area in establishing diplomatic and cultural ties between the East and the West.

**Keywords:** *Silk road, Kazakhstan, Mangistau, trade relations, Kyzyl Kala, Tupkaragan region.*

---

The Silk Road is an ancient caravan route, which started from China and joined Chinese civilization with other regions of the Far East, Central and Minor Asia, as well as Europe. Most of this route paths passed through Central Asia and Kazakhstan.

The Silk Road had appeared as an international trade route in the third century BC and served people until the sixteenth century. In the ancient cities located along the Silk Road not only a trade had developed, but also the Eastern and Western civilizations had met and mutually enriched each other, and the Road promoted the establishment and development of cultural and diplomatic relations between various nations that had lived along it.

Nowadays, the Kazakh side of the Silk Road attracts the attention of tourists from many countries of the world. Because of this, I have conducted research on the topic. In my research work I have focused on the Silk Road and its history in the Mangistau region, got acquainted with the

## HISTORY AND ARCHEOLOGY, ARCHIVAL STUDIES

changes that the Silk Road had introduced into the process of cultural development in the Mangistau region during the Middle Ages, and linked it with the regional history studies aiming at study and the potential of revival of historical monuments located along the Silk Road. Because the Silk Road is remaining one of the unexplored topics in the Kazakh history and in history of the Mangistau region, which evolved further during the Middle Ages. I have visited the Regional History Museum named after Abish Kekilbayuly and along with the history of the Mangistau region, I explored the changes that the Silk Road had brought to the lives of the Kazakh people during the Middle Ages.

I spoke with Mr. Bakhytzhan Kudaibergenuly, the historian-archaeologist, the leading expert of the museum, in order to learn deeper about the ancient settlements located along the Silk Road in the Mangistau region, and learned about the directions of the branches of the Silk Road that passed through Kazakhstan, including Mangistau region, and familiarized myself with the types of caravanserais, historical buildings, types of exported and imported via the Road goods brought in and out of the country by the trade routes, and what changes all those things introduced into our culture.

The first information about Mangistau found in historical sources, dating back to the 10–11th centuries, refer to the region as "the land in the country of the Oghuz." However, originally they called the peninsula "the Black Mountain", or "Syahuk" in Persian. In the second half of the 10<sup>th</sup> century Arab geographer al-Muqaddasi had referred to it as "Binkishtakh", the famous Khorezmian scientist Al-Biruni called it "Yan-kh-shlag", and Mahmud Kashgari - the "Mang kishlag".

During the Golden Horde period (14th century) the first European maps showing the territory of Mangistau region began to appear. In the Catalan atlas of 1375 Mangyshlak had been mentioned clearly under the name of "Melmesalash". "Melmesalash" in Latin means Mangyshlak.

I have mentioned above that cities began to appear in the territories along the Silk Road in the Middle Ages. In Mangistau one of such cities is the "Kyzyl Kala" ancient settlement located in the Akmosh gorge, the other ancient town of "Ketik Kala" was located in Tupkaragan region, and the territory of "Karakabak" settlement covered the areas lying between the Tauchik location and the coastal areas of

## HISTORY AND ARCHEOLOGY, ARCHIVAL STUDIES

the (Caspian) Sea. The area of the ancient settlement of Kyzyl Kala amounted to about 6 hectares. However, the town had been destroyed during the Mongol invasion.

The Karakabak gorge had served not only as a transit zone for goods and cargo coming from foreign regions, but also as a place where these valuable items were created and stored. At the same time, artifacts found in our region prove that the activities of local craftsmen in the Mangistau region led to the creation of craft centers that satisfied the demand of local nomad tribes for various industrial and technological products of that time.

In 2005, A. Astafiev has discovered the oldest settlements of the "Mangistau branch" of the Silk Road located at the mouth of the Karakabak Gorge. On some ancient maps the name of that region has been indicated as "Karakavak". The size of the town that was built on the rock is about 3 hectares. Residential houses were built in the shape of the Cyrillic alphabet letter "G" ("Г"), archaeologists found also round hearths, pillar structures-supports, places for sacrifices made of clay there.

The city of Karakabak had acquired historical significance during the times of the nomadic tribes of Huns of the Hunnic Union, which had existed in the 1st-4th and the first half of 5th-6th centuries. Among the artifacts discovered in the cities of Kyzyl-Kala, Ketik-Kala, Karakabak, among other things, porcelain items and candles were found. Those were products made in and imported from China, Khwarazm and India via the Silk Road. Thanks to trade relations, the economies of tribal union states located on the territory of modern Kazakhstan and the aforesaid countries have developed further, mutually enriching each other and it has provided a positive impetus for the further evolution of the languages, civilizations of the above-mentioned Kazakh states and the aforesaid other foreign states, and that cooperation certainly influenced the development of the culture of the people who inhabited on the territories covered by the current Kazakh steppes.

During the 15th and 15th centuries, the Aral-Caspian region gained a special importance in international trade. Many branches of international caravan routes were passed via the Mangistau peninsula. Therefore, the possible number of caravanserais serving transnational trade routes, campsites where caravans stayed, and small villages serving the same purpose in the area may well have reached very large numbers'

## HISTORY AND ARCHEOLOGY, ARCHIVAL STUDIES

level in those days. This is evidenced by the historical facts of the existence of the Melmeselek (Mangyshlak) fortress, which served as an important port in Mangistau, the caravanserais of Bileuli, Shuruk and Adzhigeldy on the banks of the Mangistau plateau. Interestingly, the name of the term "caravan" is originated from the Persian word karwan sarai.

The passage of branches of the Silk Road through Mangistau contributed to the process of evolution of culture and arts. And in our times, this same mainstream - along with the development of trade and economic relations with China, the states of the Middle East and Asia Minor, the republics of the coastal regions of the Volga River, etc. - serves to strengthen and develop diplomatic and economic ties with the countries of the aforesaid regions of the world. The modern Silk Road can also be called the Road of Exchange of new technologies and innovations, cultural and scientific achievements. In addition, the "Western Europe - Western China" automobile corridor passes through our land. This project must undoubtedly bring large financial dividends to Kazakhstan earned owing to the transit of transported goods. Thus, the modern role of the Silk Road today, which left its historical mark already during the Ancient Epochs and Middle Ages, is similar to the role it had played in the past and there is no doubt that it will continue to contribute to the development, prosperity and renewal of our country in the future too.

Today the Silk Road attracts the attention of tourists living in various countries of the world. They are especially interested in the Kazakh side of the Silk Road. If we manage to revive the historical monuments located along the Silk Road, this could become a significant source of additional income for the budget of our country. In the Middle Ages, a silk fabric served as the main commodity item transported via the Silk Road, but today we can say that now the main goods transported along this road are intangible assets of culture, science and education realms. Therefore, I believe that it would be of use if we intensify our scientific study of the history and cultural heritages of the Silk Road in the Mangistau region and try to to revive our historical monuments located there. At the end, I'd like to thank Ms. Gulzhanat Kurmanova, the supervisor of my scientific research work and my teacher, who teaches history at my school. I am grateful to her for the fact that during her work she helped me to learn at deeper level the rich history of my native land.

## HISTORY AND ARCHEOLOGY, ARCHIVAL STUDIES

### References:

- [1] Political Explanatory Dictionary. Almaty. 2007
- [2] Physical Geography of Kazakhstan. Almaty: Atamura, 2008
- [3] Otyrar. Encyclopedia. Almaty, Publishing house "Arys", 2005
- [4] A the firstborn "from the history of the Turks" // Zaman-Kazakhstan-1995 № 13, 8 page
- [5] Amanzholov K.R. cours of lectures on the history of Kazakhstan. Book 1. Ancient from time to the October Revolution of 1917. A., 2004, 118P.
- [6] M.Kani. Ancient history of the Kazakh people. A., 1993, 197P.
- [7] Musin. History of Kazakhstan. A., 2003, p 39-56.