

Silk Road and Spread of Religions in Kazakhstan

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The "Great Silk Road" began to function as a regular trade artery connecting the Mediterranean and China, West and East in the 2nd century B.C.¹⁾

But only as late as the 6th - 7th centuries the northern segment of the Silk Road via south Kazakhstan and Semirechie became one of the most active though the former route via Fergana and Kashgar was shorter and more convenient. The shifting of trade roads was reasoned first of all by the fact that the Turkic Khanates' headquarters housed at that time in Semirechie took under their control the trade roads through Central Asia and made their efforts to gain maximum profits from international trade. Second, the road via Fergana was dangerous in the 7th century because of intertribal conflicts.²⁾

Due to shifting of the Silk Road to the north numerous nomadic peoples of the Kazakhstan and Siberian steppes were naturally involved into international trade. The Silk Road gave an impetus to the rise of a number of towns in south Kazakhstan and Semirechie, among them Ispidjab, Otrar, Shavgar, Taraz, Navaket, Souzb.

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1) Bichurin N.D. (Iakinf). *Sobranie Svedenii o nomadah obitavshih v Srednei Asii v drevnie vremena*. T.2.M.-L.1950, S.147-168; Kliashtorny S.T. *Drevneturkskie runicheskie pamiatneki*. M.,1963.S.173.

2) Barthold V.V. *Ocherk istorii Semirechia*. M.1963. T.2. CH.2. S.31.

Fairly well known was the northern segment of the Silk Road separated into two branches ; one stretching along the Syr-Darya river in the Aral region through Mangyshlak to the Caucasus and Mediterranean, another via Somirechie to east Turkestan and China.³⁾

A number of research works described the goods carried by caravans.⁴⁾

Previous and recent archaeological studies conducted in the area in question, excavations in Otrar, Djamukat(Kostobe), Taraz, Navaket(Krasnaia Rechka), Souzb (Ak-Beshim). Provided along with date from chronicles good information for elucidation of one more function of the Silk Road, the road conveying religions. Along one of them Buddhism from India penetrated to east Turkestan and China via Central Asia ; Christianity and later Islam came from Syria, Iran and Arabia.

By the opinion of researchers Buddhism penetrated from India to China through Central Asia. The process began in mid-first century B.C. Buddhism in east Turkestan and China spread mainly thanks to Medieval theologians and missionaries particularly Sogdians, Parthians and Kanghui.⁵⁾

The spread of Buddhism particularly intensive in the 2nd - 3rd centuries A.D. was evidently connected with the Kushanian political goal in the East.

In the early Medieval time the Sogdians accepted duties of the main missionaries of Buddhism. On the whole the Sogdians played very important part in spreading the Buddhism in Central Asia. The Sogdian word "Bodhisattva" came to the Mid-Persian, Uigurian and

Chinese languages from Sogdian. The analysis of terms from the Turkic Buddhists, topics of east Turkestan showed them to be borrowed by the courtesy of Sogdians. In Nara, the ancient capital of Japan, a Sogdian inscription was recognized on the Kazedji Buddhist temple. The Buddhist relics were found in a number of towns along the Great Silk Road going

3) Barthold V.V. Otchet o poezdke v Srednuju Asiju s nauchnoi tselju. 1983-1984; M.-L. 1966. T.4, s.21-29; Baipakov K.M. "Velikii Shelkovyi put'": Kulturnye kontakty v proshlom i nastojashchem. Vestnik AN KazSSR. 1989.3.s.18-27

4) Shedger E. Zolotye persiki Samarkanda. M, 1981.

5) Litvinsky B.A. Zeimal. T.1. Adjina-tepe.-M., 1971. S.110-115.

through Central Asia. For many years the Buddhist temple in Termez, Karatobe, had been under excavations. In Sogdian a cult construction was found in the Sanzara Valley. The Buddhist monuments were found in the townsite Ghiaur-Kala, Mavr. The Adjiuna-Tepe Buddhist Monastery with its splendid fragments of painting and sculpture was examined in the Vakhsh Valley, south Tadjikistan.⁶⁾

As mentioned above the Turks were subjected greatly to Buddhism since the 6th century. Xsian- Tsien mentioned the west Turkic Khanate as favouring Buddhism.

As researchers suggested several west Turkic rulers became Buddhists or their patrons in the first half of the 7th century. A.Gabain suggested that extension of Buddhism among Turks was connected with their tendency to sedentary and urban life.⁷⁾

In south Kazakhstan and Semirechie Buddhism was fairly widespread judging primarily by the Buddhists' constructions in the area. The Buddhists monuments i.e. temples, monasteries, chapels were encountered in the Chu Valley townsites Ak-Beshim, Krasnaia, Rechka, Novopokrovsk, Novopavlovak in different years. Among the finds were statuettes and stelae with Buddhist personages and scenes.

Ruins of two Buddhist temples Ak-Beshim and Suiab dated to the 7th - early 8th centuries were fully excavated and examined.

The Ak-Beshim first temple was rectangular in plan, size 76×22m', the longer side directed west - east. The temple consisted of a sanctuary and gallery ascended from the yard by three-flight stairs. An eight-column hall adjacent to the sanctuary had flat ceiling. Living, domestic buildings and a chapel quadrangle in plan approached the complex from the east. Monumental sculptures were mounted on pedestals and sofas along the corridor walls. In front of a cella there were on two sides of a double-platform postaments

6) Litvinsky B.A., Zeimal T.I. Adjiuna-Tepe. - s.114-116.

7) Gabain A. Der Buddhismus in Zentralasien Handbuch der Orientalistik. 1,3,2. Zeiden-Koln.

with mounted on them sculptures of sitting Buddha with feet on the floor. The gilded buckles of the altar with Buddha representation were found on the sanctuary floor.⁸⁾

The Ak-Beshim second temple was quadrangle in plan, 38×38m', fronted north. Cross-Like cella, 10.5×10m', was encircled by two corridors leading to a quadrangle small yard. Niches for sculptures were found in frescoed walls of the sanctuary. Various personages of the Buddhist pantheon like Buddha, "Bodhisattvas", Dokshita⁹⁾ were found among the remnants of clay sculptures.

The first Krasnorechensk temple dated to the 9th - 10th centuries differed in a certain degree from Ak-Beshimian. It consisted of cella encircled by a corridor and large hall entered from south-east.

The central small sanctuary (3.2×3.2m') revealed partly preserved frescoes coloured blue, brown and red on white background. One of the fragments retained an inscription in black "ink" which one failed to read because of bad state of preservation. The gallery encircled the sanctuary from three sides ; corridors were 2.3-2.7 m wide. Laterally there were two appendices-houses faced open to the yard.

The second Krasnorechensk temple matched the first Ak-Beshim one in plan. The sanctuary and small part of the yard in front of it, two encircling corridors were unearthed along with cella quadrangle in plan, 6×6 m', with dome-like top and remains of tromps with festoon arch. The sanctuary was decorated with sculptural ensembles structurally connected with walls by wooden pillars and fastening. Time failed to bring to our days this annexed massive structure but numerous fragments of it confined to main sculpture, niches or upper parts were found in dump. Remains of two clay sculptures were found at the entrance to cella. They stood on pedestals laterally; separate parts of a torso and head helped to restore their height equal to one

8) Kizlasov L.R. Archeologicheskie issledovania na gorodishche Ak-Beshim v 1953-1954 g. Trudy Kirgizskoi archeologo-ethnograficheskoi ekspeditsii. T.2.M., 1959.S.155-227.

9) Ziablin L.P. Vtoroi Buddiisky hram Ak-Beshimskogo gorodishcha. Frunze, 1961.

and a half of a human size. The sculpture was destructed in antiquity.

Corridors were 12 m long with polychromous frescoes upon loess partly remained on wall which were later painted with other topics upon alabaster while reconstruction. The sculpture of 'Buddha in Nirvana pose'(a head and part of a torso did not survive ; its length 8 m, width 1-5 m) was laying on its left side on a pedestal painted red. The Buddha's folded garment was also red. The Buddhists from parish in Semirechie preferred in their sculptures canonized statuary images. Buddha's face was usually wide, gently contoured, eyelids half-down, earlobes sagging, eyes excessively lengthened. The Krasnorechensk sculptures covered with gypsum upon clay showed the upper part of eyeballs, flanks of the nose and lips contoured with red line ; eyes with black lines converging at temples ; eyebrows distinct, curly hair tinted blue and black ; heavy decorations were represented by the temple hemispheric bells, breast necklaces, bracelets.

Fairly often among the chance finds were these imported from India that is bronze and silver statuettes of Buddha and Bodhisattvas gilded and encrusted with gems, bronze buckles and plaques, small stone reliefs and stelae with iconographic topics which composed once upon altars and relics of the Buddhists' temples and monasteries. A granite stele from the Krasnorechensk temple deserved special attention ; it was 60cm long, 35-32 cm wide, 14cm thick. The front side of it was divided into three designed bands; the upper one showed under the festoon arch a triad i.e. Buddha on lotus and Bodhisattvas standing on both sides; their faces broken. The middle band showed two lateral sitting fantastic animals ; The lower one represented donors ; on the lateral surfaces there were deities from the Indian pantheon in a garland performed in technique of fine engraving. The reverse side of the stele revealed traces of Indian inscription.

A miniature haut-relief in stone from the Novopokrovsk Buddhist complex was also referred to as imported because it copied a relief in Adjanta style, that is "Buddha with the Laity".¹⁰⁾

10) Istorija Kirgizskoi SSR. - T.1. S.350-352

The latest archaeological discovery was the unearthed underground monastery found near the ruins of the known Medieval town Ispidjab or Sairam.

Archaeologist succeeded in revealing several narrow lengthy spaces carved in the loess deposits at the foothills ; their vaults imitated the ceilings made of reetangular adobe bricks common in architecture and constructions of the 6th - 8th centuries. The walls were marked with sutures coloured black separating large clay blocks which also imitated the style of terrestrial masonries.

The underground monasteries and temples were known from different areas engaged in Buddhism ; these were particularly abundant in east Turkestan mainly in its northern part, from Kashgar in the west to Khami in the East and Dunhuan in China. At last an internediate link was fortunately found in south Kazakhstan. Prototypes of the grotto monastery ensambles were to be found in India where the traditional grotto architecture progressed in Magadhe and nearly (in recent Bikhar) during the Mauriya period. Monasteries appeared to be the earliest grotto constructions in India ; each of them composed one or several sanctuaries (chatya) and monks' dwellings (vikhara)¹¹⁾. Some spaces discovered in Ispidjab were evidently vikhara.

Christianity spread from West to East along the Silk Road together with Buddhism. In the first half of the 5th century a "heretical" sect composed of Nestor's followers appeared in the east Roman Emmpire. Nestor taught that Virgin Maria delivered not a god but a human and Christ was a "mansion of Lord" or a bearer of the Holy Ghost. According to Nestor's idea Virgin Maria should have been called "Christ-bringing Lady" instead of "Our Lady" because Virgin Maria delivered not a deity but human the Christ". This innovation annoyed the masses greatly because it contrasted badly with the symbol of faith adopted at the Nikey Cathedral in 325 according to which

11) Litvinsky B.A.,Pichikyan I.R.Peshcheraia Kultovaia architectura Vostochnogo Turkestana. Vostochny Turkestan i Sredniaia Asia v sisteme kultur drevnego i srednevekovogo Vostoka. - M.,1986. - S.81-125.

Christ was the only owner of the human and celestial Hypostases : the neglect of his integrity with God-father was denied by the Orthodox church as utmost heretical. Nestor's doctrine was blamed at the Efess Cathedral in 431 ; severe persecution fell later upon the Nestorians who were forced to emigrate to Iron. Nestor's supporters organised in Persian Nisibin borderland a school which united the Byzantine political opposition. Wealthy Syrian merchants and craftsmen lost the market and moved to the East.¹²⁾

Amazing is the fact that such remoted parts of Asia had close contacts with Syrians. Their colonies and merchant trading stations scattered on the areas from the Black Sea coast to the "Celestial Empire". Unique relics of culture were found in oases along this road, in mountains and low lands ; among these were buried in sands the remains of every day life and art relics, cult accessories belonging to Christianity and other religions. Along the whole length of this road were traced constantly the Syrian inscriptions and Syrian Christianity which started their spread in the earliest years of Siria's history.

Centuries-lasting economic ties of Syrians resulted in their culture which affected much the peoples of the Arabian Peninsula, India, Central Asia in which the Iranian and Turkic languages experienced in a certain degree the action of the Syrian language upon them. Spread of Christianity among the Sogdians both in metropolises and colonies acquainted them with the Syrian writing. The Sogdians-Christians extended the Syrian writing on the early Turks; later it was borrowed by the Uigurians: "...Syrians contributed much into the world culture ; they involved the East in that trend of the world culture inherited from the benefit of antiquity".¹³⁾

In the 7th - 8th centuries the Nestorian teaching spread widely in towns of south Kazakhstan and Semirechie. In 780-819 when Patriarch Timothy headed the Church, Christianity was adopted ay the Turkic Ruler presumably the Karlukian Djabgu. At the turn of the 9th - 10th centuries separate

12) Pigulevskaia N.V. Kultura Syriitsev v Srednie veka. - M.,1979.- S.13-14.

13) Pigulevakaia N.V. Kultura syriitsev v Srednie Veka,-S.22-27.

Karlukian metropolises¹⁴⁾ were established ; in Taraz and Merke the Christian churches were also working ; Christian folks lived also in the towns on the Syr-Darya river.

In the 12th century the Kashgar and Navaket metropolises emerged.¹⁵⁾ There is some information on the Mongol Kereites tribe turned to Christianity in the 11th century. In the "History of Mogols" Rashid-ad-din wrote ; "Jesus belief - Peace to Him" penetrated the Kereites world and they adopted it".¹⁶⁾ Many Christians were among the Mongol - Naimans. Although Chinggiz Khan destroyed the principality of Kereites in 1203, exactly he was regarded in west European countries as Host Johannes whose legendary reign was confined to the East by the chroniclers of the 12th century. In any case the role of Nestorians was significant in the Empire of Chinggiz Khan.

The Nestorian girl Sorgahtanibeki, a niece of the Kereit Van Khan destructed by Chinggiz Khan married Tuluk, who was Chinggiz Khan younger son ; she was mother of two great Khans ; Munke and Khubilai and son Khulagy, the conqueror of Iran.¹⁷⁾

Wilhelm Rubruquis commented on Christians from the Ily Valley who had their own church and settlement in Kayalik. It was known that the 14th century monastery on the Lake Issik-Kul housed the holy remnants of Saint Matthew.¹⁸⁾

Finds from Semirechie and south Kazakhstan connected with Nestorians confirmed fairly convincingly available in chronicles information about ruins of the Christian churches unearthed at the Ak-Beshim townsite. It consisted of a quadrangle in plan construction roofed with dome and a rectangular yard.¹⁹⁾

14) Kljashtorny S.G. Istoriko-kulturnoe znachenie Sogdiakoi nadpisi. Problemy vostoikovedenia.- 5, 1959. - S.168.

15) Barthold V.V. Christianstve v Turkestane v domongolskii period.- Soch., T.2, ch.2.M., 1963.S.285-287, 294.

16) Trudy Vostochnogo otd. archeologicheskogo obshchestva.-ch.5.-S.94.

17) Posle Marko polo. - S.10-11.

18) Barthold V.V. Ocherki istorii Semirechia.-T.2. ch.1-L., 1963. - S.61.

19) Kyzlasov L.R. Archeologicheskoe issledovanie na gorodishche Ak-Beshim. -S.231.

Excavations in Djamukat and Navaket necropolises revealed burials of Christians wearing silver and bronze crosses. A nephrite cross was found by chance in Krasnaia Rechka.²⁰⁾

The Chimkent museum maintains a stone mortar decorated with cross and rigeon, the symbols of Christians found in Tortkol-tobe, presumably Shara b.²¹⁾

While excavating Taraz a ceramic beaker with the Syrian inscription "Peter and Gabriel" was found in a layer dated to the 6th - 8th centuries.²²⁾ Articles made by the Nestorian craftsmen exemplified by two silver plates decorated with early Christian iconography²³⁾ became known as Anikovskoe and Grigorievskoe. The Grigorievskoe platediscus (9th - 10th centuries) was decorated with flat relief added by engraving. The background and separate parts of it were gilded. Three overlapped medallions showed "Ascension", "Wife at the coffin" and "Crucifix" ; the intervals between them were engraved with "Daniel in the lion's trench", "Abdication of Peter" and "Guard at the Lord Coffin".²⁴⁾

Grave stones (kairaks) with Nestorian inscriptions and symbolics were referred to as eminent examples of the "religious art and religious symbolics" of Christians, Turks by nationality", from the period Christianity appeared in these lands up to the end of the 14th century.²⁵⁾

They were mainly met with in Semirechie and east Turkestan at the end of the 19th century - beginning of the 20th century²⁶⁾, but occasionally they

20) Pamiatniki kulturni i iskusstva Kirgizii. Katalog vystavki. -L.1983. -S.159. Ris.261a

21) Rempel L.I. Kamennii sosud iz Tortkul-tobe. Hudozhestvennaia kultura Srednei Asii v 9 - 13 vv. - Tashkent, 1983. - S. 169-176.

22) Borisov A.A. Siriiskaia nadpis na sosude iz Taraza. Izvestia AN KazSSR, seria archeologii. -Vip.1, 1948.- S.105 - 108.

23) Darkevich V.P., Marshak B.I. O tak nazivaemom siriiskom blude iz Permskoi oblasti. SA, 1974- 2.-S.213 - 232.

24) Darkevich V.P. Argonavti Srednevekovia. - S.66-68.

25) Kokovtsev P.K. Neskolko novih nadgrobuin kamnei s christianskimi Syriiskimi nadpisiami iz Srednei Asii. Izvestia Imper. Akademii nauk.- 12, 1907. -S.428.

26) Djumagulov Ch. Yazik Syro - Turkic (Nestorianskih) pamiatnikov Kirgizii.-1971, Frunze. - S.

were encountered at present. So whilst excavating the Krasnorechensk citadel two kairaks with the Syrian inscription were found in the foundation of the 11th - 12th centuries construction. They were used twice ; one of them was dated to 789, another to 909. The first of them was titled "Yial - anch the Virgin".²⁷⁾ These were the earliest Syrian epitaphs being an intermediate link in a row of analogous finds embracing kairaks from Syria dated to the 5th - 6th centuries and those from Semirechie and east Turkestan dated to the 12th - 14th centuries as was mentioned above.²⁸⁾

Presence of the christian parish in Navaket was proved not only by the Syrian epitaphs on the grave stone but the Sogdian inscriptions on ceramics and lips of large vine vessels (khums). One of these said ; 'This khum is designed for Yaruk - Teghin the teacher. Master Pastun. Let the khum be infilled. Amen, amen!'. The word teacher in this inscription ment "mentor, tuitor" by analogy of the Turkic - Sogdian epitaphs. The word "Amen" left no room for doubt that Yaruk-Teghin was the head of the Christian parish.

Another khum was inscribed with words ; "Master of this khum is Pastun". One more vessel from the townsite Pokrovka west of Navaket showed an inscription in two lines translated as "This vessel is a gift of the Pakara parish. Drink this vine, Master when you are gay. Let be happy and blissful Ali-Bilge the Ruler whom the God granted happiness". The khum from Taraz was inscribed with words "The Ruler Iltag" ; the lip of a khum from Kismichi was inscribed with words. "Shirphan the Bishop".²⁹⁾ According to calligraphy, the inscription was dated to the 9th - 10th and even the dawn of the 11th century.

Judging by inscriptions on the vine vessels the vine was manufactured in Semirechie by Christians and was important in ritual doings. This suggestion is favoured by the vine capacity (10th - 11th centuries) unearthed in the

27) Istorija Kirgizskoi SSR. - T.1. - S.369-370

28) Goriacheva V.D. - Gorod zolotogo verbljuda. - Frunze, 1988. - S.62-68.

29) Livshits V.A. Sogdiitsy v Semirechie ; lingvisticheckie i ethnographicheskir svidetelstva. Krasnaia Rechka i Burana. - Frunze, 1989. - S. 81-83.

Stepninks townsite Aktobe. Its bottom was inlaid with burnt bricks marked with crosses.³⁰⁾

So, the archaeological and epigraphic records together with data from the Medieval chronicles showed the ways Christianity dispersed. One more religion (Religion of Mani) followed the Silk Road. It originated from Iran in the 3th century and quickly conquered a great number of countries from Italy to China. On the whole it was a synthesis of Zoroastrism and Christianity. The idea of Messiahship was borrowed by Mani followers from Christianity ; from Zoroastrism they inherited the idea of the ever lasting conflict between good and evil, light and darkness.

The Sogdians also contributed much to propagation of the Mani religion. At the dawn of the 8th century the residence of the supreme head of Mani supporters was in Samarkand. This religion coexisted in Central Asia with Buddhism for a long period although it was affected badly by Buddhism as is seen from pantheons, terminology and conceptions.³¹⁾

Supporters of Mani were known from Semirechie and south Kazakhstan among sedentary folk first of all. An early Uigurian record of Mani context compiled by his followers and titled "Sacred foliant of two entities" mentioned "the town of Argu - Talas (Altyn Argu, Talasy - ulushe, Talas - ulushe)" in which the book was written aimed at ; " to awake belief in the land of ten arrows" implying a well known town of Taraz.³²⁾

The Mani fraternities were also known from several more towns (Balasagun, Chidhilbalike) in Semirechie.

A bronze medallion with female effigy and a crescent, the symbols of the Mani astral deity found in Taraz, related evidently to Mani relics.³³⁾

Among peoples of the Kazakhstan Medieval towns were members of one

30) Baipakov K.M. Srednevekovaja gorodskaja Kultura Yuzhnogo Kazakhstana i Semirechis. - Alma-Ata, 1986. - S.184,ris. 79.

31) Litvinskii V.A., Zeimal T.I. Adjna-tepe. S.120-121

32) Kliashtorny S.G. Drevneturkskie runicheskie pamiatniki.-L.,1964.-S.130- 131.

33) Senigova T.I. Voprosi ideologii i kultov Semirechia. Novoe v archeologii Kazakhstana. Alma-Ata, 1968. - S.53-54. Ris.11.

more Zoroastrian religion which emerged in ancient Iran in the 7th - 6th centuries B.C. This religion propagated respect for four elements of the Universe, that is water, fire, earth, air ; this phenomenon can be ascertained in Central Asia, Sogd, in towns on the r.Syr-Darya and Semirechie by watching the tower-shaped structures which can be connected with cult of fire. They remained on the back-ground of Kostobe and Krasnaia Rechka townsites. In Central Asia and Kazakhstan however a separate variant of Zoroastrism different from the canonical type took advantage. It intermingled closely with the local paganism cults particularly with cult of fire, respect for ancestors, cult of animals ; sheep, horse, camel.

Finds connected with this religion implied ossuaries or khums for keeping bones, inhumation in terrestrial crypts - nauses, burials of pile of bones.³⁴⁾

Zoroastrian faith was conveyed to Kazakhstan by Sogdians in the 6th- 7th centuries, though its elements began to shape long before among the Saka - Massaghetian tribes inhabiting south Kazakhstan.

Recently expressive relics related to Sogdians were discovered in towns on the r.Syr - Darya.

Excavation of citadel in Kuiruk - tobe, the Otrar Oasis, unearthed a palace complex with 157.5 sq.m. gala hall(15 x 10,5 m) in the centre ; the whole complex was destructed by severe fire. The roof of the hall collapsed but saved ("conserved") - the remnants of ceiling and fragments of the carved ceiling frieze. The layer subjected to fire yielded ceramics, terracota, bronze coins of two kinds decorated with lion on one side and runic monograms " H + yw " or "at" on the other which dated the burnt out structural level to the first half of the 9th century. Preserved and cleaned parts of the frieze showed representations of deities, secular topics which were formerly associated under a single artistic and intellectual idea. One of the planks 122 × 25cm, showed a pair of deities resting in the zoomorph thrones. A male

34) Senigova T.I. Voprosi ideologii i kultov Semirechia (6 - 7 vv.).- S.54-61 ; Goriacheva V.D. Nadpisi Krasnorechenskogo gorodishcha. Krasnaia Rechka i Burana. - Frunze. 1984. - S.85-95.

deity in indented crown was sitting in a throne shaped in the form of two winged camels (?) with heads opposite. The right hand bent at the breast held a sceptre with three curved shoots at the end. That part of the plank which showed three kneeling figures nearly the zoomorph throne covered with carpet was suggested to be the lower part of the frieze. In the left hand the deity held a bowl or altar indented at the edge.

Female deity was sitting in a throne shaped in the form of two sheep with rolled horns. A band with blowing ends and a knot on the forehead was on her head. The right half- bent hand held something triangle.

Similar deities were represented on frescoes from Pedjikent and on ossuarium from the nearest kishlak (village) Syvaz in southern Sogd.

An interesting plank, 93×23cm, reproduced a scene of "attacking the palace" or "town". On the towers of the city walls crowned with dents stood two warriors with ready to act bows. Frontally a four - armed deity with winged crown on top was represented with two hands up ; one of them keeping something round. This scene may be correlated with the Sogdian performed in Mani style context which described an attack of the town patronized by "Nana the Mistress" who was known as Nana (Anachyt) one of the major Sogdian deities.

A 125×35cm plank with representation of persons deserves special attention. In the centre of it, in the vault there stood half turned to each other a man and a woman evidently noble. A woman figure was in fairly good state. She had round almond-eyed face, flat nose ; a flat cap was on her head, diadem on her forehead, bandaged plait hanging down on her shoulder. A man was grasping woman with his right hand, the left hand turned with palm to her face. Some details of this picture, i.e. figures behind, gestures suggested the scene implied match - making.

Collection of carved wood planks gave rich information on the religious conception of the peoples from the Syr-Darya towns. Along with local the Sogdian cult became very popular among the aristocratic tops at any rate.

The Sogdian religious conceptions intruded the Turkic ideology particularly

the Kangar (Kengeres) but most likely these conceptions were given new sense and adapted to the Turkic faith.³⁵⁾ Many cults connected with Zoroastrism continued in Kazakhstan even after the Islam appeared here.

So in the Otrar houses of the 12th century richly carved fireplaces - altars mounted in the floor were found by archaeologists and served for fire do³⁶⁾; these were merely glimmers of those grand Mazdeizm fires which were still fading in civil houses even in those where Islam was established and the Arabic writing was a reality. The poet Dakini attached to the court of the Chaganak Emir not accidentally wrote that out of all benefits of the Universe he had chosen vine, music, beauties' lips and Zoroastrian belief.

Islam however was planted violently not only by "fire and sword" but honeyed words of merchants - Muslims and gradually it superseded Christianity, Buddhism, Zoroastrism and local culte. The new religion was established in numerous towns on the Silk Road. Chroniclers described events of the 8th - 9th centuries and ascertained the Islamization process of the south Kazakhstan population. In 840 Nuh ibn Asad conquered Ispijab.³⁷⁾ His brother Ahmad ibn Asad marched in 859 to Shavgar and massacred several thousand peoples.³⁸⁾

The Karlukians who gained political domination in 766 in Semirechie and south Kazakhstan experienced the utmost effect of the Muslim culture. They were believed to adopt Islam as early as Khalif Mahdi reign (775 - 785)³⁹⁾ but it concerned evidently only a part of Karlukians because in 893 Ismail ibn Ahmad conquered Taraz and "forced the main church of this town to turn to moaque."⁴⁰⁾

35) Baipakov K.M. Srednevekovaiia gorodskaia kultura yuzhnogo Kazakhstana i Semirechia. -S. 48 - 58.

36) Baipakov K.M. Kult ognia na Syrdarie. Izvestia AN KazSSR. - 5 1987. - S. 51-61.

37) Volin S.L. Svedenia Arabskih istochnikov o doline r.Talas i smezhnihraionah. TIIE AN KazSSR. - T.8. 1960. - S.75.

38) Barthold V.V. Turkestan v epohu mongolskogo nashestvia.Soch.T.1.-M., 1963.S.268.

39) Barthold V.V. Ocherk istorii Semirechia.-Soch.T.2. Ch.1.- M.,1963. - S.39

40) Barthold V.V. Turkestan v epohu mongolskogo nashestvia.- Soch. T.1. - M., 1963. - S.268.

In the early 10th century Satuk, the progenitor of the Karakhanide dynasty, adopted Islam ; in 960 his son Bogra Khan Harun ben Musa declared Islam the state religion which gradually penetrated the nomadic surroundings. Ibn Haukal himself mentioned the Turks-Muslims wandering between Farab, Kenjida and Shash.⁴¹⁾

There is some information on Islam spread among Kipchaks.⁴²⁾

Excavated by archaeologist relics of the 9th - early 13th century testified to the formation of the urban Muslim culture in this area. The churches in Taras and Mirky were turned to mosques.⁴³⁾ As population professing Islam grew the cathedral mosques were built in towns. Al Makdisy wrote about one of them from Keder ; the ruins of this mosque were unearthed while excavating Kuiruktobe townsite correlated with Keder ; the mosque was in the centre of this town at the crossroads.

A mosque in Balasagun, one of the largest towns in Semirechie, was dated to the 10th - 11th centuries. The construction itself did not survive but the minaret still towering above the ruins.

Public thermae were considered as those constructions which appeared in Central Asia and Kazakhstan in association with Islam.⁴⁴⁾

The burial rite changed in the late part of the 9th - 10th centuries. It was typical for Muslims and performed according to certain canons that is in ground pits and in tombs made of adobe bricks. A dead was placed with his head northwest, face southward. Utensils were lacking in graves. The earliest necropolises were discovered in the Otrar oasis and dated to the 9th - 10th centuries ; the Burana necropolis related to the 10th century.⁴⁵⁾

41) MITT. T.2. - S.184.

42) Sbornik materialov po istorii Zolotoi Ordy. - T.1.-Spb.,1884.-S.234 ; Rodoslovnoe derevo turkov. Sochinenie Abul Gazi,khivinskogo khana.-Kazan.1906. - S.34.

43) Volin S.L. Svedenih arabskih istochnikov... - s.80-82.

44) Bolshakov S.G. - Gorod v kontse 8 - nachale 13 vv. Srednevekovii gored Srednei Asii. - L., 1973. - S.307 - 309.

45) Nurmuhanbetov B.N. Rannemusulmanskoe kladbishche bliz gorodisha Kuiruk - tobe. V glub vekov. - Alma-Ata, 1974. - S.86-94; Goriacheva V.B. Srednevekovie gorodskie century i arhitekturnie assembly Kirgisii. - Frunze, 1983. - S.38.

Monumental memorial structure appeared in necropolises in the 11th - 12th centuries. The earliest set of the Muslim mausoleums was encountered in Burana.

Two mausoleuums survived near the village of Golovachevka 18 km east of Taraz. The Babadji - Khatun one was assigned to the portal free mausoleums and dated back to the 10th century⁴⁶⁾ ; the Aisha-Bibi mausoleum of the 11th - 13th centuries (only the west wall survived) was peculiar due to its walls richly covered with tiles of plant and geometrical ornament.

The Sarli-tam mausoleum (12th century) remained on the lower Syr - Darya river. It had a high portal decorated with carved terracota planks ; it was dated to 11th - 12th centuries.⁴⁷⁾ Ceramics decorated with all possible features of the Arabic writing made up a valid group ; some of them expressed religious ideas, blessing or sermons.⁴⁸⁾

Copper and bronze articles were mainly those marked with religious versions and blessings.

To make in brief a conclusion on the "Silk Road", this bright phenomenon of world civilization, one should emphasize the whole complexity of the historical and spiritual life in the Medieval Epoch while discussing the trade roads from Europe to Asia and back which crossed on their way the boundless Kazakhstan steppes, high mountains, fertile planes and fascinating with all these splendid goods found, articles of ancient art and ways the religions dispersed. In the Kazakhstan towns which served the sites of contacts between West and East, Europe and Asia a fruitful ground was provided for interrelations and mutual enrichment of heterogeneous cultures. Sedentary citizens and nomadic tribes created due to interactions the amazing culture glimmering like a pearl in a crown of ancient cultures of the mankind.

46) Bernstamm A.N.K proishozhdeniju mavzoleia Babadji - Khatun. KSIIMK, Nyp. 61, 1956. - S.86-95.

47) Tolstov S.P. Po drevnim deltam Oksa i Yaksarta.-M,1961. - S.281.

48) Bolshakov S.G. Gorod v kontse 8 - nachale 13 v. - S. 275.