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THE ORIGIN OF HORSE BREEDING AND ITS ROLE IN HISTORY (based on the materials of Saryarka)

This article contains questions related to the domestication of the horse and formulated a number of basic considerations about the formation of early foci of horse breeding. In connection with the study of a number of monuments of the Great Steppe Zone, the opinion has been repeatedly expressed in archaeological science about the commonality and, perhaps, the simultaneity of horse domestication in the steppe regions of South-Eastern Europe, the Volga region and Kazakhstan. According to the authors, the domestication of horses occurred on the meridian migration routes of wild animals, including horses. Of all the routes in the ancient era, the most popular was the Central One (r.Sarisu), which passed through the steppes of Saryarka. The antiquity of this route is also indicated by various mythological stories associated with some of the junction stations of this route.

The authors believe that the epicenter of the coordinate system of the Eurasian steppe world was located in Saryarka, known as a political and cult center, as a cradle or father's house (atazhurt) for many peoples. In the vast steppe expanses of Central Kazakhstan, the most complex processes in the history of nomadism were maturing and the most acutely felt violation of world harmony, at the call of which the steppe passionaries sought.

Key words: Saryarka, the Great Steppe, domestication, horse, meridian route, horse breeding, steppe passionaries.

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Жылқышарушылығының шығу тегі және оның тарихтағы орны (Сарыарқа материалдары бойынша)

Бұл мақалада жылқыны қолға үйрету мәселесіне қатысты бірнеше сұрақтар қарастырылады және жылқы шаруашылығының алғашқы ошақтарының пайда болуына қатысты бірталай тұжырымдар жасалған. Ұлы дала аймағының бірталай ескерткіштер кешенін зерттеу барысында археология ғылымында Оңтүстік-Шығыс Еуропа, Еділ бойы және Қазақстанның далалық өңірлерінде жылқыны қолға үйретудің ортақ жүзеге асқаны, мүмкін тіпті бір уақытта болғандығы туралы пікірлер көп айтылды. Авторлардың пікірі бойынша жылқыны қолға үйрету жабайы жануарлардың, соның ішінде жылқылардың меридиандық миграция жолдарында іске асты. Көне заманда бұл маршруттардың ішіндегі ең таңдамалысы Сарыарқа даласы арқылы өтетін Сарысу өзенін бойлаған бағыт болды. Бұл жолдың көнелігі осы маршрут бойындағы басты торап қызмет атқарған станцияларға қатысты мифологиялық сюжеттердің көп болуымен де расталады.

Авторлардың жобалауы бойынша Еуразия далалық әлемінің координаттар жүйесінің эпицентрі саяси және культтік орталық және ата-жұрт қызметтерін қатар атқарған Сарыарқада орналасқан. Орталық Қазақстанның алапат далалық аймағында көшпелілер тарихындағы ең күрделі үдерістер пайда болып, олардың жаңа аттаныстарына себеп болатын әлемдік үйлесімнің бұзылуы нақты сезілетін.

Түйін сөздер: Сарыарқа, Ұлы дала, жылқыны қолға үйрету, жылқы, меридиандық маршрут, жылқы шаруашылығы, далалық пассионарилер.

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Происхождение коневодства и его роль в истории (по материалам Сарыарки)

В данной статье рассматриваются вопросы связанные с domestикацией лошади и сформулированы ряд основополагающих соображений насчет формирования ранних очагов коневодства. В связи с изучением целого ряда памятников Великой степной зоны в археологической науке не раз высказывалось мнение об общности и, может быть, одновременности domestикации лошади в степных районах Юго-Восточной Европы, Заволжья и Казахстана. По мнению автора domestикация лошадей произошла на меридианальных маршрутах миграции диких животных, в том числе лошадей. Из всех маршрутов в древнюю эпоху наиболее популярным был по реке Сарысу, который проходил через степи Сарыарки. О древности этого маршрута говорят и различные мифологические сюжеты, связанные с некоторыми узловыми станциями этого маршрута.

Как полагают авторы, эпицентр системы координат Евразийского степного мира находился в Сарыарке, известной как политический и культовый центр, как колыбель или отчий дом (ата жұрт) для многих народов. В огромных степных просторах Центрального Казахстана вызревали, наиболее сложные процессы в истории кочевничества и наиболее остро ощущалось, нарушение мировой гармонии, по зову которой стремились степные пассионарии.

Ключевые слова: Сарыарка, Великая степь, domestикация, лошадь, меридианальный маршрут, коневодство, степные пассионарии.

Introduction

The poor knowledge of the Neolithic monuments of Kazakhstan does not allow us to come close to the problem of the origins of horse breeding. However, interesting findings from the northern steppes of Kazakhstan are changing the situation. We mean the Botai settlement and a number of monuments of early horse breeding belonging to the Eneolithic era. We can immediately state that we do not refuse the temptation to link the formation of the cult of Alash (“*Atamyz –Alash, keregemiz – agash*” – our ancestor is Alash, our basis is a tree) with the early horse breeding culture of the Great Steppe. In this regard, there is a need to study the general situation, which would cover possible areas of origin of horse breeding, including in the central regions of Kazakhstan, known as Saryarka. This approach allows us to analyze the initial phase of horse domestication and the regularities of the process of forming a horse breeding farm.

Materials and methods

The tasks set in the article were achieved through a comprehensive study of the problem, primarily due to the analysis of the role of meridional routes through the central regions of the Great Steppe. Historical information testifies to the importance of this direction of movement of people and capital in antiquity, in the Middle Ages and modern times. The

article is based on two basic principles of historical science – historicism and objectivity. The study uses a neoclassical approach, which is expressed in an active appeal to both written sources and the oral tradition of the steppe peoples.

In connection with the study of a number of monuments of the Great Steppe Zone, archaeological science has repeatedly expressed the opinion «about the commonality and, possibly, the simultaneity of horse domestication in the steppe regions of Southeastern Europe, the Volga region and Kazakhstan» (Makarova, Nurumov, 1987:131). However, scientists have noticed one interesting feature in the monuments of the Neolithic-Eneolithic period of the Eurasian steppes, belonging to the zone of distribution of ancient horse breeders. As noted by the famous researcher V.F. Zaybert, as we move westward, the share of horses in the overall structure of the farm gradually decreases (Zaybert, 1993: 198).

Most paleozoologists who have studied bone remains from Neolithic-Eneolithic settlements of Eurasia agree that the Northern Black Sea region, as well as the steppe territory of Kazakhstan, are areas of horse domestication. It should be noted that Kazakh researchers L.A.Makarova and T.M.Nurumov raised the question that monuments of the Botai type can testify to the earliest forms of horse breeding, i.e. they assumed an earlier domestication of the horse on the territory of the republic. The available materials allow us to speak

about the dominance of horse breeding in the structure of the economy of the steppe inhabitants of the Neolithic-Eneolithic period. The study of the problems of the origin of horse breeding is also actively being worked out in the research of foreign scientists (Peter Forster, 2012; C.Z. Lei, 2009). A large number of works on horse breeding of a historical and ethnographic nature have been published by Turkish researchers (Kafesoğlu I., 1984; Cinar A.A., 1993).

Results and discussion

It is likely that the Northern Black Sea region and the Ural-Irtysh interfluvium are not the main centers of ancient horse breeding in Eurasia. Numerous Kazakh folk legends connect the beginning of the domination of cattle breeding as the main type of economic activity with the territory of Central Kazakhstan (Saryarka). In the second half of August 2021, during the expedition, as part of the implementation of a scientific project under a grant from the Committee of Science of the Ministry of Education and Science of the Republic of Kazakhstan (IRN grant – AP09562202), we conducted research in several districts of Central Kazakhstan. Since ancient times, Kazakhs have called these areas, united under the common name *Kazylyk*, «*mal kindigi*», that is, «the umbilical cord / the beginning of cattle breeding» (Materials of the expedition, 2021: 5-12).

It has long been known in scientific circles that Central Kazakhstan, which in the Kazakh environment is known as Saryarka, in ancient times was one of the most powerful centers of ancient metallurgy and a country with developed transport communications at that time. Numerous archaeological and ethnographic materials testify to the participation of the population of Central Kazakhstan in the main civilizational breakthroughs of mankind. It is known that large groups of people throughout the Stone age moved along the meridian (north-south) directions through the steppe regions. Meridian connections with the civilizations of the south in the Siberian expanses were also primordial, permanent and natural, their existence was favored by the direction of rivers and valleys,” writes the famous researcher I.L. Kyzlasov (Kyzlasov, 2003:10).

In the Neolithic era, in the steppes of Saryarka, and in the adjacent areas of Betpakdala (Hungry Steppe), along the routes of the Great Meridian Way, pockets of Neolithic culture appeared in the

form of small centers of the flint industry, and early metallurgical developments.

In the Bronze Age, the bulk of goods exported from the steppe zone were ingots of tin (*kalay*), copper (*zhez*), gold (*altyn*) or non-ferrous metal alloys such as bronze (*kola*), various metal products (tips, etc.). At this time, large metallurgical centers of metal mining, such as Dzhezkazgan, operate in the steppe. Academician K.I. Satpayev noted that at least 1 million tons of copper ore were mined only in ancient Dzhezkazgan, at the Uspen-Neldy deposit -200,000 tons, at Kenkazgan-800,000 tons, etc. (Satpayev, 2017: 44-49). It must be assumed that no less copper ore was mined on the territory of Eastern Kazakhstan (Ridder, Zyryan) and Northern Kazakhstan (Imantau). Processing centers (Atasu, etc.) also operated in the steppe. Along with the emergence of ancient metallurgy and proto-urban settlements in the central steppe regions, large transshipment stations and cities specializing in metal trade appeared on the southern outskirts of the Great Steppe. Copper, tin and other metals mined in Central Kazakhstan were delivered in the form of ingots to cities along the Syrdarya River, and from there they were transported to Near Asia, Northern India, etc. One of the major medieval cities of the middle reaches of the Syr Darya was called Disroin (Cape Kala – the City of copper). M. Kashgari writes that this name came from the metal walls of the fortress (Kashgari, 1998: 209).

In this direction, the Avestan stories about the relationship between the Aryans (Arians) and the Turks (Turans) should also be considered. In these texts we see warlike tribes worshiping the same sacred symbols, caring for the same animals, roaming the vast expanses of the steppe, holding their festivals and wakes at the Vorukash Sea, at the high Hara. The Vorukash Sea is identified by us with the Aksakal-Barby Lake (the mouth of Turgai and Irgiz), and the high Hara with the Karatau Mountains. The lord of water/earth Ardvi, revered by them, is carried on a chariot drawn by horses:

Here is Ardvi in the chariot,

Holding the bridle, striving;

She is being driven by four

of the same breed, white tall stallions (Avesta, 1993:128).

In the plots of the Avestan hymns, pictures of the everyday life of early horse breeders are hidden. Probably, even in the Neolithic era in steppe Eurasia, those natural conditions developed that contributed to an increase in the number of wild horses, which then contributed to their successful domestication.

As evidenced by numerous studies from the field of natural sciences, landscape features of the steppe expanses of Central Kazakhstan. The habitat of these tribes in the «Avesta» is indicated by the country «Arianam-Vajja». In a number of modern studies, this territory is identified with the central steppe expanses of Kazakhstan, that is, with Saryarka. “The climatic conditions of the Eastern and Northeastern Aral Sea correspond much more to the description of the Avesta,” B.I. Vainberg noted (Vainberg, 1999: 198). These assumptions are also confirmed by our expedition studies conducted in various regions of Central and Northeastern Kazakhstan, where relict forests and groves in the north are combined with semi-desert and desert territories in the south, which in our opinion formed a kind of ecosystem of early horse breeding (Expedition materials, 2021: 10-16).

In the Early Iron Age and the Middle Ages, the most intensive movements of people and goods occurred in the direction of the Irtysh-Syr Darya. At all times, the nomadic population of Saryarka and residents of small steppe settlements have actively participated in these relations. In the Golden Horde and post-Golden Horde times, about a million people lived in the spaces along the meridional routes, who were in a state of constant migration from north to south and back.

It is interesting to note three main directions of the Great Meridian route.

- The western route from the Volga region and the southern Urals to Bukhara. The route (Ibn Batuta traveled along it in the XIV century) passes through Astrakhan, Saray, Saraychik, Urgench and further. In the XVIII-XIX centuries, routes from Orenburg, Troitsk and other cities through Mugajars, Aral Karakums, through the lower course of the Syr Darya (through the ruins of the ancient Dzhanakent, located 50 km from the old riverbed of the Syr Darya, on its left side) were popular. E. K. Meyendorff, who traveled from Orenburg to Bukhara at the beginning of the XIX century, traveled a total of 1500 km (Meyendorff, 1975:25-26).

- Central route. This is the main transport highway from Siberia to Mavrennahr connecting the capital of Siberia, Tobolsk (Isker) and Bukhara. Various branches of this route pass through the steppes of Northern and Central Kazakhstan. In ancient times, caravans with furs, non-ferrous metals, with numerous herds of horses, etc. followed this path. In the Middle Ages, this way was mastered by Arab and Persian merchants who went to the Kazakh steppes, and then to Siberia in search of trading partners. In the XVIII century, this

route was followed by Russian merchants (mainly from the Volga and Siberian Tatars), diplomatic missions, various agents, etc. As noted, in many eastern sources, non-ferrous metal ingots were in particular demand among merchants. Kazakhs of Central Kazakhstan up to the beginning of the XIX century offered caravans and diplomatic missions passing through their steppes to buy copper from them (Nazarov, 1968: 62). Since the most dangerous and difficult part of this route goes along the Sarysu River (through Betpak Dala), this route is called the Sarysu road in the literature.

- The third route of the Great Meridian Way passes through the territory of East Kazakhstan and Zhetysay. In this case, the transshipment points were located in the middle reaches of the Irtysh, including the center of the Kimak (kimek, Kemek) tribal community – the city of Kalabalgasun. If the caravans went from the Kimak settlements in the Middle Irtysh region, then they went up the Tunduk steppe river to the Karkaraly Mountains, and from there to the middle course of the Chu River (Shui), where traders chose the next route. From there you can go to the cities of Semirechye, in particular to ancient Taraz, or turn right towards Turkestan and Tashkent.

In our opinion, of all these routes in the ancient era, the central one, i.e. the Sarysu route, was the most popular. The antiquity of this route is also indicated by various mythological stories that we have collected from local residents living along this route. So, in the steppes of Saryarka, the legend of Saint Talmas-ata is popular (the ruins of the mausoleum of the same name are located 50 km south of the city of Zhezkazgan). The legend describes an interesting story that the saint, who knew the language of birds and animals, who called them his son or daughter, had three wives. The elder Bolgan-ana lived in the upper reaches of the Sarysu River (i.e. at the confluence of the Kengir Sarysu River), the middle wife Belen-ana lived in the lower reaches of the Sarysu (near the lake. Telekul-Tat), and the youngest – Akbikesh lived in the foothills of Karatau (i.e. near the ancient city of Sozak in southern Kazakhstan). Saint Talmas had a habit of going on the road in the morning from his younger wife Akbikesh to arrive at the elder wife in the evening. At the average wife, he had a habit of making a lunch break. One day Saint Talmas changed this habit of his and stayed overnight with his average wife. Then the elder in anger relieved a small need in the river, from which its waters turned yellow (i.e. Sarysu) (Materials of the expedition

2021: 16-19; information presented by resident S. Botakara Dosovich Tursyn (1933). This legend, of course, was intended to serve one task, i.e. the designation of the main route of the Great Meridian Way on its most difficult section. Today we have the ruins of ancient settlements and large architectural structures along this site. By nature, the entire length of this route is a solid desert landscape (Betpakdala, etc.). The characters designated in the legend cannot be identified by us in any way. In addition, toponymy also indicates an earlier origin of the bearers of this culture (Materials of the expedition, 2021: 21-25; Information about toponyms we collected in the southern regions of the Karaganda region). It must be assumed that such toponyms as Alatagy, which is certainly associated with the period of wild horses' habitation in these places, as well as the above legend are monuments of the early stage of our history.

Thus, the meridian path from south to north as a scientific topic is poorly studied, and a review of the available literature indicates a variety in the choice of issues and a wide palette of views when presenting the material. Science should find out the frequency and intensity of the path's actions at various stages of the history of Eurasia, determine the main routes and branches that eventually covered a huge territory from the taiga expanses to the Central Asian interfluvium, and then Egypt, Iran, China, India and other regions.

The Great Meridian Way since the domestication of the horse and the emergence of wheeled carts (III thousand BC) has acquired a decisive significance. It has retained its communicative importance up to the latest period of the history of Eurasia. At all times, intensive political contacts (diplomatic missions), exchange (*satovka*) and trade, penetration of new technologies and diffusion of cultural values took place along the routes of the Great Meridian Way. In our opinion, it is the steppe valleys along this route that have become the main foci of horse domestication. The Great Meridian Way (along the north-south route) was the most rational of all possible ways of farming among the late nomads. In the process of domestication of the horse, this route became fundamental and played a huge role in the formation of the economic and cultural type of the Kazakh type of nomadism. Kazakh folklore says about the origin of horses: «*Zhylky zhelden zharalady*», which literally means “the horse came from the wind», it is assumed that it was originally a steppe animal. In the full version: «*siyr sudan, zhylky zhelden, tuye sordan, koi auadan, kisi topyraktan, eshki saitannan*» – a cow from water, a horse from

the wind, a camel from the salt marsh, a ship from the air, a man from the earth, a goat from the devil (Potanin, 1972:303).

We can assume the existence of several economic and cultural regions on the territory of Kazakhstan in the Neolithic-Eneolithic period (V-III thousand BC). The first one is forest-steppe, represented as carriers of the Botai culture, the second one functioned as a meridian system that arose, most likely, on the basis of hunting traditions among tribes that moved behind herds of wild horses. This latter was closely connected with the settled agricultural south in a broad sense, and with the Turkestan (including Tashkent) region directly. Our expedition studies conducted as part of the implementation of a scientific project under a grant from the Committee of Science of the Ministry of Education and Science of the Republic of Kazakhstan (IRN grant – AP09562202) in August 2021 in several districts of Central Kazakhstan indicate that local horse breeding farms still cherish the traditions of meridian movement from north to south, that is, in winter they drive their herds to the south, and in summer they graze on northern pastures (Materials of the expedition, 2021: 21-25; Information about the methods of horse breeding were collected from the following informants – herdsman B. Akylbekov (born 1964); the owner of a large horse breeding farm A. Aldebekov (born 1969). A resident of the village told us about the earlier traditions of local horse breeding. Azhy of Yerementau district of Akmola region Akhmet Zhumabek (Zhumazhan) Rakybekuly (born in 1971).

Based on various legends and beliefs of the Kazakhs, in the earliest period of domestication of wild animals, steppe tribes bred cows earlier than horses. Let's turn to the legend with the interesting title «The Legend of the horse and cow competition»: « Before, Kazakhs had only cows; people did not know horses at all; bulls were decorated with horns and tails with owl feathers and everyone rode them – both poor and rich people did not disdain. Something flowed from the nose of the cows, people began to ask God and he then created them a horse out of the wind. The wind rose with dust – and the herd came running. People let a cow and a horse run, the cow got ahead, the horse stayed behind. Both were tired and thirsty. The cow was the first to reach the groundhog's hole and asked him: «*Suyr sasyk, su kaida?*» (smelly groundhog, where is the water?). Offended, the groundhog pointed her to the stinking, stagnant water. The cow got drunk and ran on. The horse came running after and asked: «*Suyr zhupar,*

su kaida?» (groundhog with the smell of mint, where is the water?). The groundhog pointed out to her good, clean and lovely water. The cow, having drunk bad water, could not run fast and the horse was ahead of her” (Potanin, 1972: 52).

Conclusion

Thus, the domestication of the horse and the widespread development of horse breeding in the Neolithic-Eneolithic era in the steppe expanses of Eurasia gave rise to the formation of a supersystem, a kind of historical and cultural phenomenon known in historical and ethnographic science as pastoral/nomadic cultures.

The advantage of the meridian path was directly related to the proximity of the developed agricultural and urban population in the south. The marginal Turkestan-Tashkent oasis connected with the Great Steppe adjoined the Transoxiana center of sedentary culture. Probably in the Late Neolithic era, when such urban centers as Namazgi, Jeytun, etc. operated in the south, in the south of Kazakhstan, at the junction of two economic and cultural types, the first urban settlements appeared. It is obvious that the reason for the appearance of early cities in the Turkestan-Tashkent oasis (along the Syrdarya River) was trade and exchange between nomads and farmers. Trade is considered as the main city-forming factor in the Central Asian two rivers, and especially along the Syr Darya River. The city is growing, first of all, as a point of trade, secondly, as a center of handicraft production, and only later as an administrative and political center.

It was said that the economic development of the meridian paths by the local population probably dates back to the Late Neolithic era. Before that, this path through the Great Steppe served as a migration route for wild animals, wild horses-tarpans, kulans, antelopes, which were hunted by local tribes. In various archaic versions of ancient legends, both hunting and horse breeding plots are found in parallel and interspersed. So, in the fairy tale “Er-Tostyk” the main character is looking for his brothers on foot: “Er-Tostyk gave his elderly parents meat of animals and poultry, and he set off on a journey. Throwing a bow over his shoulder, picking up a spear, putting iron boots on his feet, he wandered for 4 years and 4 months, he saw many places. His friend is a bow, his food is a bow (on the road, a bow is the first assistant in the extraction of food). Oohing and aahing Er Tostyk climbed the mountain, and a herd of horses appeared before his eyes. Coming closer to them, he

came across a lonely yurt on the way. He entered to rest and saw: there is a big pot with boiled meat on the hearth” (Margulan, 1985:21).

The central or Sarysu meridian highway crossing the Betpakdala desert was covered with legends in ancient times. In the above-mentioned fairy tale “Er-Tostyk”, the place originally cursed is called Sorkuduk, located on the border of Betpakdala. Kenzhekey’s father warns his daughter with the following parting words: «Say hello to your daughter, let her not stop her nomads camp on Sorkuduk, if she does not obey, there will be trouble». But old Ernazar, the father of the Er-Tostyk, is not inclined to accept other people’s advice, which is why the misfortunes and adventures of this family soon began. Caught in the net of a shapeshifter (*zhalmauыз kempir*) Ernazar sacrifices his beloved son: «...Ernazyk took a six-legged piebald horse from the herd, took a clockwork seven-legged red horse, on the way he met Kenzhekey, who told him the following...:

«At the top of Sorkuduk,

The father-in-law spent the night to his misfortune.

Fearing for his life,

Gave dear son to the old woman Zhalmauыз».

Meridian routes through the southern deserts also served for steppe tribes traveling to distant migrations. Thus, the Kazakhs of Western and Central Kazakhstan in the XIX century remembered the peoples who left the Great Steppe in ancient times. In the oral tradition of Kazakhs there are statements in recitative: “*Zheti el kelip, zheti el ketken*” (seven peoples came and went to these places).

In the scientific literature, the transition to permanent routes and the stabilization of the winter camps of the tribes of the Great Steppe is associated with the onset of the Saka era. We are talking about the formation not so much of stable routes, but most likely the emergence of a complex economic and cultural way of life that combined nomadic cattle breeding in the northern regions and settled agriculture in the south. At times, due to internal reasons (demographic), or under the pressure of external circumstances (lack of food, attacks of enemies), a part of the population splashes out of the Great Steppe Belt of Eurasia. These movements, assessed in historiography as aggressive, conquering, had a cardinal impact on the fate of the settled cultures of the East and West. At the same time, some movements of the ancient period were characterized by reversibility. So, the

legendary leader of the nomads Oguz Khan (Uyz Khan) after each hike, he returns to his native yurt, to the Er-tag and Gere-tag mountains (i.e., to Saryarka) (Abilgazy, 1991: 22).

As we assume, at the beginning of the first millennium BC, ethnogenetic legends about the origin of the Alash people, the indigenous substratum of steppe tribes, were finally formed on the territory of the Great Steppe. Ancient mythological stories recorded the nature of the ethnic structure of the nomads, headed by the sons or relatives of the legendary ancestor of the peoples of the Great Steppe Belt of Eurasia, Alash Khan. The very meaning of this word also goes back to the way of life and the name of the horse among the earliest horse breeders of the Great Steppe. During the expedition, we were convinced that in many areas of Central Kazakhstan, legends about Alasha are still being told ((Materials of the expedition, 2021: 17-19; Information is provided by a resident of S.Botakara Dosuly Tursyn (born in 1933). It is obvious that the stabilization that occurred at the beginning of the I millennium BC led to the formation of uniform forms of material culture (such as a cart, a yurt, horse harness, a costume).

Subsequently, despite various vicissitudes of fate, the continuity in the ethno-cultural development of the Great Steppe Belt of Eurasia does not actually change and is inherited in the XV century by Kazakh tribes. The most obvious proof of this fact is the construction undertaken by the Kazakhs in Saryarka in the XV- early XVI centuries (probably under Kasym Khan) mausoleum of Alash Khan. With the onset of the total crisis of the steppe nomadic culture and the loss of political leadership, the post-Golden Horde tribes turned to this legendary cult figure, personifying the unity of the world of the nomads of Eurasia.

Geographical and toponymic landmarks in legends and legends from the cycle “Alasha Khan» clearly indicate the existence of routes along the south-north line: “Get over the Qaratau. There are Ulytau and Kishitau mountains. Go to Karakengir, Zhezdikengir, Kudaiberdy, lay the foundation and pay taxes. “Allegedly, with such a parting word, the legendary Maik bi sends a young royal exile, Alashakhan, to the steppe. To accompany him, he determines a hundred horsemen led by his eldest son Uysyn. Their way lies towards Saryark through the mountains of Aktau, Ortau, the rivers Chu and Sarysu: «Aktau, Ortaudan asyp, Shu men Sarysudan koktey otip, Mayky bidin aytkan zherine keldy» (After passing Aktau and Ortau, spending the spring in Shu

and Sarysu, they came to the place that Maiky bi spoke about) (Kopeyuly, 2013: 43). Subsequently, when a steppe society of three hundred riders was formed, they raised a piebald boy on an *alash* (homespun carpet of stripes) and declared him their ruler. As the legend tells, this outstanding event took place in the mountains of Ulytau, which is the geographical center of the Great Steppe Plain.

In contrast to the specified Zhetysu region, a diversified cattle breeding economy has developed in the Northern Black Sea region and in the Ural-Irtysh interfluvium, but with a predominance of horse breeding. It was supplemented by hunting, fishing, and domestic crafts. In these ecological niches, as V.F.Zayber points out, “herds of horses lived within a radius of 150-200 km ... the movement of herds was radial-circular or limited-radial” (Zaybert, 1993:170).

The materials discovered as a result of archaeological excavations in the Botay settlement speak about the settlement of the population of these regions. This is due to the presence of a diverse food supply, a large number of water sources, natural shelters from forests (*orman, togai*). In our opinion, the Botai horse breeding farm originates from the central steppe regions of Kazakhstan, from the Saryarka expanses, where the axis of the Great Steppe Culture of Eurasia passed. The Botai horse breeding farm originates from the central steppe regions of Kazakhstan, from the Saryarkin expanses, where the axis of the Great Steppe Culture of Eurasia passed.

Despite all the upheavals of the nomads, this territory is the beginning and foundation of ethnicity, the core of the ethnocultural traditions of the Kazakhs. The main axis along which the vital energy of the Great Steppe functioned was connected with the meridian path. There is no doubt that the epicenter of the coordinate system of the Eurasian steppe world was in Saryarka, known as a political and cult center, as the motherland or father's house (*ata zhurt*). Here, since the time of the legendary Oguz Khan, the most complex processes in the history of nomadism have matured and the violation of world harmony was most acutely felt, at the call of which the steppe passionaries sought.

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