

CHRISTIAN HERITAGE IN CULTURE OF THE CENTRAL ASIA AND KAZAKHSTAN

Nurzhanov Arnabay

Institute of Archaeology of A.H. Margulan, Dostyk av., 44, Almaty, 050010, Kazakhstan

Karibzhanova Ekaterina

Abai Kazakh National Pedagogical University, Dostyk str., 13, Almaty, 050010, Kazakhstan

Kadirkulova Gulim

Almaty Academy of Economics and Statistics, Zhandosov str., 59, Almaty, 050035, Kazakhstan

Krupko Igor

Institute of Archaeology of A.H. Margulan, Dostyk av., 44, Almaty, 050010, Kazakhstan

Kudaibergenova Zhanar

Abai Kazakh National Pedagogical University, Dostyk str., 13, Almaty, 050010, Kazakhstan

Correspondence: Arnabay Nurzhanov, Institute of Archaeology of A.H. Margulan, Dostyk av., 44, Almaty, 050010, Kazakhstan

Abstract: Central Asia from the earliest times to the present day has been the scene for many cross-cultural contacts of many religions and cultural worlds. Each of them had their own solid foundation, organization and their places of worship, which in a certain period of time coexisted. Through dialogue and constructive cooperation they made a worthy contribution to the development of spiritual culture in early medieval civilization. Essentially peoples of Central Asia were tolerant to faith and positively perceived creative side of each religion. That is why the Central Asian region was the area of development and distribution of various religions and faiths and also relay these religions to China and the Far East.

Keywords: Christianity, Turkic peoples, tradition, church, culture.

1. Introduction

History of spreading the Christian communities in the East is more understandable in the context of the emergence of Christianity and its teachings, as well as its relationship (which was often very difficult) with dominant in Iran, Central Asian and Chinese local religious systems and political situation. The emergence of Christianity was like a refreshing first blow of the incoming storm that erupted in the torn in the torn by internal strife Jewish Diaspora. John the Baptist and Jesus Christ were some kind of intermediary between the teachings accessible only to the elite and sermons which were addressed to the masses, from which Christianity had grown (Svenitskaya, 1987). Truly the birthplace of Christianity, where it has formed and got its social roots, can be called Syria and Asia Minor. The word "Christianity" itself according to the tradition was born in Antioch from the Greek word "Christ" – "Messiah." Indicative in this regard is that one of the earliest work of the New Testament - apocalypse, was addressed to the Christian communities of the seven cities of Asia Minor (Bogomolov, 1994).

Christian teachings on the West and East have the same basis and originate from apostolic times. It is believed that the Apostles Thaddeus and Thomas preached in Persia and founded a Christian church in Jerusalem, the second one was founded - the Antiochian (Syrian) Church in 37 year, which from the beginning retained considerable autonomy with regard to the language of the church. Assuming that the Eastern church dates back to the mission of St. Thaddeus (of seventy), who established Christianity in Edessa (Urhat) nearest to Antioch city to the east of it. Researchers of the Chinese tradition of Christianity brought the legend about preaching of the apostle Thomas in China, who suffered a martyr's death penalty in Madras in 53 year. (Seleznev, 2001). In India, the St. Thomas Christians call themselves followers of the Christian doctrine.

In areas adjacent to Iran, and in Iran itself in 225AD there were already established Christian bishopric. (Lukonin, 1969). It is known that a large number of Christians was part of the Roman captive soldiers, Shapur I settled them in the cities that he founded on the lands of the Middle East which he captured during the western military campaigns in the middle of the III century. Christian traditions and the first Christian communities appeared in the cities of Iran: Shad – Shapur, Weh – Shapur and Antioch Shapur. There is evidence of the spread of Christianity within Iran already in the III century – Christian catacombs at Kharg Island, which were described in detail by A.Steyn and E. Herzfeld.

Very important theological center of the East Syrian Christianity was the so-called "School of Persians" founded in the IV century at Edessa. At the beginning of the V century with the full translation of Greek works into Syrian was done by theologian Theodore of Mopsuestia. In the Syrian tradition he included his Christological views about God's Word and Jesus as a man of the two entities. In the 20-ies of the V century namely his teachings formed the basis of the Christian doctrine of Nestorius (Hassan et al., 2019; Ahmadi et al, 2014).

On the Silk Road spread not only the technological and cultural achievements of other peoples of the East, but also religious teachings. Nestorianism was widely represented, a heretical trend in Christianity that arose in Byzantium in the fifth century. The founder of this direction was the Patriarch of Constantinople Nestorius. According to his teaching, Jesus Christ is a man who, having overcome human nature, became a messiah. The name "Son of God" Nestorius almost never used in relation to the "Word incarnate." The word was "the Son of God" before the incarnation;

after the incarnation, it can not be so called separately from human nature. Later, Nestorius recognized that the connection takes place at the time of the Annunciation. He considered the Virgin Mary not to be a Mother of God, but a man-woman, since she was a man and could not "give birth to God." The dual nature of Christ - human and divine, according to Nestorius, is only in relative unity, never completely merging (Zare & Rajaeepur, 2013).

Warning against the term "Theotokos", Nestorius wondered: "Does God have a mother?" - giving a negative answer, referring to the words of the apostle Paul about the deity of Christ: without a father, without a mother, without a clan. Later Nestorius took a more moderate position, replacing that word with the term "Christ-bearing."

2. Materials and Methods.

Significant event in the life of the Church of the East can be called the Cathedral, in Markab (424 year), which declared independence from the Patriarchate of Antioch, and declared the local Catholic patriarch. After the Council of Ephesus in 431 East Church actually started to support Nestorius. Western Church recognized his teaching as heresy, which was final diplomatic break between Eastern (Syro-Persian) and the Western Roman Byzantine church.

Christians from Persia (mostly Syrians) further spread in Central and East Asia through the numerous commercial land and sea routes. The Great Silk Road brought Syro-Persian preachers in Bactria and Sogdiana already at the III century, and later in the Syrdarya basin and Zhetisu.

Among the first cities with Christian communities are mentioned: Merv, Samarkand and Termez, through which passed the earliest line of caravan routes. Successful promotion of Christianity in northern Khorasan ended up with foundation of metropolis in 420 in the city of Merv.

In Merv the remains of Christian monuments preserved by the South Turkmenistan archaeological complex expedition under the leadership of M. Masson were discovered. This is primarily a small monastery, the ruins of which in the form of an oval house are in the northeast corner of Gyaur-kala (the ancient Merv) (5.p.155-179). The building is built of 40x40x10-12 cm raw material on the ruins of the Parthian house, which served as a platform for it with a height of more than 3 m and an area of 58x42 m.

The second monument of Christianity in Merv is the necropolis of the neighborhood of Gyaur-kala. It occupied an area of about 3 hectares and by the time of its investigation it consisted of 7 hillocks, which make up the northern and southern groups of hills.

In 1993 in Erk-kala worked together with the South-Turkmenistan archaeological complex expedition employees of the College of London University "International Merv Project". English archaeologists in the Late Sassanian layer found a ceramic casting mold for casting Nestorian crosses and pendants (6. P.51).

Merv, and after the Arab conquest in 651, remained the residence of Christian metropolitans. In the Syrian literature, Nestorian hierarchs are known: Bishop Feodor (VIth.), Elijah (VIIth.), Metropolitan Joseph (VIIIth.), which indicates the long stay of Christians in Merv and his district, even in the first centuries of Islamic domination in the region. It is known that the Nestorian community was located in the Poi Baban area to the north of the Sultan-kala settlement, in the garden of which the last Sassanid king Ezdegird III was buried (7. pp.96-97).

Among the outstanding scholars of the Merves, medieval sources mention the Christian physician of the philosopher and mathematician Sahl Rabban and his son Ali ibn-Sahl Rabbana (late VIII - early 9th century AD), as well as the Christian doctor Ibn-Matza, who left behind valuable works on medicine and medicinal plants (8. p.45-47). This is a vivid example of the fact that in Merv and its district, in the Middle Ages, Christians continued their activity in the Muslim world. The second largest center of Christians in Central Asia, primarily of historical sense, becomes Sogdia. Christians lived in the town of Sogdian merchants Pendjikent where we can see their influence in the religious iconography of monumental art and Christian documents - Syrian writing on ostrakon with a margin of text from the Syrian Bible and a picture of Syrian Nestorian cross. It is believed that the Syrian language, as the language of the Nestorian church was subject of special study in Sogdia, a model of academic writing of which was Penjikent ostrakon. (Nikitin, 1984). From other centers Sogdia, first of all should be noted a Christian church in Bukhara, on the spot where according to Narshakhi, mosque was built.

In VI century there was laid permanent trade route linking Sogdia and Byzantium across the North Caucasus. (Yerusalimskaya, 1985). Due to this, some researchers have linked the Turkish issued coins specifically with trade with Byzantium. So, in Samarkand Sogdia there are known copper coins of Turkic rulers dated to the middle of VII century with the bust on the obverse image. On both sides of the head placed crosses with friction ends, sometimes lower end is longer than the other ones (Rtveladze, 1992), the prototype for their images served Byzantine solidi of Justinian I (527-565) and Justinian II (565-578) with a portrait of the emperor and his wife Sophia. Turkic rulers of Sogdia could be Christians, but could also make imitation Solid for international trade. So ustrushan Afshin also minted coins with Christian symbols, and the type of coin was definitely borrowed from Byzantium (Ivanitskii, 1994).

The propagation of Christian themes in Sogd, borrowed from Byzantine textile ornament, is indicated by silk-zindanachi fabrics discovered in the burial grounds of the North Caucasus, as well as stored in museums in Europe. In addition to individual borrowed ornamental elements and motifs, several Sogdian silk fabrics that directly copy Byzantine patterns can be noted. The most expressive of them is a fabric with a symmetrical image in medallions of the scene of Abraham's sacrifice. The copying of fabrics with Christian stories in Sogd's workshops could not be accidental and was made per specific consumer, both during export and in Sogd, where they could be representatives of the Nestorian community.

The ties of the Sogdian Nestorians with the West and, above all, with the Syropalestinian cultural world are intensified during the period of the pontificate of Timothy I (780-829), when the missionary activity of the Nestorian clergy reaches a special height. It was this time of the 7th-9th cc. is dated to a massive bronze censer, found in Urgut near Samarkand. At the bottom on the outside is a relief cross with large beads at the ends. To the same group of imported Syrian products it is necessary to include a bronze native uniformly cross, accidentally found on Afrashab. The cross is dated VIII century.

Of great importance for the history of the cultures of the early Middle Ages is the influence of the processes of perception and assimilation on the local soil of motifs and beliefs, their transition to the category of ornamental decorative elements, the preservation of the original symbolism with some reinterpretation or simplification of semantics. No less important is the fact that the penetration of Christianity was not only reflected in the iconographic images and elements of the ornament, but it undoubtedly penetrated into the minds, forming a system of thought and feelings.

Archaeological investigations in the territory of Khorezm also indicate spread of the Christian population in the Aral Sea region. In 1964 - 1965 in the necropolis Mizdahkan Christian burial building was found, it was the collective burial place of the members of the Christian community (Yagodin, & Hodzhaylov, 1970). It is dated to the end of VII and the first half of VIII. Here on eight ossuaries was discovered composition consisting of a cross with stars and a "cross - Stars" connecting the elements of the star and the cross (Yagodin, & Hodzhaylov, 1970). In the center of four-cross with flared ends of its corners originate pointed rays, on both sides are located eight-pointed stars and figures with elements of stars and crosses. Crosses on the ossuaries of Mizdahkan are probably not just decorative elements but probably religious symbols that show the belonging of the buried people to Christianity.

On Khorezm tombs, as well as on the ossuaries of Chacha and Asia Minor gravestones, there are combined pagan and Christian symbols. For example grapevine served in local cults as a symbol of fertility and rebirth, but could be interpreted differently by Christians. Christian cross becomes a sacred symbol of the god, and the stars replaced by the image of the Mother of God (Bogomolov, 1994).

The caravan routes of Central Asia are represented by a necklace with strung medallions-cities on gold trade threads. One of such brilliant medallions is Khojent, a trade route through which passed many centuries. Khojent is an ancient city. In the medieval period, it was one of the major centers of Mawranhanahr.

During the excavation near the fortress wall of the citadel a whole glazed bowl with a diameter of 24 cm in diameter, a bottom of 8 cm, a height of 4 cm (9.c.335), an easel, on a ring pallet, with a rare wall bend from the bottom was found. On a white engobe, dividing the mirror into three sectors, the brown paint is very peculiarly written with a stylized Arabic lettering inscription. Horizontally elongated letters with a bend in the middle that skirting others are also elongated, but vertically. The right and left letters are straight, and the vertical letters are long. The inscription was read by the orientalist N. Kukhorenko as "Isa and Maryam." The cup is made by a Khojent master, this is indicated by its decoration, and the inscription makes it possible to recognize the composition of the population, among whom were representatives of the Christian faith.

In our opinion, the inscription on the Khojentian cup is painted in such a way that it reflects an incomplete Nestorian cross. For horizontal ends have an extension, and the vertical lower part is slightly elongated. The crucifixion is symbolically reproduced, where the place of overlap is executed in such a way that it transfers the drooping head and the ending of the legs - the letters of letters. Information on early Christian monuments of Zhetysu (Kyrgyzstan), collected from scientific and local archaeological study of medieval settlements began to appear in the scientific literature and periodicals from the late nineteenth century. Currently available to scientists, there are several types of Nestorian monuments: Kayrak gravestones with crosses and Syrian epitaphs; few crucifixes made of bronze, stone and jade; ceramic vessels with inscriptions and remains of architectural structures.

Monuments of the Christian religion on the territory of Kyrgyzstan are quite numerous and in time and on the basis are divided into two groups: the period of the early and developed Middle Ages, which are part of the history of Syrian Nestorianism in Central Asia, the last quarter of the XIX - XX centuries. which is associated, mainly, with the activities of the Russian Orthodox Church.

Christianity began to penetrate the territory of Kyrgyzstan in the middle of the 1st millennium AD, after the settlement of the Talas and Shuya valleys by the Sogdians and the development of the trade routes of the Great Silk Road laid from Central Asia through Semirechie and East Turkestan, China, Mongolia and Siberia. In these areas, the spread of Christian doctrine and the design of the church organization.

Monasteries were built on the paths of Christian missionary work. The largest number of them is known in China and Eastern Turkestan, where they appeared in the beginning of the VI century. There were two Christian monasteries on the territory of Kyrgyzstan. One of them, while undetected, was introduced in 1375. on the Catalan map where on the northern shore of Lake Issyk-Kul there is a building, crowned with a cross and an explanatory inscription: "A place called Issyk-Kul. In this place is the monastery of the Armenian brothers, in which, it is said, the body of St. Matthew, the Apostle and the Evangelicals" (6.p.179). As P. Semenov believed Tyan-Shansky, who saw this map in Venice in 1850, the monastery was located in the Bay of Kurmenty.

The second monastery was founded in the mountains of the Central Tien Shan in 20 km. from the modern border with China. Its surviving ruins are known under the name "Tash-Rabat": the building is built of crushed slate

stone on a horizontal platform, planned on the hillside. This compact multi-chamber structure with a square contour of the plan (32,4x34,8), oriented to the sides of the world. The only entrance was from the East. The main facade is marked by three-quarter-round angular circular towers of monolithic masonry and protruding on a 3 meter massive peshtak with a vaulted entry niche.

The building plan includes 25 rooms, a square hall and three corridors. All the premises are divided into two groups of different functions, which communicate with each other through one opening located at the end of the central corridor. The front group consists of two adjacent preliminary premises, nine small cells placed along the side corridors.

Tash-Rabat is built in the traditions of Central Asian architecture, combining the techniques of the building arts of antiquity and the early Middle Ages. Details of its architecture have analogues in synchronous and much earlier constructions of Maverannahr and Khorasan, but in general the composition of the building does not repeat any of the well-known monuments of Central Asia and does not fit into the typological classification of medieval buildings. This circumstance also became one of the reasons for a rather broad interpretation of the purpose of the building.

3. Results.

Among the outstanding works of "religious art and religious symbols" of Central Asian Christians, but ethnic Turks (Djumagulov, 1971) are Kayrak - Nestorian tombstones with symbols and Turkish-Syrian inscriptions. Kayrak – is polished by the mountain river pebbles by which people used to punch out the cross of Nestorian form, sometimes figurative, with loops at the corners and accompanied by inscriptions-epitaphs.

More than 700 supernovae are known. Inscriptions usually have a date according to the Turkic calendar animal cycle, the names of the deceased and their parents. The finds were found in the Shuiskaya Valley in the Kara-Dzhigan and Burana settlements, as well as in the Krasnorechensky fort. In the Dzhukuu gorge in the Issyk-Kul region in Almalayk and near the Tash-Rabat building in the mountains of the Central Tien Shan.

Pre-Mongolian are also namogilniki, found on the Red River by M. Mason in 1919, and A. Bernshtam in 1938. The latter is a square brick with the epitaph "George the Blacksmith". Both finds are associated with the eastern part of the site of the settlement, so it is possible to assume the location of the Nestorian community in the city, east of Shahristan. These kayrakas, as well as several crosses of bronze, bone and nephrite dating from the 8th to 9th centuries, found there in the same place, testify in favor of the identification of the site of the ancient settlement near Krasnaya Rechka with the medieval town of Navaket. In it, according to written sources, in the XIII century the Nestorian metropolia was established, and the head of the church called himself "Metropolitan of Kashgar and Navaket" (7.c.293-294). Another aspect of Syrian cultural relations is reflected in the monuments of writing. Syrian religious literature had a lasting impact on the Turkic writing and, possibly, on oral speech. Judging by the epigraphic monuments, the Syrian letter was used from the 8th to the 14th centuries on the territory of Northern Kyrgyzstan. Since the adoption of Christianity by the Turks under the Khagan, Arslan II Turguk (766-840 AD) and before the death of the Semirechye Nestorians in the mid-13th-14th centuries.

It is also established that, along with the Syriac language, the Sogdian among the Semirechensk and East Turkestan Christians was in the process. In this respect, the finds of the Sogdian inscriptions, made on the corners of the Khoumovs of the 9th-10th centuries, are indicative. From the Krasnorechensky and Navaketovskiy fortifications. One of them says: "This hum is intended for the teacher of Yaruk-tegin. Master Pastun. Let it be (hum) full, amen-amen. " It is noteworthy that the name Yaruk-tegin is accompanied by a Syrian titulus "teacher", "mentor" ("malfon"), known for Syro-Turkic epitaphs. Nestorians lived in the region of Semirechye XIII-XIVvv. (8. p.79-81). The use at the end of the double "Amen" indicates the Christian writing environment.

One of the earliest monuments on the territory of Kyrgyzstan is a small church of VII-VIII centuries, which was discovered during the open excavations by L.R. Kyzlasov in 1953 - 1954 years, on the site of Ak-Beshim, which is identified with the capital of the Turkic khagans - Suyab.

The church was built outside of the central district of the city's square shakhristan, 105 m away from the eastern wall in the fortified area. Overall size of the construction is 36x15m. Wall thickness was 1.5 m, it was made of pakhsa and mud bricks. Altar room had the size of 5.3 x 4.8 m with three niches, and there are remnants of paintings made in bright colors at the entrance. The entrance is in the west wall of the courtyard and opened along the long walls where could be awnings. In a side room, separate from the court and the altar, in the end wall was arranged small niche. Here in the rubble found a bronze pectoral cross was found. (Goryacheva, & Peregudova, 1994)

Entrances to the courtyard of the church have not been found, it is more likely they are in the longitudinal walls, as in medieval Christian monuments of Iran, Syria and the countries of the Caucasus, as well as in-building of Haroba-Koshuk in Merv. This building of V-VI centuries is the nearest architectural analogy of Ak-Beshim church, which is comparable to the long churches of Ephesus and Ctesiphon. Thus, there is continuity in the church architecture of Central Asia and Zhetysu (Kyrgystan) with temples of the Middle East that can be attributed to the Syrian-Byzantine tradition. In the ideology of the peoples of the ancient and medieval East, Christianity occupied a certain place, retaining its positions even after the establishment of Islam. Kazakhstan is not an exception in this respect either. First of all, its southern part, known in historical and geographical literature as a region of Southern Kazakhstan and Semirechie. The spread of Christianity in Kazakhstan, as in Central Asia, is closely related to the political and cultural history of the peoples of Central Asia, the Middle East and the Middle East. In the oases of the Great Silk Road, which passed through the mountains and lowlands, remarkable cultural monuments were discovered. On this way, the

monuments of everyday life and art that have been lost in the centuries, objects of worship belonging to different religions and Christianity have found peace. And all along this path invariably there are testimonies of Syrian script, Syrian Christianity, the spread of which began already at the earliest period of its history. The centuries-old economic ties of the Syrians determined their cultural influence both in the Arabian Peninsula, and in India, and in the regions of Central Asia, where the Iranian and Turkic dialects were to some extent influenced by the Syrian language.

The spread of Christianity among the Sogdians, both in the metropolis and in the colonies, led to the acquaintance of the Sogdians with the Syrian letter. From the Sogdian Christians, the Syrian letter extends to the ancient Turks: this letter was borrowed by the Uighurs: "The Syrians have made a huge contribution to world science and culture. They introduced the East to the trend of the development of world culture, which proceeds from the achievements of antiquity" (9.c.22-27).

Christian churches were also operating in the medieval cities of Taraz and Mirka (Kazakhstan). From written sources we know that later in the IX century they have been converted to the mosques (Wolin, 1960). In 893 Ismail ibn Ahmad conquered Taraz and converted the main church of the city to the mosque (Bartold, 1963). Such practices were common worldwide. Some of the larger churches were converted or partially rebuilt by Muslims, such as the Cathedral of St. John the Baptist in Damascus on the place of which in the VI century magnificent mosque was built (Bartold, 1998). But commonly, Christians used to preserve their temples; new churches and monasteries were built freely for a long time; the so-called Treaty of Omar according to which Christians agreed not to build new churches and not to fix old ones appeared much later. On all territories of caliphate, from Cape of St. Vincent at the southwestern tip of Portugal to Samarkand there were rich Christian monasteries which retained their real estate. Christians of caliphate freely communicated with the Christian of the world and accepted donations (Bartold, 1998).

Christian burials of later periods are known from the results of a survey of the necropolis of ancient Taraz - burials were in hums and small crypts of mud brick (Rempel, 1957). They dated to IX-X centuries. During the excavations of ancient cities of Taraz and Saryg (Krasnorechensk mound) in layers of VII-VIII centuries Fragments of vessels with inscriptions of Christian content in Syriac and Sogdian languages were found (Borisov, 1948).

Syrian inscription on the vessel from Taraz, discovered during excavations in 1938 by A.Borisov, believed to belong to Christians-Jacobites based on brushwork characteristic of western Jacobite school. It contains two Christian names: Peter and Gabriel. The membership of the inscriptions, as well as the spread of the Jacobites in Central Asia in this early period is still questionable (Borisov, 1948).

In the XII-th century archdiocese was established in Kashgar and Navaket. There is evidence that in the XI century Christians have turned a Mongolian tribe of Kerayit to Christianity. Rashid al-Din in his "History of the Mongols" he wrote- "the confession of Jesus, peace be upon him - has spread among them (Kerayit) and they took accepted it" (Notes..., 1883). There were a lot of Christians among the Mongols-Naiman. (Baipakov, 1997). Be that as it may, the Nestorians in the empire of Genghis Khan played a significant role. Niece of devastated by Genghis Khan to Kerayit Khan- Wang, nestorian Sorgathanibeki was wife of the youngest son of Genghis Khan - Tulia, a mother of two great Khans Kublai and Munke and conqueror of Iran - Hulagu (After Marco Polo, 1986).

Wilhelm Rubruk wrote about Christians of Ili Valley (South- East Kazakhstan) who have had their church and village in Kayalyk (Kaylak). In Kayalyk according Rubruk there were three Nestorian temples. However, they did not have images of Christ. However, over the chest, served altar Rubruk seen "image of a winged person like St. Michael and other images, such as bishops who keep their fingers as if they were blessing" (Journey..., 1993). After Kayalyk, Rubruk visited Nestorian village with a church, where he came in and sang "Hail, the Queen"(Journey..., 1993).

According to researchers, the lack of religious painting in the Nestorian churches in Central Asia has been associated with the relevant canons that emerged as a result of reforms XII-XIII centuries. (Nikitin, 1984).

4. Conclusions.

Thus, archaeological findings, coupled with those of medieval sources make a picture of the spread of Christianity in Iran, Central Asia, South Kazakhstan and the Zhetysu, East Turkestan up to China from the IV and to the XIV century. Mid XIII-XIV century is characterized by the increasing influence of the Catholic Church. Franciscan Missionaries of orders, as well as merchants from Italian republics penetrate western Kazakhstan, Central Asia and China. Italians in the East, with their abilities, knowledge and wealth, along with the Muslims reached success in trade and religious affairs.

Corresponding Author: Akymbek Yeraly Shardarbekuly

Department archeology, ethnology and museology Al-Farabi Kazakh National University, Almaty, Republic of Kazakhstan, E-mail: early_a@mail.ru

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