

COMMERCE AND CARAVAN ROUTES ALONG
THE NORTHERN SILK ROAD
(SIXTH-NINTH CENTURIES)

PART I: THE WESTERN SECTOR

ROMAN K. KOVALEV

INTRODUCTION

Much has been written about the "Silk Road" connecting eastern Eurasia with western since the term was first coined by Ferdinand von Richthofen in 1877.¹ Since then, scholars involved in the study of early medieval trans-Afro-Eurasian commerce and communications have quite properly come to refer to the many key commercial arteries passing through this vast area as the "Silk Roads." It is now abundantly clear that many important trade routes, both by land and sea, interconnected the great expanses of Eurasia and much of northern and eastern Africa during the Middle Ages. It is now also quite evident that there was much more to this exchange than the trade of silks. All sorts of commodities, fauna and flora, and ideas were also transmitted along the Silk Roads and this trade was multilateral.²

One of the most important, but much less documented in the written sources and thus less studied, routes integral to the larger network of early medieval Silk Roads was its northern branch passing across the steppe zone of Eurasia from east to west. From its advent in the late 560s, this Northern Silk Road had several major vectors leading south to north: three stems branching out north and northwest of the Urals

1 Ferdinand von Richthofen, *China*, Bd. I (Berlin, 1877).

2 See, for instance, E.H. Schafer, *The Golden Peaches of Samarkand. A Study of T'ang Exotics* (Los Angeles, 1985); G. Hourani, *Arab Seafaring: In the Indian Ocean in Ancient and Early Medieval Times (Expanded Edition)* (Princeton, 1995); E.I. Lubo-Lesnichenko, *Kitai na shelkovom puti* (Moscow, 1994); Xinru Liu, *Silk and Religion: An Exploration of Material Life and the Thought of People, AD 600-1200* (Delhi, 1998); S. Hedin, *The Silk Road*, tr. F.H. Lyon (London, 1938, reprint, Columbia, MO, 1994); C. Thubron, *Silk Road* (New York, 1990); A.L. Juliano, *Monks and Merchants: Silk Road Treasures From Northwest China Gansu and Ningxia Provinces, Fourth-Seventh Century* (New York, 2001); H-J. Klimkeit, *Gnosis on the Silk Road: Gnostic Parables, Hymns, and Prayers from Central Asia* (San Francisco, 1994); S.N. Lieu, *Manichaeism in Central Asia and China* (Boston, 1998); *Nomads, Traders and Holy Men Along China's Silk Road*, eds. A.L. Juliano, J.A. Lerner [Papers Presented at a Symposium Held at the Asia Society in New York, November 9-10, 2001/Silk Road Studies, VII] (Turnhout, 2002); *The Silk Road: Trade, Travel, War and Faith*, eds. S. Whitfield and U. Sims-Williams (Chicago, 2004).

while at least three ran to the north and northeast of the mountain range.³ Rather recently, the late Thomas S. Noonan has proposed the very apt name of the "Fur Road" to describe the middle Volga-central Asia stem leading to the western Urals⁴ – a term that can just as well be applied to all of the other stems west as well as east of the mountains, since fur was one of the key components of commerce along all of these routes.

The advent and expansion of trade along these northward stems of the Northern Silk Road during the sixth to the ninth centuries brought animals and commodities that were unusual for the area, and unquestionably many other innovations, most of which had never before been seen in this region of northern Inner Eurasia. In exchange, these routes carried to central and southern areas of Outer Eurasia highly prized and exotic commodities such as furs, fossilized mammoth tusks and walrus ivory, and other goods originating in the boreal forests of the taiga and the coastal Arctic tundra regions.⁵ Perhaps most interesting of all, and consequential for world history, is that this trade acted as a major catalyst for the greater integration of Outer and Inner Eurasia. And the integration of both of its parts was also permanent for most of its regions. With the rise of this commerce, and in some cases on its heels, we see for the first time in history the formation of the earliest proto-states or the foundation of full-fledged and long-lasting political entities in the forest zone of northern Inner Eurasia, e.g., Volga Bulğaria and Kievan Rus'. Trade with Outer Eurasia by way of the Silk Roads brought to the forest zone prestige items and wealth, both key components to the development of kingship and a more complex political structure, which, in turn, were necessary for building and maintaining a commercial infrastructure to facilitate this commerce and provide a system to defend and secure its function. These states maintained their commercial ties to the southern parts of Eurasia in the following millennium, as they also came to borrow and share many other connections with the region through religion and culture.

Despite the enormous importance of the early medieval exchange along the Northern Silk Road and its northern stems, very few scholars involved with medieval commerce and commercial routes discuss this trade in any serious way.⁶ For instance, most recently, in his *magnum opus* on the European economy and its communication routes from the fourth to the ninth centuries, M. McCormick barely

3 Th.S. Noonan, "The Silk Road and the Fur Road: Central Asian Trade with Northern Russia in the 6th-7th Centuries," *Kontakte zwischen Iran, Byzanz und der Steppe*, ed. C. Bálint [*Varia Archaeologica Hungarica*, Bd. IX] (Vienna, 2000), 285-301; Lubo-Lesnichenko, *Kitai na shelkovom puti*, 262-268; R.K. Kovalev, "Commerce and Caravan Routes Along the Northern Silk Road (Sixth-Ninth Centuries) – Part II: The Eastern Sector," *Archivum Eurasiae Medii Aevi* [=AEMAE] (forthcoming).

4 Noonan, "The Silk Road and the Fur Road," 285-301.

5 R.K. Kovalev, "«Fish Teeth» – The Ivory of the North: Russia's Medieval Trade of Walrus and Fossilized Mammoth Tusks" (forthcoming).

6 For instance, of the many branches of the Silk Roads outlined on the detailed map of Afro-Eurasia in J.-P. Drège, E.M. Bühner, *The Silk Road Saga* (New York-Oxford, 1989), the northern stems are absent.

mentions the existence of the Northern Silk Road and totally ignores its northern stems that ran across eastern Europe. As will be argued below, this oversight leads McCormick to overemphasize the importance of the Venetians in the east-west trade during the ninth century.⁷

In large part, it is hoped, the reason for the neglect of the Northern Silk Road and its northern stems in scholarly literature may be attributed to the absence of a comprehensive study on the subject. Thankfully, not too long ago, Noonan made several major contributions to the beginning of such an inquiry by addressing the middle Volga-central Asia stem of the road during the sixth to the ninth centuries,⁸ while about a decade ago E.I. Lubo-Lesnichenko provided a survey of the Uyğur and the Qırğız routes, two of several key northward stems that ran east of the Urals during the early Middle Ages.⁹ But, much evidence regarding these routes and others that belonged to the larger northern commercial system remains to be collected, analyzed, and pieced together into a comprehensive narrative.

Aside from the primary written accounts that speak of these northern roads, during the "Golden Age" of Soviet archaeology (ca. 1950-ca. 1985), a huge volume of material evidence on trade along these routes has been amassed. In fact, it can be said that there is such an abundance of finds related to this trade during the early Middle Ages that it is overwhelming for any single scholar to process fully in one lifetime. This task would not be made easier by the fact that most of the materials have not yet been systematically studied, published, or made available in easily accessible monographs and journals. For all these reasons, the undertaking becomes rather daunting.

The object of the present inquiry and its sequel is not to offer such a comprehensive survey of all of the available evidence on the northern trade routes during the early Middle Ages. Rather, it attempts to expand on the works of Noonan and Lubo-Lesnichenko by considering a select set of evidence that arguably is most illustrative of the commerce and caravan routes of the Northern Silk Road from the mid-sixth through the ninth centuries. This evidence will mostly include archaeological reports of silk finds, numismatic data, the discovery of "eastern" (or south-west and central Asian) metalware, evidence for the use of camels and mules/donkeys (both unique pack animals used in caravan commerce), and remains of caravansaries/way-stations along key routes. This evidence, with several notable

7 M. McCormick, *Origins of the European Economy. Communications and Commerce, A.D. 300-900* (Cambridge, 2001), 563, 724-728, 764. McCormick also greatly underestimates the importance of what he calls the "northern arc" (pp. 563-564, 606-612), i.e., the "Silver Road" from the Islamic Near East to northeastern Europe via Khazaria discussed below.

8 Th.S. Noonan, "Russia, the Near East, and the Steppe in the Early Medieval Period: An examination of Sasanian and Byzantine Finds from the Kama-Ural Region," *AEMAE* 2 (1982), 269-302; idem, "Khwarazmian Coins of the Eighth Century from Eastern Europe: The Post-Sasanian Interlude in the Relations Between Central Asian and European Russia," *AEMAE* 6 (1988), idem., "The Silk Road and the Fur Road," 285-301.

9 Lubo-Lesnichenko, *Kitai na shelkovom puti*, 262-268.

exceptions, has not yet been systematically assembled in scholarly literature. While the present study does not pretend to gather and include all of the silks, coins, metalware, evidence of camels and mules and caravansaries discovered along the northern stems of the Northern Silk Road, a major effort has been made to gather as much evidence as possible from a notable number of published reports. These physical remains will be supplemented by the primary written sources. Left out of the study are the numerous finds of beads, most glass items, Chinese/T'ang bronze mirrors, all sorts of jewelry pieces, and other artifacts transported to the northern regions of Eurasia by way of the Northern Silk Road and its stems during the period under examination. Since the materials in question and their analyses have proven to be much greater than space permits, the present study will focus only on the western sector of the Northern Silk Road (the segment west of the Urals) – the eastern sector will be examined in a forthcoming study.¹⁰

THE ADVENT OF THE SILK-FUR ROADS IN WESTERN EURASIA IN THE EARLY MIDDLE AGES

In a rather recent insightful study, J. Howard-Johnston has argued that there is “very little evidence that furs were being worn, and hence that there was any significant demand in the Mediterranean world, in the Greek, Hellenistic, and Roman periods. There is none at all for fur-wearing by elite groups in core territories.”¹¹ Howard-Johnston attributes the aversion to fur in the classical world to the disdain of the “civilized” person for the skins/furs that were worn by “barbarians.” The only groups who did not share this distaste for fur were “deviant youth sub-cultures” and Germanic émigrés who settled in the late Roman Empire.¹² If Howard-Johnston is correct – and he does present a convincing argument – then the first large-scale eastern European fur trade would have dated from the late ancient-early medieval period at the earliest.¹³

There is good written evidence for a fur trade between the Mediterranean and Scandinavia during the late Roman period. Jordanes, for example, mentions those in Scandinavia (the Svear) “who send through innumerable other tribes the sapphire colored skins to trade for Roman use. They are a people famed for the dark beauty

10 Kovalev, “Commerce and Caravan Routes Along the Northern Silk Road (Sixth-Ninth Centuries) – Part II.”

11 J. Howard-Johnston, “Trading in Fur, From Classical Antiquity to the early Middle Ages,” *Leather and Fur: Aspects of Early Medieval Trade and Technology*, ed. E. Cameron (London, 1998), 69-70.

12 Howard-Johnston, “Trading in Fur,” 70-72.

13 *The Gothic History of Jordanes*, tr. C.C. Mierow (Princeton, 1915), III: 21, p. 56.

of their furs...”¹⁴ Not long ago, D.M. Metcalf has interpreted the late Roman and early Byzantine coins found in Scandinavia as evidence for the existence of a fur trade between the northern lands and the Roman Empire during the fifth and sixth centuries. In particular, Metcalf suggests that “a fashion among the Ostrogothic nobility for the wearing of fur robes was instrumental in creating a long-distance trade in high-quality furs from southern Sweden to northern Italy with counterflows of gold solidi which have been found in modern times especially on the Baltic islands of Öland, Gotland, and Bornholm.”¹⁵ The Gothic love of fur is well attested¹⁶ and there is good evidence that the Huns also had adoration for fur.¹⁷

Howard-Johnston believes that the “barbarians” who settled in the empire quickly adopted Roman dress and consequently lost their desire for fur.¹⁸ However, Howard-Johnston also cites the *Secret History* of Procopius which clearly demonstrates that “barbarian” fashions, including the use of fur, had become very popular amongst the population of Constantinople in the mid-sixth century.¹⁹ Rather than dismiss this testimony regarding the spread of “barbarian” dress among the citizens of Constantinople as the product of “deviant youth sub-cultures,” this passage from Procopius indicates how fashionable such practices as the wearing of fur had become amongst the “civilized” citizens of the empire’s capital. In this connection, it is important to note that the furriers of Constantinople had their shops in the Forum (of Constantine?) where the Basilica or Church of the Furriers appeared as early as 532.²⁰ Furthermore, the very word “furrier” is unknown in Greek before the sixth century.²¹ In short, there are good reasons to believe that the barbarian taste for fur slowly but surely spread amongst other groups in the empire, especially as the Goths became part of the ruling elite.

The desire of the late Roman population for fur may help to explain the reference of Jordanes to the Hunugori of the north Pontic steppe who were active in the trade of marten pelts.²² While it is not clear to whom these pelts were sold in the

14 In a more recent study, J. Kolendo has come to a similar conclusion; see J. Kolendo, “L’importation de fourrures du Barbaricum sur le territoire de l’Empire romain,” *Münsterische Beiträge zur antiken Handelsgeschichte*, Bd. XV, 2 (1999), 1-23.

15 D.M. Metcalf, “The President’s Address: “Viking-Age Numismatics. 1. Late Roman and Byzantine Gold in the Northern Lands,” *Numismatic Chronicle* 155 (1995), 413-441; idem., “The President’s Address: “Viking-Age Numismatics. 2. Coinage in the Northern Lands in Merovingian and Carolingian Times,” *Numismatic Chronicle* 156 (1996), 399.

16 H. Wolfram, *History of the Goths* (Berkeley, 1988), 207, 209, 462, n. 297.

17 Priscus, frag. 14 in C.D. Gordon, *The Age of Attila: Byzantium and the Barbarians* (Ann Arbor, 1966), 103.

18 Howard-Johnston, “Trading in Fur,” 71.

19 Howard-Johnston, “Trading in Fur,” 71. Also see Procopius, *The Secret History*, tr. G.A. Williamson (Harmondsworth, 1981), ch. 7.14, 6, pp. 72-73.

20 A. Kazhdan, “Furrier,” *The Oxford Dictionary of Byzantium* 2, ed. A.P. Kazhdan (New York-Oxford, 1991), 809.

21 Kazhdan, “Furrier,” 809.

22 *Gothic History*, ch. 4.37, p. 60.

south, it is evident that furs had become an important commodity around the Black Sea region by the sixth century. By the early ninth century, furs (specifically sables) were considered some of the most valuable goods among the Byzantines. In his work *Dhakhā'ir*, Ibn al-Zubayr mentioned that when the 'Abbasid caliph al-Ma'mūn (813-832) wished to send a diplomatic gift to the Byzantine Emperor and asked what are the most prized commodities in Byzantium, he was told that they were *misk* (musk) and *sammūr* (sables). The caliph subsequently ordered that 200 *raṭls* of *misk* and 200 hides of *sammūr* be shipped to the emperor.²³ The evidence thus suggests that by the sixth century, the long-standing Greco-Roman aversion to fur was changing under the "barbarian onslaught." By the early ninth century, the distaste for furs had been transformed into admiration as they came to be highly desired by the Byzantine emperors. The early 'Abbasid caliphs and the population of the caliphate came to share the Byzantine vogue for furs.²⁴

The developing demand for furs in the markets of southwestern Eurasia coincided with the consolidation of the West Türk qağanate (552-659) – a state spanning from the northern Black Sea region to southwestern Siberia – and the advent of the Northern Silk Road. This cross-continental northern branch of the Silk Roads came into existence in the late 560s with the establishment of direct trade relations between the West Türk qağanate and its commercially oriented Sogdian subjects, on the one hand, and the Byzantine Empire, on the other.²⁵ To gain free access to Byzantine markets for their silks and avoid paying the high tariffs charged by the Sasanians, Sogdian merchants developed a new route to the west that bypassed the Persian Empire via the northern steppe.²⁶ This Northern Silk Road led from the Far East to the Byzantine Empire via the Türk-held territories of Sogdia, Khwārazm, the desert-steppe region of the Aral and the northern coast of the Caspian seas, the Northern Caucasus, and the northeastern shore of the Black Sea. The Aral Sea basin proved to be geographically convenient for reaching the middle Volga area with its

23 M. Gil, "The Rādhānīte Merchants and the Land of Rādhān," *Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient* 17: 3 (1974), 313.

24 For the references to the demand for fur in the 'Abbasid caliphate, see R.K. Kovalev, "The Infrastructure of the Northern Part of the «Fur Road» Between the Middle Volga and the East During the Middle Ages," *AEMAE* 11 (2000-2001), 25-26.

25 For a detailed primary source account of how and why this happened, see *The History of Menander the Guardsman*, tr. R.C. Blockley (Liverpool, 1985), 113-127. For Sogdian merchants, see É. de la Vaissière, *Histoire Des Marchands Sogdiens* (Paris, 2002). Also see the review of this monograph by Xinru Liu in the present volume.

26 N.V. Pigulevskaiia, "Vizantiiskaia diplomatiia i torgovlia shelkom v V-VII vv.," *Vizantiiskii vremennik* 26 (1947), 184-214; idem., *Vizantiia na putiakh v Indiiu: Iz istorii torgovli Vizantii s Vostokom v IV-VI vv.* (Moscow-Leningrad, 1951), 184-211; Th.S. Noonan, "Why Dirhams First Reached Russia: The Role of Arab-Khazar Relations in the Development of the Earliest Islamic Trade with Eastern Europe," *AEMAE* 4 (1984), 251 [also in Th.S. Noonan, *The Islamic World, Russia and the Vikings, 750-900: The Numismatic Evidence* (Ashgate-UK, 1998), sec. II, p. 251]; J. Harmatta, "The Struggle for the 'Silk Route' Between Iran, Byzantium, and the Türk Empire From 560 to 630," *Kontakte zwischen Iran, Byzanz und der Steppe*, 249-252.

easy access via the Kama river to the fur-rich areas of Perm' in the northwestern Urals. As will be seen below, this route – running north from the Aral by way of the Khwārazmian desert, the steppe and forest-steppe of the southern Urals up to the middle Volga and then on to Perm' – very quickly came into the scope of trans-continental merchants operating along the Northern Silk Road beginning with the late 560s as it came to function as the west Urals "Fur Road."

Few early medieval finds can better illustrate the advent of the Northern Silk Road and its connection to the Fur Road than the items of clothing discovered at the Moshchevaia Balka cemetery, located along the upper Bol'shaia Laba river some 1500 meters above sea level in the Northern Caucasus. This ethnically mixed Alan-Adyge cemetery was situated at the Sanchur Pass that connected one key route passing from the north Caspian Sea region to the northeastern coast of the Black Sea. At the cemetery, archaeologists have discovered an unprecedented number of silk garment remains in graves of wealthy and poor alike dating from the sixth through the ninth centuries. Even children's doll clothing was made of silk. The large number of silks discovered at the site, its apparent great availability to the inhabitants of the area, and the location of the cemetery at a key junction on a route all strongly suggest that this site functioned as a toll station along the Northern Silk Road where silks were collected as payment for transit from the passing caravan traffic.²⁷

Of the many silks discovered at the cemetery, 143 received careful study. The results have shown that the majority of them were Sogdian and Chinese (combined 62% of the total), trailing by Byzantine (including Egyptian), Iranian, and those of local manufacture. But the most spectacular and revealing of all the finds is a caftan sewn together from Iranian (post-Sasanian), Sogdian, Byzantine (Arab-Syrian?), and Chinese silks dating to the eighth-ninth centuries which was lined with squirrel fur.²⁸ The great variety of silks from across Eurasia and the squirrel fur from which

27 For the main literature on the site and its silks, see A.A. Ierusalimskaia, "O Severo-kavkazskom 'Shelkovom puti' v rannem srednevekov'e," *Sovetskaia arkhologiiia* 2 (1967), 55-78; idem., "K voprosu o svyaziakh s Vizantiei i Egiptom (ob odnoi unikal'noi tkani iz Severokavkazskogo mogil'nika Moshchevaia Balka)," *Narody Azii i Afriki* 3 (1967), 119-126; idem., "Alanskii mir na 'shelkovom puti' (Moshchevaia Balka – istoriko-kul'turnyi kompleks VIII-IX vekov)," *Kul'tura Vostoka. Drevnost' i rannee srednevekov'e – Sbornik statei* (Leningrad, 1978), 151-162; idem., *Kavkaz na Shelkovom puti. Katalog vremennoi vystavki* (St. Petersburg, 1992), №№22-25, pp. 18-19 (for doll clothing); E.I. Savchenko, "Issledovanie mogil'nika Moshchevaia balka," *Arkheologicheskie otkrytiia 1980 goda* (Moscow, 1981), 117; idem., "Issledovanie mogil'nika Moshchevaia balka," *Arkheologicheskie otkrytiia 1981 goda* (Moscow, 1983), 131; I.S. Kamenetskii, "Razvedki i raskopki v basseine Kabani," *Arkheologicheskie otkrytiia 1982 goda* (Moscow, 1984), 121-122; E.I. Savchenko, "Moshchevaia balka – uzlovoi punkt Velikogo Shelkovogo puti na Severnom Kavkaze," *Rossiiskaia arkhologiiia* 1 (1999), 125-141.

28 Ierusalimskaia, *Kavkaz na Shelkovom puti*, №1, p. 14-15. Also see Ierusalimskaia, "Alanskii mir na 'shelkovom puti,'" 151; Noonan, "Why Dirhams First Reached Russia," p. 252, Table VI; p. 253.

this caftan was assembled makes it a microcosm or a snapshot of the entire length of the Northern Silk Road and its likely link to the west Urals Fur Road. Fur coats and other furs were also found together with silk garments at this cemetery dating to the eighth-ninth centuries.²⁹ While the exact type of fur is not always specified in the publications of these outfits, what is known is that alongside sheepskins, there were finds of furs of "fur-bearing" animals.³⁰ Quite clearly, furs and silks were rather common objects traded through this Northern Caucasus sector of the Northern Silk Road in the early Middle Ages. Below, we will consider the question of the origins of these furs in the Caucasus and the trade routes that brought them there. But, before moving on to this subject, it would be of interest to note one further detail in connection with the Moshchevaia Balka cemetery.

It is the fascinating grave of a Chinese merchant who apparently traveled along most of the Northern Silk Road and happened to die near its western-most terminal.³¹ It contained a Buddhist icon painted on a piece of Chinese silk with a picture of a mounted warrior riding in the mountains; a rose-colored piece of paper containing a Chinese accounting text written in ink; a small piece of yellow paper containing a Chinese text of a Buddhist sūtra written in ink; fragments of papier-mâché bookbinding (probably of a sūtra) with Chinese characters; and, fragments of a Buddhist prayer flag made of leather and Chinese silk, paper, and papier-mâché. All of the silks and items enumerated date to the eighth century and were probably deposited at the cemetery at this time. The accounting text, written in shorthand, reads: "...wheat, total 6000;" ...received 2000 *yuan*, 4th month 14th day;" ...wheat... bought meat for 4 *yuan*."³² It is of interest to make the observation that Chinese coins (*yuan*) were mentioned in this text. While it is not known where this Chinese merchant made his purchases and whether he actually paid in Chinese currency, or other coins using the *yuan* as conversion units of account, or used silk as a unit of account and payment, Chinese coins were a rather common item of trade along the eastern sector of the Northern Silk Road.³³ What is made rather clear by this find is that Chinese merchants traveled to as far west as the Northern Caucasus with their silks.

29 E.P. Alekseeva, *Arkheologicheskie pamiatniki Karachaev-Cherkessii* (Moscow, 1992), 31.

30 Ierusalimskaia, *Kavkaz na Shelkovom puti*, №4, p. 15; №21, p. 18.

31 Ierusalimskaia, "Alanskii mir na 'shelkovom puti'," p. 151 & Fig. 4; Noonan, "Why Dirhams First Reached Russia," 257.

32 Ierusalimskaia, *Kavkaz na Shelkovom puti*, №110-114, p. 30. It should be noted that this new translation of the text significantly differs from the one published earlier by Ierusalimskaia (Ierusalimskaia, "Alanskii mir na 'shelkovom puti'," 151).

33 Kovalev, "Commerce and Caravan Routes Along the Northern Silk Road (Sixth-Ninth Centuries) – Part II."

THE MIDDLE VOLGA-CENTRAL ASIA (KHWĀRAZM) STEM OF THE NORTHERN SILK ROAD

The Late Sasanian/West Türk Qaġanate Era (ca. 560-ca. 650)

The development of the middle Volga-central Asia stem of the Northern Silk Road is well documented by the finds of various imported eastern artifacts in a wide geographic region stretching from the middle Volga and its Imen'kovo culture (dating from the fourth or perhaps mid-sixth through the first half of the seventh century³⁴) to the fur-rich area of Perm' in the northwestern Urals. Among the most common artifacts brought to the middle Volga-Perm' region to trade for the pelts were silver coins (Sasanian drachms, Khwārazmian silver and copper coins, and Byzantine hexagrams) as well as Sasanian, Byzantine, and central Asian bronze and silver vessels and dishware.³⁵

In addition to the finds catalogued by V.P. Darkevich and Th.S. Noonan, it would be of interest to mention a number of additional important discoveries in the Kama-Viatka-Vycheġda river basin of the Perm' region. Thus, at one sanctuary dated to the second half of the seventh century, situated at Ust'-Sylvenskoe hillfort, archaeologists report the discovery of silver ingots, 10 silver coins (seven Byzantine hexagrams of Heraclius (610-641) and his son Constantine III (641), two Sasanian drachms of Khusraw I (531-578), and one Khwārazmian drachm of Shāh Bravik/Fravik of the seventh century), and other bronze and silver items.³⁶ Thirty Sasanian drachms of the fifth-sixth centuries were discovered at the Verkh-Sainskoe cemetery.³⁷ One Khwārazmian copper coin (with an image of a ruler wearing a crown with camel humps at its top); six Sasanian drachms of Kavad I (488-531) and Pēroz I (459-484); and, one Byzantine copper coin of Justin II (566-578) were discovered in a complex of burials at the Bartym'sk cemetery. Based on the dates of the

34 For the basic study on the Imen'kovo culture, see P.N. Starostin, *Pamiatniki imen'kovskoi kul'tury* [Arkheologiiia SSSR №D-1-32] (Moscow, 1967); idem., "Imen'kovskaia kul'tura," *Ocherki po arkheologii Tatarstana* (Kazan', 2001), 100-118. For the various arguments revising its chronology, see A.B. Bogachev, "O verkhnei khronologii granitse imen'kovskoi kul'tury," *Srednevekove pamiatniki Povolzh'ia* (Samara, 1995), 16-22; E. Kazakov, "Novye arkheologicheskie materialy k probleme rannei tiurkizatsii Uralo-Povolzh'ia," *Tatarskaia arkheologiiia* №1-2 (4-5) (1999), 27.

35 For the vessels and platters, see V.P. Darkevich, *Khudozhestvennyi metall Vostoka: VIII-XIII vv.* (Moscow, 1976). Also see Noonan, "Russia, the Near East, and the Steppe," 269-302; idem., "Khwārazmian Coins of the Eighth Century," 242-258; A.G. Mukhamediev, "Bronzovye slitki – pervye metallicheskie den'gi Povolzh'ia i Priural'ia," *Sovetskaia arkheologiiia* 3 (1984), 219-222.

36 A.V. Goldobin, A.N. Lepikhin, A.F. Mel'nichuk, "Issledovaniie sviatileshch Zheleznogo veka v Permskom Prikam'e," *Arkheologicheskie otkrytiia Urala i Povolzh'ia* (Izhevsk, 1991), 40-41.

37 N.V. Vodolago, T.A. Korobeinikova, I.Iu. Pastushenko, "Issledovaniia srednevekovykh mogil'nikov v Prikam'e," *Arkheologicheskie otkrytiia Urala i Povolzh'ia* (Syktyvkar, 1989), 48.

Sasanian and Byzantine coins, it is likely that the Khwārazmian coin can also be dated to the second half of the sixth century. Similar Khwārazmian coins have been found at the Nevolinsk and the Blagodatsk I hillforts, which probably also date to the second half of the sixth century.³⁸ It would be of interest to add that the Bartym'sk cemetery, where one Khwārazmian coin was found, is located near the well-known Bartym'sk sanctuary. At this last site, one Sasanian and three Khwārazmian (dating to the first half of the eighth century) silver vessels have been discovered, one of which contained 264 hexagrams of Heraclius (610-641) dating to 615-629 and eight more were found nearby.³⁹ Eight Sasanian drachms, a silver alloy goblet stylized in the shape of a bull's head, gold items fashioned in niello with stone and glass encrustations and inlaid silver were discovered at the Veslianskoe I cemetery, dating to the fifth-seventh centuries.⁴⁰ In addition, a Byzantine silver platter (27.3 cm in diameter) dating to the seventh century was discovered with a silver necking in ca. 1960 near the village of Sal'nikovo in Perm'.⁴¹

All of the above finds quite clearly speak of trade relations between Perm' and southern Eurasia. Indeed, the late sixth-century Byzantine, Sasanian, and Khwārazmian coins found at the Bartym'sk cemetery and the seventh-century silver coins from the same areas discovered at the Ust'-Sylvensk hillfort trace the entire western and central sectors of the Northern Silk Road and tie it to the west Urals Fur Road. To underscore the close connection of Perm' with central Asia (particularly Khwārazm), it should be noted that Khwārazmian coins are extremely unusual finds outside of the territories of central Asia and even somewhat rare in central Asia itself.⁴² Thus, the examples discovered in Perm' most probably were brought to the northwestern Urals directly from Khwārazm via the west Urals Fur Road.

Numismatic finds, while not numerous at Imen'kovo sites of the middle Volga, confirm this culture's connection to early operations along the west Urals Fur Road and their role as intermediaries in this trade. Thus, a small hoard of seven Sasanian drachms and broken pieces of silver items was rather recently discovered at the Karmalinsk hillfort located in the Samara Bend. The latest of these drachms was

38 A.G. Mukhamediev, *Denezhnoe obrashchenie Povolzh'ia i Priural'ia VI-XV vv.* [Aftoreferat] (St. Petersburg, 1992), 22-23. Unfortunately, Mukhamediev does not provide any more details about these coins. The rulers of Khwārazm were known to wear crowns with camels in later centuries. See B.I. Vainberg, *Monety drevnego Khorezma* (Moscow, 1977), pp. 23-26 & Appendix X, type V.

39 L.N. Kazamanova, "Bartym'skii klad vizantiiskikh serebrennykh monet VII veka," *Nuzmizmaticheskii sbornik 2* [Trudy Gos. Istoricheskogo muzeia, №26] (Moscow, 1957), 70-76; Darkevich, *Khudozhestvennyi metall Vostoka*, 17-18.

40 E.A. Savel'eva, "Raskopki I i II Veslianskikh mogil'nikov," *Arkheologicheskie otkrytiia 1974 goda* (Moscow, 1975), 37-38.

41 K.M. Rusanova, A.G. Poliakov, "Razvedka v Komi-Permiatskom natsional'nom okruge," *Arkheologicheskie otkrytiia 1974 goda* (Moscow, 1975), 174-175.

42 Noonan, "Khwārazmian Coins of the Eighth Century from Eastern Europe," 245-246.

struck in 545, but the hoard was probably deposited in the early 570s.⁴³ It is believed that the Imen'kovo peoples used the imported silver coins as scrap metal for making jewelry.⁴⁴ Therefore, what coins the Imen'kovo peoples had were either remelted into jewelry or shipped north to Perm' in exchange for pelts, which, in turn, were traded for more silver. This then would explain the general paucity of coin finds at Imen'kovo sites.

Aside from coins and metalware of south Eurasian origin imported to the middle Volga region and further north and northeast, it is also possible that the peoples of the Imen'kovo culture imported silks and distributed them to other regions. This may be suggested by the finds of fragments of a silk braided cloth at the Kurmank cemetery located in the Oka river region, just west of Imen'kovo sites.⁴⁵ A piece of Chinese silk was also discovered at the Demenki cemetery of the upper Kama region.⁴⁶ Unfortunately, both of the cemeteries are broadly dated from the seventh to the ninth centuries. Thus, they may be items of trade from the post-Imen'kovo era of the middle Volga's trade relations with central Asia, a topic that will be considered below.

But, the most compelling evidence pointing to the development of the west Urals Fur Road and its link with the Northern Silk Road and Imen'kovo's key role in this trade is the appearance of the camel in the middle Volga region. The presence of these southern Eurasian pack animals in the area is documented by the finds of their bones at a number of Imen'kovo sites: Imen'kovo I hillfort, Maklashevskoe II hillfort, and Shcherbetskoe Island I unfortified settlement [Map 1].⁴⁷ In light of the advent of the Northern Silk Road in the late 560s, it is not surprising to see camels leaving the desert-steppe environment of the Aral Sea sector of the Northern Silk Road and traveling north into the forest-steppe and even the forest zone of the middle Volga. What is most telling is that all the sites where camel bones have been discovered lay near the confluence of the Kama with the middle Volga. This region was conveniently situated along routes that offered access not only to the steppe in the south but also the forest zone in the north and its Finno-Ugrian inhabitants. These skilled hunters-trappers were essential for the procure-

43 G.I. Matveeva, V.Iu. Morozov, "Karmalinskoe gorodishche," *Arkheologicheskie issledovaniia v lesostepnom Povolzh'e* (Samara, 1991), 176.

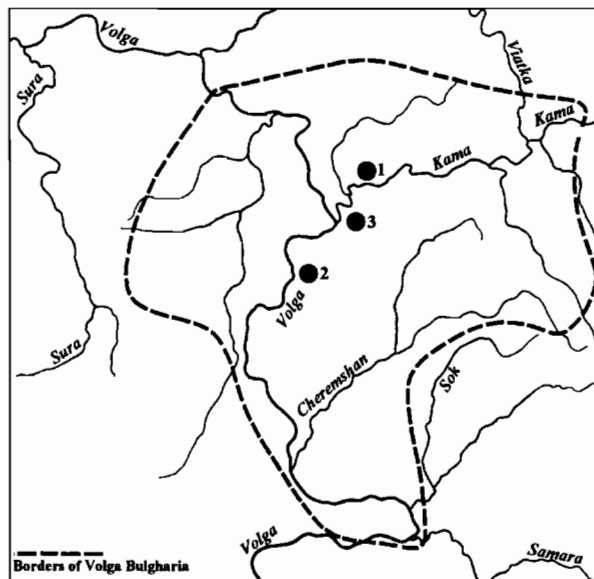
44 Matveeva, Morozov, "Karmalinskoe gorodishche," 172-177.

45 L.V. Efimova, "Tkani iz finno-ugorskikh mogil'nikov I tys. n.e.," *Kratkie soobshcheniia Instituta arkheologii 107* (1966), 134.

46 P.D. Goldina, *Lomovatovskaia kul'tura v Verkhnem Prikamie* (Irkutsk, 1985), 33.

47 Starostin, *Pamiatniki imen'kovskoi kul'tury*, 27; V.I. Tsalkin, *Fauna iz raskopok arkheologicheskikh pamiatnikov Srednego Povolzh'ia* [Materialy i issledovaniia po arkheologii SSSR, №61] (Moscow, 1958), 273; A.G. Petrenko, *Drevnee i srednevekovoe zhivotnovodstvo srednego Povolzh'ia i Priural'ia* (Moscow, 1984), 110, 133.

ment of seemingly endless supplies of furs for the peoples of the Imen'kovo culture and their trade relations with the south.⁴⁸



MAP 1 – IMEN'KOVO SITES WITH FINDS OF CAMEL BONES

1. Imen'kovo I hillfort; 2. Maklasheevskoe II hillfort; 3. Shcherbetskoe Island I unfortified settlement

Before moving to the next stage of commercial relations between central Asia and the middle Volga, it would be of interest to consider the infrastructure of the caravan trade and route connecting the two regions.

Infrastructure of the Middle Volga-Khwārazm Route

Based on ninth-century and later Arab-Persian sources, Khwārazm was connected by way of routes to the important cities of Āmul, Marw, and Harāt in Khurāsān. The later written records report that along the roads stood smaller towns and caravansaries

48 For the role of the various Finno-Ugrian hunting-gathering peoples in the fur trade of the middle Volga, see Kovalev, "The Infrastructure of the Northern Part of the «Fur Road»,» 25-64.

ries that facilitated commerce and communications along these roads.⁴⁹ Tenth-century and later accounts as well as physical remains provide some excellent descriptions of the caravansaries of central Asia. One of the earliest and quite detailed accounts of them comes from al-Iṣṭakhrī (writing in ca. 932). He states the following regarding the markets and caravansaries of Naysābūr:

And in the midst of these bazaars there are *khāns* and caravansaries in which live merchants with their goods that are (destined) to be sold at these (bazaars). Specific goods are brought to each of the bazaars that specialize in them. Each of the caravansaries looks like any other in other cities. In one of these caravansaries (live) the richest among those who (trade) in these large bazaars. And the less wealthy have bazaars and caravansaries in other (places); there also reside owners of workshops who occupying (areas) based on their trade benches, craftsmen, and workshops full of employees. Thus, the makers of high-caps (have) near their bazaar a caravan-sary with a multitude of trade benches and likewise (is the case) among the boot-makers who mend footwear, rope-makers, and other laborers and craftsmen. As regards the caravansaries and warehouses of cloth-merchants and their trade, large part of the cities have their share of them and (Naysābūr) is not behind them.⁵⁰

In his description, al-Iṣṭakhrī alludes to classic caravansaries, at least ones located in cities. In essence, caravan travelers required a secure place to spend the night, rest, obtain food and water, and trade in tired animals for fresh ones.⁵¹ Some form of craft production and trade, particularly as they relate to travel needs (e.g., repairs and provisions), could be found at even the smaller and remote caravan stops. Based on the topography of later caravansaries, such stops were required every 20-25 kilometers of the journey, or the average distance marched by a human, camel, or donkey in a day.⁵² As al-Iṣṭakhrī relates, on reaching the final points of

49 G. Le Strange, *The Lands of the Eastern Caliphate: Mesopotamia, Persia, and Central Asia from the Moslem conquest to the time of Timur* (Cambridge, 1905), 446-459 & Map. X.

50 Al-Iṣṭakhrī, *Kitāb Masālik al-Mamālik*, ed. M. J. de Goeje [Bibliotheca Geographorum Arabicorum, I] (Leiden, 1870), 311-312.

51 See, for instance, a good discussion of the way caravansaries functioned along the central Asian trade routes in *Karvanharai/Karavan-sarai*, comp. and ed. by R.Z. Ianguzin, G.B. Danilova (Ufa, 1996), especially 76-91.

52 S.G. Khmel'nitskii, *Mezhdū arabami i tiurkami. Arkhitektura Srednei Azii IX-X vv.* (Berlin-Riga, 1992), 179, 204; E. Bizhanov, *Arkheologicheskie pamiatniki iugo-vostochnogo Ustiurta* [Avtoreferat: Nukus, 1967], 11-12. For calculations on camel and donkey walking distance per day, see A.H.M. Jones, *The Later Roman Empire, 284-602* (London, 1964), 2:842. For an interesting and revealing discussion concerning the techniques of packing goods on camels, see E.R. Knauer, *The Camel's Load in Life & Death: Iconog-*

destination – cities with their large markets – merchants would stay for longer periods of time at the caravansaries as they sold and bought their goods. But, somewhat surprisingly, caravansaries appear to have been a rather novel phenomenon in al-Iṣṭakhrī's day.

Contrary to what one may expect in light of the importance of the Silk Roads during the early Middle Ages, caravansaries along their ways were very rare, if at all available, in central Asia until the ninth century. While there is evidence for the existence of facilities for caravans and merchants in the Near East that date to the Sasanian (if not Parthian) era,⁵³ only one such facility has been identified in central Asia (a site located at the confluence of the Pskema and Chatkal rivers, on a caravan road near Chāch) dating to the middle of the first millennium CE.⁵⁴ In the seventh and early eighth centuries, roadside facilities for caravans or inns (Soğd. *'spnc* > Pers. *sipanč* – lit. “temporary”) were built in Soğd, two of which were located in the upper Zarafshān river region and owned by the Soğdian king Divaštič (ca. 719-738).⁵⁵ In 719/20, the Umayyad Caliph 'Umar II ordered his representative in Soğd to construct inns (*khāns*) in the lands around Samarqand-Chāch “so whenever a Muslim passes by” he could be harbored for a day and a night, his animals would be cared for, and he would receive provisions and hospitality.⁵⁶ The Arabs followed up by building *ribāṣ* or fortified camps/garrisons in central Asia, the earliest of which appear to have been established in 727-729 by Ashras b. 'Abd-allāh al-Sulamī, the governor of Khurāsān.⁵⁷ These *ribāṣ* could function as early caravansaries, since they offered safety to travelers and a place to stay for the night. Albeit, the classic square/rectangle-type caravansaries specifically built to harbor caravans did not develop until the ninth-tenth centuries, when the level of trade expanded through central Asia and the region came under the more centralized rule of the Ṭāhirids and later the Sāmānids.⁵⁸ Until then, caravans must have made their stops at the early

Muslim *ribāṣ* and *khāns* and, prior to the eighth century, at the numerous “feudal” castles (*kūšks*) that were to be found along caravan routes throughout central Asia.⁵⁹

Perhaps, one example of a site that caravans could have used as a way-station was the castle of Iakke-Parsan. It was located along the eastern bank of the Amu Darya river in Khwārazm and next to a route leading from Bukhārā to Al-Fīl/Kath, the capital of Khwārazm in the early Middle Ages. Iakke-Parsan was a residence of some 74m × 54m in area, having a wall of 3.5-4.6m thick, and a tower. Inside the tower, archaeologists discovered camel bones and a piece of yellow silk with a print dating to the early eighth century.⁶⁰ No doubt, many of the other castles found throughout central Asia dating from the sixth through the eighth centuries could have functioned as way-stations for caravans,⁶¹ including those traveling to the middle Volga.

Little can be said about the route leading from Khwārazm to the middle Volga based only on the very scant evidence for this early period. Aerial photography has shown the existence of a well-trodden road dotted by stone wells and remains of caravansaries leading from Jurjāntyah/Gurgānj in Khwārazm to the lower course of the Emba/Zhem river northwest of the Aral Sea.⁶² While these caravansaries did not yet exist at this early stage of trade relations, it is quite possible that the caravan route itself passed through the same region centuries earlier. Writing in ca. 1050, but relying on ninth-century information, Gardtzi seems to speak of the same route in describing the road to the lands of the Pečenegs which began in Jurjāntyah, passed through the mountains of Khwārazm, then curved southwest around Lake Khwārazm (Aral Sea), from where it traversed the desert for nine days, “coming to a well every day or every two days.” On the tenth day, the road came to various springs and a river (Emba?) where various game and fowl and deer and some grass could be found.⁶³

When traveling along the caravan route from Jurjāntyah to the middle Volga in the early third decade of the tenth century, Ibn Faḍlān specifically mentions the Emba (Jām) river.⁶⁴ Indeed, details on some aspects of how the caravan road may have functioned during earlier times can be gathered from Ibn Faḍlān's eyewitness

raphy & Ideology of Chinese Pottery Figurines from Han to Tang & Their Relevance to Trade Along the Silk Routes (Zurich, 1998), 44-70.

- 53 M. Siroux, *Anciennes voies et monuments routiers de la region d'Ispahan* (Le Caire, 1971), Figs. 4-13; Khmel'nitskii, *Mezhdū arabami i tiurkami*, 179.
- 54 Iu.F. Buriakov, *Po drevnim karavannym putiam Tashkentskogo oazisa* (Tashkent, 1978), 56-57.
- 55 O.A. Smirnova, *Ocherki po istorii Sogda* (Moscow, 1970), 138-139.
- 56 Al-Ṭabarī, *The History of al-Ṭabarī. An Annotated Translation*, tr. D.S. Powers, vol. 24 [The Empire in Transition. The Caliphate of Sulaymān, 'Umar, and Yazīd, A.D. 715-724/A.H. 97-105] (New York, 1989), 94 [1364]. Also see al-Balādhuri, *Kitāb Futūḥ al-Buldān in The Origins of the Islamic State*, pt. 2, tr. F.C. Murgotten, 2nd ed. (New York, 1969), 197.
- 57 Al-Ṭabarī, *The History of al-Ṭabarī. An Annotated Translation*, tr. Kh.Y. Blankinship, vol. 25 [The End of Expansion. The Caliphate of Hishām, A.D. 724-738/A.H. 105-120] (New York, 1989), 42 [1504].
- 58 Khmel'nitskii, *Mezhdū arabami i tiurkami*, 180, 204. For the role of the state in establishing and maintaining caravansaries, see W.C. Brice, “Caravan Traffic Across Asia,” *Antiquity* 10 (1954), 83-84.

- 59 G.A. Pugachenkova, *Puti razvitiia Iuzhnogo Turkmenistana pory rabovladiiia i feodalizma* (Moscow, 1958), 165-166.
- 60 E.E. Nerazik, “Raskopki Iakke-Parsana,” *Polevye issledovaniia khorezmskoi ekspeditskii v 1958-1961 gg.* 2 [Materialy Khorezmskoi arkhologo-etnograficheskoi ekspeditskii 7] (Moscow, 1963), pp. 5, 13-14, 16, 17 & Figs. 7-8.
- 61 For a very good and up to date survey of the sites, see *Sredniaia Aziia i Dal'nyi Vostok v epokhu srednevekov'ia. Sredniaia Aziia v rannem srednevekov'e*, ed. G.A. Brykina (Moscow, 1999).
- 62 S.P. Tolstov, *Auf den Spuren der altchoresmischen Kultur* (Berlin, 1953), pp. 263-268, 284-286 & Fig. 85.
- 63 Gardtzi in A.P. Martinez, “Gardtzi's Two Chapters on the Turks,” *AEMAE* 2 (1982), 151.
- 64 Ibn Faḍlān, *The Risāla of Ibn Faḍlān: An Annotated Translation with Introduction*, J.E. Mckeithen (Ann Arbor, MI, 1979), 76 & note 197.

account of the route. While Ibn Faḍlān made his journey from Khwārazm to the middle Volga in 922, he does describe a very well-developed route with a rather sophisticated infrastructure, which was unlikely to have developed only at the turn of the tenth century.

On arriving to Khwārazm from Baghdād, Ibn Faḍlān purchased from the locals warm clothing, food for three months (bread, millet, and jerked meat), Turkish/Bactrian camels, and collapsible camel-skin boats. On March 4, 922, he joined a caravan that consisted of 3,000 pack animals (including camels) and accompanied by 5,000 men (including a guide, guards, and merchants).⁶⁵

While the size of the pre-Sāmānid-era commerce is very difficult to ascertain, it is quite likely that it was much smaller in volume than at the time of Ibn Faḍlān. Therefore, caravans would have been significantly smaller in the number of animals used and would not have necessarily made the voyage annually. For instance, according to the *T'ang shu*, in the mid-eighth century caravans of up to twenty camels carrying silks with prints traveled from the Islamic East (Dashi) (Transoxiana?) to the lands of the Qırǵız of southwestern Siberia every three years. When the baggage proved to be too large, twenty-four camels were loaded. Like the peoples of the middle Volga, the Qırǵız exchanged furs and other goods obtained in the forest zone region for the imported commodities.⁶⁶ It would thus not be unreasonable to suggest that a similar situation existed in trade relations between the middle Volga and Khwārazm during the same period.

Ibn Faḍlān's voyage began from Jurjānīyah, the second capital of Khwārazm, and then passed to the ribāt "Zamjān." The next day the caravan traveled to a way-station called Jt/Gt, which was the gateway to the land of the pastoral nomadic Turkic Ğuzz. Due to heavy snows and the inability of the camels to walk through it, the caravan stayed at Jt/Gt for two days.⁶⁷ From this station until the middle Volga region, the caravan no longer had access to caravansaries as it traversed the steppe of the southwestern Urals.⁶⁸ Along this route, the caravan had to cross a number of large rivers using the camel-skin boats. Goods and men were transported in the boats while the animals swam across themselves. Crossing the largest of the rivers (Jaykh = Ural?) was quite dangerous, as was illustrated by the capsizing of one boat and the drowning of people, horses, and camels.⁶⁹

65 Ibn Faḍlān, *Risāla*, 48-50.

66 *T'ang shu* in N.Ia. Bichurin (Iakinf), *Sobranie svedenoi o narodakh obitavshikh v Srednei Azii v drevnie vremena*, vol. I (Moscow-Leningrad, 1950), 355.

67 Ibn Faḍlān, *Risāla*, 51.

68 For caravansaries in Biliar-Bulgār, see A.Kh. Khalikov, R.F. Sharifullin, "Karavan-sarai drevnego Biliara," *Issledovaniia Velikogo goroda* (Moscow, 1976), 75-100 and S.S. Aidarov, "Arkhitekturnoe issledovanie ruin zdaniia caravan-sarai v Biliare," *Issledovaniia Velikogo goroda*, 101-112. Also see R.K. Kovalev, "Camel Transport in Volga Bulgāria and Kievan Rus'" (forthcoming).

69 Ibn Faḍlān, *Risāla*, 75-77, 78-79.

While passing through the southern Urals, on several occasions merchants made payments/bribes to the Ğuzz in the form of food items, cloth and clothing (including silks), coins, and other goods in exchange for passage, temporary shelter in tents, and fresh mounts and pack animals (including camels).⁷⁰ In this connection, it would be of interest to note the two analogous whole glass chalices of Byzantine/Syrian origins dating to the sixth century found in the southern Urals-middle Volga region. One was deposited in a grave situated in the Belaia river basin (tributary to the Kama) sometime in the sixth century and the other in a grave situated along the lower Kama (near its confluence with the middle Volga) in the second half of the sixth century.⁷¹ Both of these graves also showed features that connect them with the Imen'kovo as well as the semi-nomadic Turbaslinsk culture of the southern Ural steppe area. The latter culture, centered in the confluence of the Ufa with the middle Belaia river and dating to the seventh-eighth centuries, had very close connections, if not genesis, in the Dzhyetyasarsk culture of the lower reaches of the Syr Darya-Aral Sea basin.⁷² Another quite revealing find from the same area is the Ufa hoard of one bronze and two silver vessels of "eastern" (Iranian/central Asian?) origins dating to the sixth-seventh centuries. Not far from this hoard, archaeologists discovered a seventh-century Sasanian (?) carnelian seal from a ring at a cemetery dating to the sixth-seventh centuries.⁷³ Quite possibly, just as the pastoral nomads witnessed by Ibn Faḍlān in 922, the peoples of the Turbaslinsk and other similar cultures inhabiting the southern Urals helped to maintain the caravan route passing between the middle Volga and Khwārazm during the earliest stages of the west Urals Fur Road operation and charged transit fees from the passing caravans.⁷⁴

The above-mentioned commodities discovered in the southern Urals were just a few examples of the items that passed through the area, some of which landed there as part of the passage fees. As will be discussed below, during the next stage of trade relations between the middle Volga and central Asia, the route via the southern Urals is much better documented by way of material remains – many, if not

70 Ibn Faḍlān, *Risāla*, 58-61, 64, 69-70.

71 E.P. Kazakov, "Dva stekliannykh kubka VI v. n.e. iz nekropolei Uralo-Povolzh'ia," *Russian History/Histoire Russe*: 1-2 [Festschrift for Th.S. Noonan, Vol. 2, ed. R.K. Kovalev, H.M. Sherman] (2005) (in the press).

72 Kazakov, "Dva stekliannykh kubka VI v. n.e." Also see E.P. Kazakov, "K voprosu o turbaslinsko-imenkovskikh pamiatnikakh," *Kul'tury evropeiskikh stepei vtoroi poloviny I tys. n.e.* (Samara, 1996), 40-57.

73 A.I. Voshchinina, "O svyaziakh Priural'ia s Vostokom v VI-VII vv. n.e." (Ufimskii klad, naidennyi v 1941 g.), *Sovetskaya arkheologiya* 17 (1953), 183-196.

74 For the survey of the major pastoral nomadic and semi-sedentary cultures of the southern Urals of this period (e.g., Turbaslinsk, Bakhmutinsk, and Karaiakopovsk), see N.A. Mazhitov, "Iuzhnyi Ural v VI-VIII vv." and "Iuzhnyi Ural v IX-nachale X v.," *Stepi Evrazii v epokhu srednevekov'ia* [Arkheologiya SSSR], ed. S.A. Pletneva (Moscow, 1981), 23-28, 80-82.

most, of which were deposited in the area as a result of commerce passing through the region and transit fee payments made by merchants.

On May 12, 922, Ibn Faḍlān arrived in the Volga Bulḡār capital of Bulḡār – according to him, after a three-month voyage.⁷⁵ Regrettably, the author did not indicate when he left the middle Volga region on his return voyage nor describe his journey back south. But, it surely would have been made sometime in mid- to late summer, before the onset of the autumn cold, rain, and potential early snows. This would have given merchants about two months to trade their goods and depart on their three-month return trek to Khwārazm. In this way, camels would not have had to winter in the cold climate of the middle Volga region.

During the second half of the sixth through the first half of the seventh centuries, the peoples of the middle Volga could offer safe harbor to caravans at the numerous Imen'kovo hillforts, one of which occupied a huge area of 500,000m², but most were no larger than 5000m². Many of these hillforts were very well defended as they stood on high ground, were surrounded by moats, and had walls built of two layers of heavy interlinked logs filled in between with earth and rocks. There is evidence to suggest that the fortifications were well maintained and repaired. It is believed that these hillforts were regularly occupied by a small group of defenders, but their main functions were to afford safe harbor at times of danger to the inhabitants living at the unfortified settlements in the vicinity and provide a place to store food supplies and other valuable property.⁷⁶ Among the many osteological remains found at Imen'kovo sites were a great many bones of fur-bearing animals (marten, sable, ermine, hare and especially many of beaver⁷⁷), thereby underscoring the reasons why camels and caravans came to the middle Volga from Khwārazm. Taken all together, Imen'kovo hillforts provided security for the visiting caravans and a place to trade furs and other northern goods in exchange for the commodities discussed above and undoubtedly others that have not been preserved. From this region, the Imen'kovo people traded some of the southern Eurasian wares brought to them from Khwārazm for additional furs (probably also those of higher quality coming from the taiga region) with their northern Finno-Ugrian neighbors.⁷⁸

As suggested earlier, the infrastructure of the route Ibn Faḍlān described shows a high level of sophistication by the time he made his journey in 922. The antecedents of this road may well have had their roots in a much earlier caravan route that connected Khwārazm to the middle Volga. Camels and hillforts in the middle Volga and castles/*kūšks* in Khwārazm, separated but also linked by pastoral nomadic peoples at its middle sector, and all regions interconnected by finds of

various commodities traded along the Northern Silk Road – based on all this, it seems that there are very good reasons to believe that the infrastructure of this route came into being sometime during the late sixth and the first half of the seventh century.

The Post-Sasanian/West Türk Qaḡanate Era (ca. 650-ca. 900)

Just as camel bones suddenly appeared in the middle Volga region during the era of the Imen'kovo culture, they just as suddenly disappeared with its end in the first half of the seventh century. Camel bones reappeared in this region only in the tenth century when the Volga Bulḡār state established intense trade relations with the Sāmānid amīrate in Transoxiana. This commerce carried out by way of caravan traffic will bring an estimated 125 million Sāmānid silver coins or dirhams and many other goods to the middle Volga, mainly in exchange for furs.⁷⁹ But, there is no direct evidence for the presence of camels in the middle Volga basin from the second half of the seventh through the ninth centuries, thereby suggesting a break in trade relations between this region and central Asia. With that said, it is critical to keep in mind that archaeologists invariably discover bones of camels at settlements. Moreover, our present state of knowledge of the middle-Volga settlements dating to the later part of the seventh through the ninth centuries is extremely limited.

Up until very recently, it was believed that very few temporary and no permanent settlements were established in the middle Volga during the second half of the seventh through the ninth centuries. During this period, the region of the middle Volga witnessed the termination of the sedentary Imen'kovo culture in the first half of the seventh century and the arrival of the pastoral nomadic Bulḡārs and Turks beginning with the second half of the same century. While this is not the place to discuss the fate of the Imen'kovo culture and its connection to the proto-Volga Bulḡārs, what is clear is that settlements – while still in existence – were drastically reduced in numbers in the post-Imen'kovo period until the early Volga Bulḡārs began to sedentarize and establish fortified and unfortified settlements in the early years of the tenth century.⁸⁰ And it is only then that camel bones reappear in the

75 Ibn Faḍlān, *Risāla*, 83.

76 Starostin, *Pamiatniki imen'kovskoi kul'tury*, 11-13.

77 Starostin, *Pamiatniki imen'kovskoi kul'tury*, 127.

78 For the Finno-Ugrian peoples and their access to northern furs, see Kovalev, "The Infrastructure of the Northern Part of the «Fur Road»," 26-56.

79 Th.S. Noonan, "The Tenth-Century Trade of Volga Bulghāria With Sāmānid Central Asia," *AEMAE* 11 (2000-2001), 167-194. For camels and caravan routes of Volga Bulghāria, see Kovalev, "Camel Transport in Volga Bulghāria and Kievan Rus'."

80 For recent discussions and speculations regarding the end of the Imen'kovo culture, its fate, and "ethnic" identity as well as the Turk-Bulḡār migrations to the middle Volga, see E.P. Kazakov, *Kul'tura rannei Volzhskoi Bolgarii* (Moscow, 1992) and the review of this book by R.K. Kovalev, "Critica: E.P. Kazakov, *Kul'tura rannei Volzhskoi Bolgarii*," *AEMAE* 9 (1997), 319-335; G.I. Matveeva, *Mogil'niki rannikh Bolgar na Samarskoi Luke* (Samara, 1997); R.S. Bagautdinov, A.V. Bogachev, S.E. Zubov, *Prabolgari na Srednei Volge* (Samara, 1998); A.V. Bogachev, "Problemy etnokul'turnogo vzaimodeistviia osedlykh i kočevnykh plemen Srednego Povolzh'ia v seredine I tysiacheletia,"

middle Volga region, all found at settlements.⁸¹ Since all of the camel bones have been found at Imen'kovo sites of habitation, it would stand to reason that the apparent disappearance of camel bones in the region may well be connected not to the termination of camel caravan traffic to the area, but to the extreme paucity of settlements where their bones could have been deposited and subsequently discovered by archaeologists. In other words, camels may well have traveled to the middle Volga from central Asia in the post-Imen'kovo era, but their remains simply have not been documented. Perhaps, with the discovery of new settlements dating to these two and a half centuries and a careful study of their osteological remains, camel bones will come to light.

The above suggestion regarding the continuation of caravan trade between the middle Volga and central Asia in the post-Imen'kovo period is concurred by other evidence. Based on the finds of a handful of eighth-century Khwārazmian coins and eastern metalware dating to the seventh through the ninth centuries in the middle Volga-Perm' region, Noonan has convincingly argued that some sort of commercial relations were maintained between the middle Volga and central Asia during the course of the eighth and ninth centuries. He aptly called this phase in commercial contacts the "post-Sasanian interlude," distinguishing the earlier Sasanian stage of trade relations from the Islamic tenth-century commerce with the Sāmānids.⁸²

Indeed, in addition to the evidence advanced by Noonan, there are other materials that speak of this post-Sasanian commerce. Some very interesting and revealing materials come from a group of burial sites situated along the central sector of the caravan route from Khwārazm to the middle Volga. Thus, silks have been discovered at a number of burial sites dating to the ninth-tenth centuries in Bashkortostan, southwestern Urals: Iamashi-Tausk (lower Sakmara river basin), Bekeshevsk I and II (upper Sakmara river basin), Lagerevsk (Ufa river basin), and Sterlitamansk (middle Belaia river basin) cemeteries.⁸³ Among these finds, there is specific infor-

Russian History/Histoire Russe 28: 1-4 [Festschrift for Th.S. Noonan, Vol. I, ed. by R.K. Kovalev & H.M. Sherman] (2001), 105-136; Kazakov, "Novye arkeologicheskie materialy," 23-38. For the tenth-century Volga Bulgār settlements, see Kazakov, *Kul'tura rannei Volzhskoi Bolgarii*, 298-311. For the discovery of new settlements dating to the eighth-ninth centuries as well as cemeteries, see Iu.A. Semykin, "K voprosu o poseleniiakh rannikh Bolgar v Srednem Povolzh'e," *Kul'tury evropeiskikh stepei vtoroi poloviny I tys. n.e.* (Samara, 1996), 66-75; G.I. Matveeva, "Poseleniia VIII-IX vv. v Srednem Povolzh'e," *Iz arkeologii Povolzh'ia i Priural'ia* (Kazan', 2003), 103-113; Iu.A. Semykin, E.P. Kazakov, "Issledovanie novykh pamiatnikov rannebolgarskogo vremeni v Ul'ianovskom Povolzh'e," *Iz arkeologii Povolzh'ia i Priural'ia*, 114-138; Bagautdinov, Bogachev, Zubov, *Prabolgary na Srednei Volge*; Matveeva, *Mogil'niki rannikh Bolgar*.

81 Kovalev, "Camel Transport in Volga Bulgāria and Kievan Rus'."

82 Noonan, "Khwārazmian Coins of the Eighth Century from Eastern Europe," 256-258.

83 N.A. Mazhitov, *Kurgany Iuzhnogo Urala VIII-XII vv.* (Moscow, 1981), 38, 56, 63, 82; R.B. Akhmerob, "Sterlitamanskii mogil'nik i ego izuchenie," *Arkeologicheskie pamiatniki Nizhnego Prikam'ia* (Kazan', 1985), 30.

mation about the discovery of a large piece of Sogdian silk in the Iamashi-Tausk kurgan №2 burial, while the silks of the Bekeshevsk I and II kurgans had "very elaborate ornaments."⁸⁴ But, the most interesting burial complex is the Sterlitamansk cemetery, dating from the mid-eighth through the mid-ninth centuries. Aside from one gold Umayyad dīnār dating to 705/06 and three early 'Abbāsīd silver dirhams (dating to 770, 774/75, 779/80), archaeologists have also discovered at the site Sogdian or post-Sasanian Iranian silks dating to the eighth-ninth centuries and two silver cups of Sogdian origins dating to the second half of the eighth century. Of particular interest is that the dīnār, silks, and one of the silver cups all come from a single grave,⁸⁵ which clearly ties the individual buried here to trade with early Islamic central Asia. It is quite likely that all of these coins, metalware, and silks landed in the region between Khwārazm and the middle Volga in the late eighth century (based on coin finds) as part of transit fees caravan merchants paid to the nomadic and semi-nomadic Turks and Ugrians (proto-Magyars) who controlled the central part of this route during this period.

Connections between the middle Volga-Perm' region and central Asia can also be traced around the general region of the middle Volga. For instance, at the Varninsk cemetery located in the Cheptsa river basin, archaeologists have discovered an Umayyad dirham minted in Wāsiṭ in 705, a Bukhār-Khudāt drachm of the seventh-early eighth century, an Indian imitation of an Umayyad dirham, a coin struck by the governor of Khurāsān 'Abd al-Allāh ibn Ṭāhir (828-844) in Khwārazm alongside five late Sasanian drachms of Khusraw II (590-628).⁸⁶ The origins of most of these coins point to an eastern, central Asian orientation of trade connections of this region. In addition, as mentioned above, silks have been found at the Kurmank cemetery (Oka river region) and a piece of Chinese silk was discovered at the Demenki cemetery (upper Kama region), both dating to the seventh-ninth centuries. At the ninth-tenth century Tankeev cemetery, located in the middle Volga (just south of its confluence with the Kama), 45 graves contained thin silk cloth that was used to ritually cover the deceased's face (apparently a common Ugrian practice). One grave also contained a silk shirt, while another a ribbon made of silk.⁸⁷ While a part of these silks may have been buried at this cemetery in the tenth century when trade with Sāmānid central Asia was highly developed, it is quite possible that another

84 Mazhitov, *Kurgany Iuzhnogo Urala*, 38.

85 Akhmerov, "Sterlitamanskii mogil'nik," 30-33.

86 V.A. Semenov, "Varninskii mogil'nik," *Novye pamiatniki Polomskoi kul'tury* (Izhevsk, 1980), 64. It should be noted that Semenov's report on the coin (copper?) of 'Abd al-Allāh ibn Ṭāhir, allegedly struck in the middle of the eighth century in Khwārazm, is rather suspect. Aside from the fact that 'Abd al-Allāh ibn Ṭāhir's life terminated in 844, and not a century earlier, I am not aware of any coins struck (silver or copper) in Khwārazm by this ruler.

87 Kazakov, *Kul'tura rannei Volzhskoi Bolgarii*, 93, 95, 200.

part was deposited in the ninth century, thus speaking of commercial relations during the post-Sasanian interlude.

To all of these material finds can be added several Islamic texts that hint at this commerce. Thus, Jāḥiz (d. 870) mentioned that "From the lands of Khwārazm (come): musk; ermine, marten, miniver, and fox furs..."⁸⁸ According to Ibn al-Zubayr, writing later in the ninth century, the early Sāmānid amīr Ismā'īl ibn Aḥmad (892-907) dispatched as a present sable (*sammūr*) hats to the 'Abbāsīd caliph al-Mu'taḍid in 893.⁸⁹ It is quite likely that the furs mentioned in these two accounts were imported by Khwārazmian merchants by way of caravan from the middle Volga and then distributed by other caravan routes throughout the Islamic world.

Perhaps this trade and, in fact, its expansion during the late eighth-early ninth centuries can be traced by the boom in the building of caravansaries in Khwārazm and routes leading to it from other regions of Islamic central Asia. Thus, Ṭāhir I (776-822) built a large caravansary of Ribāṭ Ṭāhirīyah in Khwārazm sometime during his reign.⁹⁰ The caravansary of Meshekli, stationed on the right bank of the Amu Darya, north of the caravansaries of Ribāṭ Ṭāhirīyah, Ishan-Ribāṭ, and Jakarband, was erected sometime in the ninth century.⁹¹ Both Ribāṭ Ṭāhirīyah and Meshekli were built along the road that connected Khwārazm with Āmul, Marw, and Harāt in Khurāsān. To underscore Khwārazm's expansion of commerce with other regions of the Islamic world at this time, three other caravansaries – more generally dated to the ninth-tenth centuries – were erected along the road connecting Āmul with Marw: Kyzylcha-kala 1 (medieval al-Diwād), Kyzylcha-kala 2 (medieval al-Ḥadīd), and Ribāṭ Naṣrāq (near the caravan station of Maṣṣāf) (see Table 1 below). While there is no question that the expansion of Khwārazmian trade contacts during the ninth century can also be traced to the rise of central Asian commerce with Khazaria via its capital of Ītil/Atıl on the lower Volga, these same caravansaries could well have served caravan routes leading north to the middle Volga.

Overall, there is considerable evidence coming from a diverse range of sources which points to the existence of commercial contact between Islamic central Asia (Khwārazm in particular) and the middle Volga during the eighth and ninth centuries. The apparent absence of camels in the middle Volga region that would definitively point to the use of caravans to trade between this region and central Asia during this period can probably be explained by the great paucity of permanent settlements in the middle Volga area during the post-Imen'kovo era, i.e., sites where camel bones are normally found.

88 Jāḥiz in R.S. Lopez, I.W. Raymond, *Medieval Trade in the Mediterranean World: Illustrative Documents, Translations With Introductions and Notes* (New York, reprint, 1990), doc. 4, p. 28.

89 Gil, "The Rādhānite Merchants and the Land of Rādhān," 312-313.

90 Khmel'nitskii, *Mezhdū arabami i tiurkami*, 182.

91 Khmel'nitskii, *Mezhdū arabami i tiurkami*, 202.

THE NORTH CAUCASUS SECTOR OF THE NORTHERN SILK ROAD (CA. 650-CA. 900)

With the decline of the West Türk qaḡanate's power in western Eurasia, during the second half of the seventh century the Khazar qaḡanate had replaced it in the Caspian steppe zone and the Northern Caucasus as the main political entity. By the 670s, the Khazars subdued the Bulḡār qaḡanate (Magna Bulgaria) of the Pontic steppe, thereby becoming masters of the Caspian-Pontic steppes and the Northern Caucasus.⁹² Included in their possessions in the Northern Caucasus was the sector of the Northern Silk Road that passed through the mountains, along which the Khazars erected castles and settled them with a mixed population of Alans, Adyḡes, and Bulḡārs.⁹³ In this way, the Khazars were able to maintain the former commercial patters along the western sector of the Northern Silk Road in the post-West Türk era. In addition, sometime during the late seventh to the early eighth centuries, the Khazars also brought into their sphere of influence the middle Volga region and made its peoples tributaries.⁹⁴ As a result, this not only meant that the Khazars gained access to the middle-Volga furs but could also dispose of them via the Northern Caucasus east-west caravan Silk route, and from the last decades of the eighth century to the Islamic Near East via the north-south trans-Caucasus route (see below). Furthermore, their control over the middle Volga meant that the Khazars came into possession of the steppe route through the southern Urals to Khwārazm and the rest of central Asia. This west Urals Fur Road, as discussed above, was fully operational during the eighth and ninth centuries. The importance of this route for the Khazars cannot be overstated, especially for much of the ninth century. Sometime during the reign of 'Abd al-Allāh ibn Ṭāhir (828-844), the Khazars lost control over the northeastern Caspian steppe that they had controlled since the 680s-690s,⁹⁵ thereby losing influence over the eastern Caspian-Aral seas sector of the Northern Silk Road. An indirect route to Khwārazm via the middle Volga and the southern Urals thus offered an alternative.

As with the caravan routes connecting the middle Volga with Khwārazm during the sixth-ninth centuries, we have little direct information regarding Khazarian caravan roads for the same period. Nevertheless, as with the former, it is possible to reconstruct many aspects of the way they functioned based on numismatics, osteology, pictorial evidence, and the fragmentary accounts of the written sources. Thus, according to Ibn A'tham al-Kūfī, in 758 Yazīd – the 'Abbāsīd governor of

92 P.B. Golden, *An Introduction to the History of the Turkic Peoples* (Wiesbaden, 1992), 233, 236-237, 244-246; S.A. Romashov, *Istoricheskaia geografiia Khazarского kaganata (V-XIII vv.)* [AEMAE 12] (2002-2003), 191.

93 Romashov, *Istoricheskaia geografiia Khazarского kaganata* [AEMAE 12], 178-122. Also see below.

94 Romashov, *Istoricheskaia geografiia Khazarского kaganata* [AEMAE 12], 167-168.

95 Romashov, *Istoricheskaia geografiia Khazarского kaganata* [AEMAE 12], 191-193.

Armīnyah – received a dowry from the Khazar qağan which included amongst many other commodities ten thousand “short-stature” *Khazari* camels, one thousand *Turki* camels (each of which had two humps, i.e., Bactrian camels), one thousand mules, and ten carriages covered with gold and silver plaques, sables, and silks...⁹⁶ Hence, it is quite clear that the Khazars had a significant number of camels (of two distinct types) and mules in their lands that could be used as gifts as well as in caravan trade. Also, of great interest is the mention of sables and silks. This is the earliest record for the availability of these two highly prized commodities amongst the Khazars. Thus, by the middle of the eighth century northern furs were available in Khazaria and they could easily have been brought there by way of the Fur Road stretching to the middle Volga and their proto-Volga Bulgār tributaries. Silk, however, could well have come to Khazaria via the Northern Silk Road passing through the Northern Caucasus that was under their control at that time.

Archaeological finds confirm the use of camels in the lands of Khazaria during the early Khazar era.⁹⁷ The earliest bones of camels from the qağanate appear to have been discovered at the Andreiaul'sk hillfort in layers dating from the sixth through the late eighth centuries (when the site was destroyed by the Khazar-Arab wars).⁹⁸ Andreiaul'sk was located on the Akhtash river, situated between the Sulak and Terek river basins, and lay along a key route between the eastern Black Sea and the western Caspian.⁹⁹ It is likely that this site was the early medieval town of Babandar, situated 25 kilometers north of Balanjar¹⁰⁰ and on the road leading south to the Caspian Sea coastal cities of Samander and Darband. From these towns it was possible to reach Ītil/Atīl at the confluence of the lower Volga with the Caspian Sea going north by water or the southern Caucasus and the Near East going south by land. At the same time, the fort had access to a route leading west towards the eastern Black Sea coast via the middle Terek river to Khasaut (where the second largest collection of silks had been discovered, including mostly Sogdian, Chinese, and Byzantine¹⁰¹), thence to Khumara¹⁰² and onto the upper Kuban', then to Teberda

(where Chinese silks dating from the eighth through the ninth centuries have been discovered),¹⁰³ and thereafter either to the Rioni river and its Black Sea port of Phasis (Rion) or to the Gvandra and Kodori rivers that led to the coastal city of Dioscurias (Sukhumi).¹⁰⁴ The alternative route passed from the upper Kuban' to Nizhnii Arkhyz (where ninth-century Sogdian and Chinese silks dating from the eighth through the ninth centuries have been discovered¹⁰⁵) on the upper Bol'shoi Zelenchuk river, to the Sanchur Pass and the site of the Moshchevaia Balka cemetery on the Bol'shaia Laba river, onto the Bzyb' river, and then to the port city of Pitium (Pitsunda).¹⁰⁶ From these ports one could reach Constantinople directly by sea or via Trapezus in Anatolia, as described by Menander (the route from Phasis to Trapezus) in the second half of the sixth century.¹⁰⁷ It is of interest to note that the Sogdian, Byzantine, and Chinese silks discovered in Moshchevaia Balka and Khasaut date largely from the eighth through the ninth centuries.¹⁰⁸ Thus, it is quite possible that the camel bones discovered in Andreiaul'sk/Babandar belonged to camels traveling in caravans along the western end of the Northern Silk Road – the sector between the Caspian and the Black seas.

In addition to camels, mules seem to have been rather common pack animals used along the Northern Caucasus sector of the Northern Silk Road. As noted above, Ibn A'tham al-Kūfī noted the availability of these animals among the Khazars in the mid-eighth century. While bones of mules are even more rare finds than those of camels in the western Eurasian steppe and forest-steppe zone,¹⁰⁹ they

96 Ibn [A'sam] A'tham al-Kūfī, *Kniga zavoevanii (Izvlachenii po istorii Azerbaidzhana VII-IV vv.)*, tr. Z.M. Buniatov (Baku, 1981), 62.

97 It should be added that Movsēs Dasxurançi preserves an indirect reference to the use of camels by the Khazars when he relates that they drank camel's milk at the time they see captured Tiflis in ca. 629. See Movsēs Dasxurançi, *The History of the Caucasian Albanians*, tr. C.J.F. Dowsett (Oxford, 1961), 99.

98 M.G. Magomedov, *Obrazovanie khazarского kaganata* (Moscow, 1983), p. 100 & Table 4.

99 D.M. Ataev, M.G. Magometov, “Andreiaul'skoe gorodishche,” *Drevnosti Dagestana* [Materialy po arkheologii Dagestana 5] (Makhachkala, 1974), 122.

100 Ataev, Magometov, “Andreiaul'skoe gorodishche,” 138; S.A. Romashov, *Istoricheskaia geografiia Khazarского kaganata (V-XIII vv.)* [AEMAE 13] (2004), 91.

101 Ierusalimskaia, “O Severokavkazskom ‘Shelkovom puti’,” 68-69; Noonan, “Why Dirhams First Reached Russia,” 252-254.

102 For evidence of an early medieval settlement at the site, see Alekseeva, *Arkheologicheskie pamiatniki*, 106-112; Kh.Kh. Bidzhiev, *Khumarskoe gorodishche* (Cherkessk, 1983).

103 For evidence of an early medieval settlement at the site, see Alekseeva, *Arkheologicheskie pamiatniki*, 77-78. For the reference to silks, see N.A. Tikhonov, O.V. Orfinskaia, “Stekliannoe zerkal'tse iz Nizhne-Arkhyzskogo Alanskogo pogrebeniia epokhi rannego srednevekov'ia,” *Kul'tura Evraziiskikh stepei vtoroi poloviny I tysiacheletia n.e. (Voprosy khronologii)* (Samara, 1998), 388.

104 P.G. Akritas, “Drevnii torgovyi put' ot Chernogo moria k Kaspiiskomu po goram tsentral'nogo Kavkaza,” *Uchenye zapiski Kabardino-Balkarskogo nauchno-issledovatel'skogo instituta*, vol. 16 (Nal'chik, 1959), 202-219; Noonan, “Why Dirhams First Reached Russia,” 256.

105 V.A. Kuznetsov, *Nizhnii Arkhyz v X-XII vekakh* (Stavropol', 1993), 126, 213. For the early medieval finds from this sites, also see Alekseeva, *Arkheologicheskie pamiatniki*, 45-49; Tikhonov, Orfinskaia, “Stekliannoe zerkal'tse,” 388.

106 Ierusalimskaia, “Alanskii mir na ‘shelkovom puti’,” 156-157; Noonan, “Why Dirhams First Reached Russia,” 255. For a very recent and rather detailed reconstruction of the various routes leading through the area, see Savchenko, “Moshchevaia balka,” 125-141.

107 *The History of Menander the Guardsman*, pp. 126-127 & n. 149, pp. 266-267. Also see V.I. Raspopova, “Arkheologicheskie dannye o Sogdiiskoi torgovle,” *Kratkie soobshcheniia Instituta arkheologii* 138 (1973), 81.

108 Ierusalimskaia, “O Severokavkazskom ‘Shelkovom puti’,” 58; Noonan, “Why Dirhams First Reached Russia,” 255.

109 Only in central Asia (including Khwārazm) are bones of mules more common than those of camels. See T.D. Annaev, *Rannesrednekovyye poseleniia severnogo Tokharistana*

have been discovered at Andreiaul'sk/Babandar¹¹⁰ and Nizhnii Arkhyz, both, as noted above, key junctions along the trans-Caucasus Silk Road.¹¹¹ As will be seen below, mule bones and pictures of these animals drawn on various objects also occur in the central and northern regions of Khazaria, indicating that these uncommon for the area transport animals were also used outside of the Caucasus.

It is very likely that the Khazars and the merchants trading through their territories relied on the Caucasus as the source of their mules. Indeed, the Caucasus were well known for their supply of these animals during the early Middle Ages. During the ninth and tenth centuries, the region of Bardha'ah, in particular, reportedly produced the finest and fastest mules in the Islamic world.¹¹² Mule bones have been discovered in Darband (but interestingly none of camels).¹¹³ It is quite possible that mules, like horses, were employed in significant numbers to cross the more rugged mountainous regions of the Caucasus and preferable to camels in these areas.

NORTHWESTERN STEMS OF THE NORTHERN SILK ROAD DURING THE *PAX CHAZARICA* ERA (CA. 800-CA. 900)

The last decades of the eighth century witness the end of Khazar-Arab wars in the Caucasus, which brought stability to the western Eurasian steppe and initiated the so-called state of *Pax Chazarica* lasting until the violent migration of the Pečenegs to the lands of Khazaria in ca. 900. This "Khazar Peace" inaugurated a period of intense commercial contacts between the Khazar qağanate and the 'Abbāsīd caliphate. In addition to the Northern Silk Road passing through the lands of Khazaria and the west Urals Fur Road that the Khazars controlled, the peaceful Khazar-Arab relations created another trans-continental commercial artery running through the qağanate that intersected with the other two: the "Silver Road."¹¹⁴ This Silver Road brought millions of dirhams from the 'Abbāsīd Near East via the southern Caucasus and Khazaria to the forest-steppe and forest zones of European Russia, from where

(Tashkent, 1988), 49; V.I. Tsalkin, *Drevnee zhitovnovodstvo plemen Vostochnoi Evropy i Srednei Azii* (Moscow, 1966), Tables 38-42, Appendix I-VI, pp. 150-157.

110 Magomedov, *Obrazovanie khazarского kaganata*, p. 100 & Table 4.

111 Kuznetsov, *Nizhnii Arkhyz v X-XII vekakh*, p. 292, Appendix 6.

112 Jāhīz in Lopez, Raymond, *Medieval Trade*, doc. 4, p. 29; Ḥudūd al-'Ālam: "The Regions of the World," *A Persian Geography 372 A.H.-982 A.D.*, tr. V. Minorsky, 2nd ed. (London, 1970), §36, p. 143. Mules are also mentioned among the many riches presented to the future 'Abbāsīd caliph al-Manṣūr (754-775) by Armenian nobles. See *History of Lewond, The Eminent Vardapet of the Armenians*, tr. Z. Arzoumanian (Philadelphia, 1982), 123.

113 A.A. Kudriavtsev, *Feodal'nyi Derbent* (Moscow, 1993), 188.

114 For the development of trade relations between European Russia and the East, see Noonan, "Why Dirhams First Reached Russia," 152-282.

many of them were re-exported into the Viking-age Baltic.¹¹⁵ Silks joined the flow of this silver northward by way of a new – the Northern Donets-Don – stem of the Northern Silk Road passing via Khazaria. Some silks were carried via this route as far northwest as the eastern Baltic and probably further west. Other silks, however, were dispatched northwestwards by way of the forest-steppe limes (defensive lines) of Khazaria and, arguably, sent further west to central and western Europe by another new vector of the Northern Silk Road – the Northern Donets-middle Dnepr-lower Danube stem. These two new stems together with the Silver Road that intersected them in the steppe lands of the qağanate not only brought various novel types of southern Eurasian commodities to the steppe, forest-steppe, and even the forest zones of European Russia, but also camels and mules that carried them. What is more, this trade demanded the development of an elaborate commercial infrastructure in Khazaria: roads, way-stations, garrisoned forts to police and protect the commercial traffic, and even caravansaries of southern Eurasian type in the core and peripheral lands of the qağanate.

The Northern Donets-Don Stem

The Northern Donets-Don stem is attested to by numerous archaeological materials, some written sources, and an array of circumstantial evidence. To begin, the route is traced by the presence of camels and mules, highly unusual for the area. Most of this evidence comes from sites located in the core steppe lands of Khazaria that date from the late eighth through the ninth centuries [Map 2]. Thus, camel bones have been discovered in the earliest layers of Sarkel¹¹⁶ – the Khazar stone castle situated along the lower Don, built with Byzantine assistance in 840-841.¹¹⁷ A graffito depiction of a mule drawn on a bone trinket has also been discovered in the castle.¹¹⁸ Camel and mule bones occur across the river from Sarkel at the Right-Bank Tsimliansk hillfort¹¹⁹ (destroyed sometime in first two-three decades of the ninth century), and the Karnaukhovo settlement, just north of Sarkel.¹²⁰ Quite clearly, these

115 Th.S. Noonan, "Dirham Exports to the Baltic in the Viking Age: Some Preliminary Observations," *Sigtuna Papers – Proceedings of the Sigtuna Symposium on Viking-Age Coinage 1-4 June, 1989*, ed. K. Jonsson & B. Malmer [Commentationes De Nummis Saeculorum IX-XI in Suecia Repertis. Nova series 6] (Stockholm, 1990), 251, 256.

116 S.A. Pletneva, *Sarkel i «shelkovyi» put'* (Voronezh, 1996), 129-130.

117 C. Zuckerman, "Two Notes on the Early History of the *thema* of Cherson," *Byzantine and Modern Greek Studies* 21 (1997), 214.

118 V.K. Mikheev, *Podon'e v sostave Khazarского kaganata* (Khar'kov, 1985), 28.

119 S.A. Pletneva, *Ot kochevii k gorodam. Saltovo-Maiatskaia kul'tura* [Materialy i issledovaniia po arkheologii SSSR, №142] (Moscow, 1967); 147; idem., "Istoriia odnogo khazarского poseleniia," *Rossiiskaia arkheologiia* 2 (1993), Table 1, p. 60.

120 I.I. Liapushkin, "Karnaukhovskoe poselenie," *Trudy Volgo-Donskoi arkheologicheskoi ekspeditsii*, vol. 1 [Materialy i issledovaniia po arkheologii SSSR, №62] (Moscow, 1958), 313; Pletneva, *Ot kochevii k gorodam*, 147.

two animals, unusual for the area, were rather prevalent in this geographically compact region of the lower Don during the period of the *Pax Chazarica*. Their regular presence in this locale must be connected to the advent of the Northern Donets-Don route and the existence of two caravansaries in Sarkel and the numerous trade routes that passed through the site.¹²¹

The caravansaries in Sarkel were established at the time the castle was founded in 840-841, thereby they are some of the oldest known caravansaries outside of the Near East.¹²² These caravansaries had two levels: the lower floors were designated for stalling animals and storing cargo and the upper floors were used as living quarters for visitors. At the lower level of caravansary №1, a long rectangular room (24.92m × 1.85m) served as a stall for animals; there were five additional square rooms of smaller size for storage and perhaps living quarters for servants (slaves that were being led to the Khazar markets?). The largest of all spaces in the caravansaries were the central open-air courtyards surrounded by the walls of the rooms on the one hand and the wall of Sarkel on the other. With a total area of 2058 m² (42m × 49m),¹²³ caravansary №1 had a spacious courtyard of 33.8m × 27.2m in area and contained various workshops (iron-working and pottery-making) as well as residential and service buildings. Caravansary №2, occupying a total area of 3500m² (73m × 48m), while largely remains unexcavated, was significantly larger than №1. The two caravansaries were interconnected by an enclosed corridor, which served as the only way of entrance from the citadel to caravansary №2. The fact that the area of the two caravansaries constituted almost a quarter of the entire territory of Sarkel underscores the importance of Sarkel along the caravan routes of Khazaria.¹²⁴

121 Pletneva, *Sarkel i «shelkovyi» put'*, 55. It would be of interest to note that there is a very good likelihood that camel bones have been or will be unearthed by archaeologists at the Khazar castle of Semikarakory – a site located in the delta of the lower Don. The castle may well have acted as the hub for trade along the lower Don-Crimea route. For a very brief discussion of the sites, see I.L. Kyzlasov, "Rabota gruppy srednevekovoi arheologii Evraziiskikh stepei v 2002 g.," *Kratkie soobshcheniia Instituta arkheologii* 216 (2004), 104. Quite likely, like ancient Tanais and later the Mongol-era city of Azak (both located in the same region and were key commercial depots) where camel bones have been discovered, this site may well also have been a very important commercial junction from where caravans moved northwards up the Don to Sarkel. For camel bones of ancient Tanais and Azak, see V.V. Kropotkin, "Karavannye puti v Vostochnoi Evrope," *Kavkaz i Vostochnaia Evropa v drevnosti: Posviashchietsia pamiati E.I. Krupnova* (Moscow, 1973), 226; Iu.Ia. Kozhevnikova, "Fauna srednevekovogo Azaka," *Severnoe Prichernomor'e i Povolzh'e vo vzaimootnosheniakh Vostoka i Zapada v XII-XVI vekakh* (Rostov on the Don, 1989), 78-85.

122 Pletneva, *Sarkel i «shelkovyi» put'*, 55. Also see below.

123 Estimate based on Pletneva, *Sarkel i «shelkovyi» put'*, Fig. 13, p. 36.

124 Pletneva, *Sarkel i «shelkovyi» put'*, 35-56, 153.

Site	Date	Area
Caravansary Daia-Khatyn (medieval Ribāṭ Ṭāhiryah), at the crossing of the Amu Darya – on road leading from Harāt, Marw and Āmul to Khwārazm	9-10 th centuries; est. by Ṭāhir I (776-822)	112×125 m = 14000 m ²
Caravansary Sartarash (medieval Jakarband), on the right bank of the Amu Darya, opposite of the city of Jakarband – on road leading from Harāt, Marw, and Āmul to Khwārazm	10-11 th centuries	32×32 m = 1024 m ²
Caravansary Ishan-Ribāṭ, stationed on the right bank of the Amu Darya – on road leading from Harāt, Marw, and Āmul to Khwārazm	10-11 th centuries	48×48 m = 2304 m ²
Caravansary Meshekli, on the right bank of the Amu Darya (northwest of Ishan-Ribāṭ and Jakarband) – on road leading from Harāt, Marw, and Āmul to Khwārazm	9 th century	50×52 m = 2600 m ²
Caravansary Kyzylcha-kala 2 (medieval al-Ḥadīd) – on the road through the Karakum desert between Marw and Āmul (80m from al-Diwād) on route to Khwārazm	9-10 th centuries	60×60 m = 3600 m ²
Caravansary Kyzylcha-kala 1 (medieval al-Diwād) – on the road through the Karakum desert between Marw and Āmul (80m from al-Diwād) on route to Khwārazm	9-10 th centuries	"analogous to al-Ḥadīd" = 3600 m ²
Caravansary medieval Ribāṭ Naṣrāq, near the caravan station Mansāf, on mid-road between Marw and Āmul on route to Khwārazm	9-10 th centuries	35×35 m = 1225 m ²
Caravansary near Paykand/Baykand, 50 km SW of Bukhārā (on road to Āmul)	9-10 th centuries	75×72 m = 5400 m ²
Caravansary "Ribāṭ Malik," situated in the steppe along a road connecting Bukhārā to Samarqand	9-10 th centuries	86×86 m = 7396 m ²
Caravansary Kara-tepe I (Kum-tepe), NW of Jizak, on a road connecting Bukhārā to Chāch (al-Shāsh)	10 th century	50×40 m = 2000 m ²
Caravansary Navoiili, NW of Jizak, on a road connecting Bukhārā to Chāch (al-Shāsh)	10 th century	30 × 30 m = 900 m ²
Caravansary Uzumkuduk, NW of Jizak, on a road connecting Bukhārā to Chāch (al-Shāsh)	9-11 th centuries	62 × 61 m = 3782 m ²
Caravansary Chaldyvar, on the sector of the Great Silk Road between Farḡāna and Sin-Chiang (eastern Turkeṣtān)	9-10 th centuries	58×60 m = 3480 m ²

TABLE 1 – CARAVANSARIES OF CENTRAL ASIA OF THE 9TH-10TH CENTURIES¹²⁵

To better understand the significance of Sarkel as a key transit point for caravans, it is necessary to put its caravansaries into perspective by comparing them to the contemporary caravansaries found in central Asia. Thus, of the thirteen caravansaries dating to the ninth-eleventh centuries for which there is data on their total area, nine are larger than Sarkel caravansary №1 and six larger than caravansary №2. In this way, caravansary №1 can be considered below average in size while caravansary №2 slightly above average. At the same time, one has to keep in mind that the two caravansaries in Sarkel were contemporaneous and functioned side by side. For this reason, it would be appropriate to consider their combined area, which is 5558 m². Therefore, the total area available for caravans in Sarkel makes it the third largest caravansary complex among the contemporary central Asian caravan-

125 Date derives from Khmel'nitskii, *Mezhdū arabami i tiurkami*, 180-204.

saries, outdone only by Ribāṭ Ṭāhirīyah and the caravansary in Jakarband, which were twice and thrice larger. Thus, it is clear that Sarkel's caravansaries could offer accommodations to some of the largest caravans traveling across central Asia during the Middle Ages.

Overall, Sarkel and the complex of sites in its direct vicinity where there is evidence for camel and mule transport clearly underscore the importance of the lower Don region in cross-continental trade and show that Sarkel was a major circuit in the system of trans-Eurasian commerce. Overland routes ran from Sarkel east to İtil/Atıl at the mouth of the Volga; southwest to the Crimea and the Taman' Peninsula (e.g., cities like Tamatarkha); southeast to Darband via the northern Caucasus and the Sanchur Pass (the site of Moshchevaia Balka); north to the Slavic Borshevo culture region via the Khazar northern limes of the forest-steppe zone, and, as S.A. Pletneva suggests, northwest towards the middle Dnepr and Kiev.¹²⁶ According to Constantine Porphyrogenitus, 300 men were garrisoned in Sarkel and relieved annually.¹²⁷ This garrison, in addition to defending the castle from attack, could also have protected caravans and the routes of Sarkel. In this way, it functioned very much like an early Arab *ribāṭ* in central Asia by protecting the borders as well as offering accommodations and security to caravan traffic.

Despite its apparent importance as a key link in facilitating commercial traffic through Khazaria and western Eurasian trade, in general, very few artifacts have been found in Sarkel that would tie it directly to the Northern Silk Road. Among the finds there is a very worn elephant ivory chess-piece of an elephant of Sogdian origin dating to the seventh century that was discovered inside one of the caravansaries. A piece of paper manufactured in Samarqand was also unearthed in Sarkel. It dates to the eighth-early ninth century, but was buried in the hand of an individual who was apparently killed when Sarkel was stormed and taken by the Rus' in 965.¹²⁸ Of course, camel and mule bones and the two caravansaries situated in Sarkel speak for themselves about the site's connection to the Northern Silk Road. A hoard of silver coins found near Sarkel also ties it to the Silver Road and commerce with the Islamic Near East, which at that time was the source of these coins.¹²⁹ This hoard of 48 Sasanian drachms and Islamic dirhams (mostly frag-

126 Pletneva, *Sarkel i «shelkovyi» put'*, pp. 142-149 & Fig. 53. Unfortunately, Pletneva does not provide any evidence to support her suggestion for the existence of a northwestern route from Sarkel to the middle Dnepr and Kiev other than by connecting sites of settlements on the map of the Don-Northern Donets region.

127 Constantine Porphyrogenitus, *De administrando imperio* 1, tr. R.J.H. Jenkins, 2nd ed. (Washington D.C. 1967), 182-183.

128 Pletneva, *Sarkel i «shelkovyi» put'*, p. 44, Fig. 16; pp. 43, 140-141, 153.

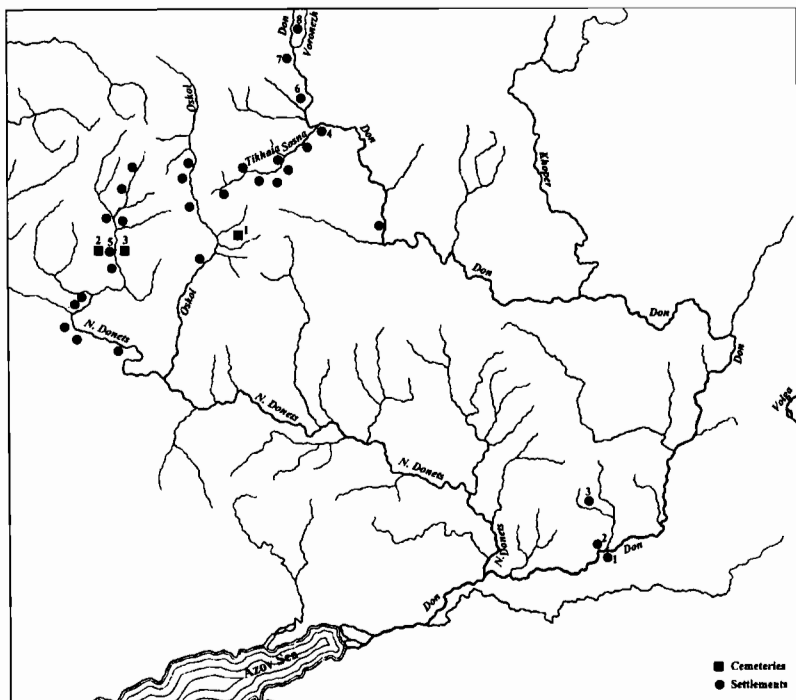
129 Th.S. Noonan, "The Regional Composition of Ninth-Century Dirham Hoards from European Russia," *The Islamic World, Russia and the Vikings, 750-900*, 153-165.

ments) was found at the Right-Bank Tsimliansk hillfort and deposited at the time the site was destroyed, most likely in first two-three decades of the ninth century.¹³⁰

While relatively few artifacts have been found in Sarkel that would connect it directly to silks and the Northern Silk Road, this should not be surprising. Silks are almost always found not at settlements, but in cemeteries; and, the cemeteries that are located in the region of Sarkel poorly preserve organic materials such as silks. However, there are two burial complexes of the Verkhnesaltovo and Netailov cemeteries located along the upper Northern Donets river [Map 2] where organic materials were rather well preserved; and, there are also reports of silk finds at both sites. These two cemeteries are interconnected by way of their chronology, since both are dated to the eighth through the ninth centuries and by way of their close geographic proximity. They are also circumstantially connected to the caravan trade by virtue of their location along the northern limes of the Khazar qaḡanate where, as will be seen below, there is evidence for the use of camels and mules.

The northern limes of the middle Don-Oskol-Northern Donets rivers were particularly well interconnected with the southern regions of Khazaria by way of the Don and an extensive network of land roads stretching down the Don to Sarkel. Numerous fortified and unfortified settlements on the western (right) bank of the river protected and controlled these routes. The forest-steppe zone of the middle Don-Oskol-Northern Donets rivers acted as the northern periphery for the qaḡanate and functioned as the primary circuit in the north-south route system used by Rus' merchants. Based on the report of Ibn Khurdādhbeh (writing in ca. 850-885), the ar-Rūs/Rus' traveled by ship from northern Russia via the Northern Donets-Don basins with their furs, swords, and other goods to the southern coast of the Caspian

130 For the hoard, see Th.S. Noonan, *Dirham Hoards from Medieval Western Eurasia, c. 700-c. 1100* [Commentationes De Nummis Saeculorum IX-XI in Suecia Repertis. Nova series 13] (Stockholm) (in preparation). It should be noted that there is much confusion concerning the date of the hoard's deposit, because a full account of the hoard has still not been made available. At least three dates have been offered based on the alleged latest coins found in the hoard: 1) Hārūn al-Rashīd (786-809), 2) 802, and 3) al-Amīn (809-813). Whichever one of these may be the case, it is still likely that the hoard should be dated to a later time, since it is known that the coin deposit contained a Khazar imitation dirham. Since the Khazars began to strike imitation dirhams beginning with ca. 824/25, the dating of the destruction of Right-bank Tsimliansk fortified site to the first two-three decades of the ninth century makes all the sense. See R.K. Kovalev, "What Does Historical Numismatics Suggest About the Monetary History of Khazaria in The Ninth Century? – Question Revisited," *AEMAE* 13 (2004), 108.



MAP 2 – SITES WITH FINDS OF CAMEL AND MULE BONES AND THE ANIMALS' DEPICTIONS IN THE DON-NORTHERN DONETS RIVER BASINS OF KHAZARIA

Settlements – 1. Sarkel; 2. the Right-Bank Tsimliansk hillfort; 3. Karnaukhovo settlement;

4. Maiaki hillfort; 5. Verkhnesaltovo hillfort; 6. Titchikha hillfort; 7. Bol'shoe Borshevo hillfort; 8.

Zhivotinskoe hillfort; Cemeteries – 1. Podgorovsk; 2. Verkhnesaltovo; 3. Netailov

via Khazaria and then proceed south on camels to as far as Baghdād.¹³¹ The existence of this Silver Road in the ninth century is confirmed by the topography of dirham hoard finds in eastern Europe. Both, Ibn Khurdādhbeh and the find-spots of the hoards trace a route that ran from the Near East via the Caucasus to the lower Volga from where it passed to the lower Don via a portage and Sarkel and then went north up the Don to the Northern Donets, from where it continued further north into the Oka system and then crossed to the upper Dnepr, upper Volga, or Western Dvina and into the Baltic via the Lovat' – Volkhov – Lake Ladoga – Neva

131 O. Pritsak, "An Arabic Text on the Trade Route of the Corporation of the ar-Rus in the Second Half of the Ninth Century," *Folia Orientalia* 12 (1970), 256-257;

– Gulf of Finland water-system. Based on numismatic finds, this route began to function as early as ca. 800.¹³²

As can be seen, the Silver Road passed directly through the Khazar northern limes, which constituted an elaborate system of forts and settlements. To date, twenty-four hillforts of various types dating to the eighth-tenth centuries have been identified and studied along the riverbanks of the Northern Donets (eight sites), Volch'ia (one site), Korocha (two sites), Oskol (four sites), Tikhaya Sosna (seven sites), and the middle Don (two sites – including the well-known Maiaki hillfort). All of these hillforts comprised a defensive network guarding three principal routes: Northern Donets, Oskol, and Tikhaya Sosna river-systems [Map 2]. All were also interconnected by way of smaller river routes and overland roads, constituting one large circuit for the Don river route linking the steppe lands of Khazaria with the northern forest regions of central and northern Russia.¹³³

Most of the hillforts along the Northern Donets, Oskol, and Tikhaya Sosna rivers were stone fortresses or castles, many of which (type 4) were erected sometime in the second half of the eighth-ninth centuries by the Khazars. Equestrian Iranian-speaking Alans, migrants to the middle Don from the Northern Caucasus since the eighth century, staffed these forts and monitored the passing traffic. Not inconsequentially, all of the forts were stationed 21.3-30.4 kilometers apart, or one day's travel. In this way, these hillforts not only constituted an elaborate system of defensive limes for the qağanate, but also a commercial network of fortified stations facilitating trade through the region.¹³⁴ Indeed, in their function, these forts seem to be very much like the *ribāṣ* or *khāns* of early Islamic central Asia. And it is precisely in this area of the northern Khazar limes and its forts where we once again encounter caravan traffic.

132 Th.S. Noonan, "When Did Rūs/Rus' First Visit Khazaria and Baghdad?," *AEMAE* 7 [1987-1991] (1991), 213-219; Pritsak, "An Arabic Text," 256-257; Th.S. Noonan, R.K. Kovalev, "Neizvestnyi klad nachala IX v. iz imeniia M.A. Obolenskogo Dmitrovskogo uезда Moskovskoi gubernii," *Arkheologicheskie vesti* 7 (2000), 211-212; idem., "Bol'shoi klad dirkhemov nachala epokhi vikingov naidennyi v 2000 g. v g. Kozel'ske, Kaluzhskoi obl.," *Arkheologicheskie vesti* 10 (2003), 149-163.

133 G.E. Afanas'ev, *Donskie Alany (The Alans of the Don)* (Moscow, 1993), 124-125, 174. Also see Romashov, *Istoricheskaia geografiia Khazarskogo kaganata* [*AEMAE* 12], 143-149, especially pp. 148-149.

134 Afanas'ev, *Donskie Alany*, 127, 139-140, 147-150; A.Z. Vinnikov, S.A. Pletneva, *Na severnykh rubezhakh Khazarskogo kaganata. Maiatskoe poselenie* (Voronezh, 1998), 36-40.

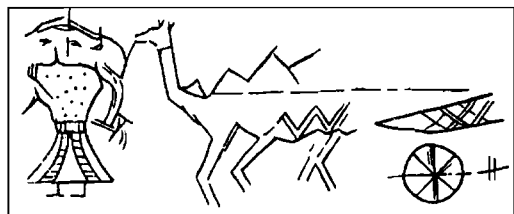


FIGURE 1 – PODGOROVSK CEMETERY

Thus, the next evidence of camels traveling north of the lower Don comes in a form of a graffito drawn on a bone mouthpiece of a flask that was discovered in one grave of the Podgorovsk cemetery (dating to the eighth-ninth centuries), located in the middle Oskol river basin, a tributary of the upper Northern Donets [Map 2]. The graffito shows a two-humped Bactrian camel pulling a cart while being led by an individual by a bridle [Fig. 1].¹³⁵ In addition to this find, a graffito of a mule drawn on a bronze amulet, discovered in a grave in the region of the Northern Donets, should be noted.¹³⁶ Mule bones and two graffiti – one of a camel and another of a mule – have also been discovered at the Maiaki hillfort of the middle Don, situated northeast of Podgorovsk cemetery [Map 2].¹³⁷ The picture of the camel was drawn on a rock depicting, once again, a two-humped Bactrian camel being led by a bridle. At the back of the camel, one sees what looks to be a pole or a rope, perhaps part of a harness to a wagon that was being pulled by the animal [Fig. 2]. Based on the Podgorovsk camel graffito and the graffito from Sulek, southern Siberia,¹³⁸ harnessing camels to wagons was common practice along major caravan routes passing through the steppe of early medieval Eurasia.

135 S.A. Pletneva, "Risunki na stenakh Maiatskogo gorodishche," *Maiatskoe gorodishche*, ed. S.A. Pletneva (Moscow, 1984), p. 79, Fig. 14; S.A. Pletneva, "Podgorovskii mogil'nik," *Sovetskaia arkhologiia* 3 (1962), 241-251.

136 Mikheev, *Podon'e v sostave Khazarского kaganata*, 28.

137 V.E. Flérova, *Graffiti khazarii* (Moscow, 1997), p. 105, Table II: 33; Ia. Matolchi, "Kosti zhivotnykh s gorodishche, selishcha i mogil'nika (1978-1979)," *Maiatskoe gorodishche*, 245-246; Mikheev, *Podon'e v sostave Khazarского kaganata*, 28.

138 L.A. Evtikhova, "Iuzhnaia Sibir' v drevnosti," *Po sledam drevnikh kul'tur. Ot Volgi do Tikhogo Okeana*, ed. A.P. Smirnov, N.Ia. Merpert (Moscow, 1954), 221. Also see Kovalev, "Commerce and Caravan Routes Along the Northern Silk Road (Sixth-Ninth Centuries) – Part II."

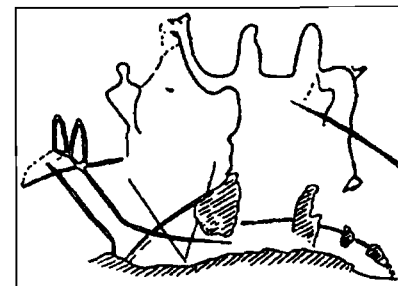


FIGURE 2 – MAIAKI HILLFORT

Thus, it appears that the two Khazar graffiti are nearly identical, as they show that camels were used for pulling wagons loaded with goods through the region. It would be amiss not to note the discovery of a silk caftan in one grave of the Maiaki unfortified settlement, situated next to the Maiaki hillfort. It contained a caftan that is analogous to one of the caftans found at Moshchevaia Balka.¹³⁹ In this way, the middle Don and the Northern Caucasus sector of the Northern Silk Road running via Khazaria seem to connect rather neatly.

The use of camels along the middle Don is also attested to in the written sources. Writing in the early tenth century, Ibn Rusta and, about a century and a half later, Gardīzi (mid-eleventh century), note that merchants travel from the lands of the Burtās to Khazaria by boat and land and that the Burtās have many camels.¹⁴⁰ While the exact location of the Burtās is disputed, it would be safe to say that they were situated somewhere between the right bank of the middle Volga and the middle Don and were eastern neighbors of the Alans, southwestern neighbors of the Volga Bulğars, and southern neighbors of the Mordva tribes.¹⁴¹ Interestingly, fragments of raw silk (golden-yellow) with stitches made with a dark twisted silk thread were discovered at the Mordva cemetery of Kriukovo-Kuzhnovsk dating from the eighth through the eleventh centuries.¹⁴² Perhaps, the Burtās carried silks to some of these peoples and, quite possibly, they obtained them from the Alans inhabiting the Khazar limes of the middle Don, who, as will be seen below, had access to silks.

Other sites connected to caravan trade in the region are the Verkhnesaltovo and Netailov cemeteries noted above. Both sites are located along the upper Northern Donets river, the former on the right bank and the latter on the left [Map 2]. Based

139 A.A. Ierusalimskaia, "Adygo-Alanskii kostium VIII-XI vv. na fone obshchikh problem izucheniiia srednevekovogo kostiama Zapada i Vostoka," *Kul'tura stepei Evrazii vtoroi poloviny I tysiacheletia n.e. (Iz istorii kostiama)* (Samara, 2000), 60.

140 Ibn Rusta in D.A. Khvol'son, *Izvestiia o khazarakh, burtasakh, bolgarakh, mad'iarakh, sylvian i rusi, Abu ali-Akhmeda ben Omar ibn-Dasta* (St. Petersburg, 1869), 19; Gardīzi in Martinez, "Gardīzi's Two Chapters on the Turks," 156.

141 For a comprehensive recent discussion on the Burtās, see Romashov, *Istoricheskaia geografiia Khazarского kaganata* [AEMAE 12], 168-179.

142 Efimova, "Tkani iz finno-ugorskikh mogil'nikov," 134.

on burial types, it has been determined that Verkhnesaltovo was predominately an Alan cemetery while Netailov was early Bulġar, but there was quite a bit of mixing of the two at both. A well-known fortified settlement of Verkhnesaltovo and its rather expansive "suburbs" were also located on the right bank of the Northern Donets and the fort constituted one of the key Khazar defenses along its northwestern limes with the Slavic cultures to the north. To date, it has been estimated that some fifteen thousand graves are located at the Netailov cemetery and some sixty thousand "family" burials entered in at least five chamber-grave burial grounds at the Verkhnesaltovo cemetery – making this, by far, the largest burial ground in Khazaria. Both cemeteries are presently dated to the eighth-ninth centuries.¹⁴³

For our purposes, the most interesting finds from the burials excavated to date are the coins and silks. Of the 357 graves excavated by 1997 at the Netailov cemetery, a total of thirteen coins were discovered: twelve dirhams dating from the late seventh through the first half of the ninth centuries and one Byzantine gold solidus of Constantine V dating to the mid-eighth century. At the more excavated Verkhnesaltovo cemetery (where ca. 1000 burials have been examined), more than 150 dirhams have been discovered.¹⁴⁴ The finds of such a large collection of dirhams at the cemeteries (the largest numbers found at any Khazar burial ground) clearly speaks of the site's connection to the Silver Road that ran from the Near East via Khazaria and up the Don-Northern Donets rivers north into northwestern Russia and the Baltic.

Aside from the coins, during the excavations of 1991-1997 at the Netailov cemetery, archaeologists unearthed organic remains in almost every grave uncovered, which included silks as well as furs – all ritually used for wrapping human remains. Silks are also rather common finds at the Verkhnesaltovo cemetery.¹⁴⁵ So far, a comprehensive study of these silks – concerning their quantities, chronology, and places of manufacture – has not been published. However, in light of the great total number of burials at these two cemeteries, it would not at all be surprising if they would compete in their number of silks and even surpass Moshchevaia Balka once both cemeteries are fully excavated. Quite possibly, like Moshchevaia Balka, this burial complex along the upper Northern Donets belonged to people who were situated on a major caravan route and were responsible for the collection of tolls in the form of silks and coins from the passing traffic. The importance of toll collections for the Khazars is well attested to in the written sources.¹⁴⁶ Therefore, it would

143 A.V. Kryganov, "Netailovskii mogil'nik na fone Prabolgarskikh nekropolei Evropy," *Kul'tura Evraziiskikh stepei vtoroi poloviny I tysiacheletia n.e. (Voprosy khronologii)* (Samara, 1998), 358-359.

144 Kryganov, "Netailovskii mogil'nik," 362-363; O.V. Parkhomenko, "Pokhoyal'nyi inventar Netailivs'koho mohyl'nyka VIII-IX st.," *Arkheolohiia* 43 (1983), 75-86.

145 Kryganov, "Netailovskii mogil'nik," 362-363.

146 B.N. Zakhoder, *Kaspiiskii svod svedenii o Vostochnoi Evrope* 1 (Moscow, 1967), 169-170. Also see Kovalev, "What Does Historical Numismatics Suggest," p. 108, n. 34.

not be unreasonable to suggest that the large concentration of coins and expensive silks found in this remote region of the northern limes of the qaġanate may be connected to the existence of a Khazar toll station in the area.¹⁴⁷ In short, while it is more than likely that the camels visiting the Sarkel caravansaries traveled to many different destinations, their most common route – at least based on the finds of camel and mule bones, graffiti of these two animals as well as silk and coin finds – seems to have been the northwestern Khazar limes of the forest-steppe region of the upper Northern Donets-middle Don basins. And it is precisely just to the north of these Khazar limes where it is possible to once again track the caravan route.

The next area where camels can be traced based on their bone finds are the Slavic Borshevo culture settlements of Titchikha and Bol'shoe Borshevo,¹⁴⁸ both situated along the upper Don and dating to the eighth-tenth centuries.¹⁴⁹ These two sites were located immediately to the north of the Khazar limes and the Maiaki hillfort where a graffito of a camel has been found. Evidence for the presence of camels, in any form, north of Bol'shoe Borshevo has not yet come to light. It is thus possible that their road terminated at Bol'shoe Borshevo or just north of it at the site of Zhivotinskoe hillfort. Situated near the confluence of the Voronezh and the upper Don rivers, Zhivotinskoe of the Borshevo culture dates from the second half of the eighth through the first half of the eleventh century. It has been determined that

147 While it may be too premature to suggest this, but it is quite possible that many, if not most, of the silks discovered at the Verkhnesaltovo and Netailov cemeteries will turn out to be manufactured in Sogdia, eastern Turkestan, or China. Aside from what was already suggested above concerning the eastern origins of the silks coming into Khazaria, it appears that Byzantium was not a major supplier of silks to Khazaria, perhaps because the Empire restricted the export of its silks to the non-Christian nomads of the Pontic steppe. This is perhaps best illustrated by the absence of Byzantine silks in nomadic non-Christian (Greek) Bulġar graves at the Sudak 2 cemetery in the Crimea (where the deceased were interred wearing their woolens), while "a large" collection of ninth-tenth century Byzantine silks with gold and silver threads and prints have been unearthed at the Byzantine/Christian burials of the same cemetery and fragments of silk with prints were discovered in one Byzantine/Christian grave of the Ai-Iorgii cemetery. See I.A. Baranov, *Tavrika v epokhu rannego srednevekov'ia (saltovo-maiatskaia kul'tura)* (Kiev, 1990), 80, 107. It thus appears that the Byzantines did not sell their silks to non-Greeks in the Crimea and quite possibly elsewhere in the North Pontic steppe region. What Byzantine silks were transported through the Northern Caucasus (where they have been found) were probably exported from the Byzantine Empire indirectly (i.e., via the Christian states of the Caucasus).

148 V.I. Gromova, "Ostatki mlekovitaiushchikh iz ranneslavianskikh gorodishche bliz g. Voronezha," *Drevnerusskie poseleniia na Donu* [Materialy i issledovaniia po arkheologii SSSR, №8] (Moscow, 1948), 121; V.I. Tsalkin, *Materialy dlia istorii zhivotnovodstva i okhoty v drevnei Rusi* [Materialy i issledovaniia po arkheologii SSSR, №51] (Moscow, 1956), p. 181, Table 21; idem., "Fauna iz raskopok borshchevskikh i romenskikh gorodishche," *Sovetskaia arkheologiia* 4 (1969), p. 92, Table I; A.M. Moskalenko, "Gorodishche Tatchikha," *Iz istorii drevnerusskikh poselenii na Donu* (Voronezh, 1965), 68, 285.

149 For these sites, see P.P. Efimenko, P.N. Tret'iakov, *Drevnerusskie poseleniia na Donu*; Moskalenko, *Gorodishche Titchikha*.

during the tenth and eleventh centuries the site acted as a major way-station along an east-west caravan route connecting the Bulgars of the middle Volga with Chernigov and Kiev and further west with central Europe.¹⁵⁰ It is quite possible that the camels traveling along the north-south route between the caravansaries of Sarkel via the Don-Northern Donets used the same route in the ninth century by continuing their journey through the forest-steppe and the southern forest zones of the north Pontic region in an east-west direction after reaching the southern Borshevo sites. This potential route will be explored in some detail below.

The Upper-Northern Donets-Don-Middle Dnepr-Danube Stem

An advent of an east-west route through the north Pontic forest-steppe zone and the forest region just north of it would have made perfect sense for the Khazars and merchants operating through their territories after the late 830s. During these turbulent years for the Khazars, the qağanate experienced a civil war (the Kabar revolt) as well as lost control over most of its north Pontic lands – from the lower Danube to the lower Don – as a result of the Magyar westward migration into the region. Sarkel, the principal castle along the lower Don, was after all built specifically to protect the remaining Khazar eastern territories from the Magyars and secure trade through the region.¹⁵¹ The Magyar takeover of the vast territory stretching from the lower Don to the lower Danube meant that if the Khazars wished to maintain commercial relations with the western coast of the Black Sea by land, the qağanate had to develop an east-west route that circumvented the steppe and the Magyars who controlled it and disrupted trade through the region.¹⁵² The Khazars accomplished this not only by erecting Sarkel, but developing the north-south Northern Donets-Don stem of the Northern Silk Road with its elaborate network of forts and roads extending to its northern borders. Based on numismatic evidence, these defenses proved very effective since north-south trade along the Northern Donets-Don resumed by 841/42 and, in fact, escalated in the following decades.¹⁵³ It must have

150 A.P. Motsia, A.Kh. Khalikov, *Bulgar-Kiev. Puti, svyazi, sud'by* (Kiev, 1997), 134-136; A.Z. Vinnikov, "Slavianskoe Zhitovinskoe gorodishche na r. Voronezhe," *Put' iz Bulgara v Kiev* (Kazan', 1992), 114-132; Kovalev, "Camel Transport in Volga Bulgaria and Kievan Rus'."

151 Constantine Porphyrogenitus, *De administrando imperio* I, 171-173; K. Tsukerman, "Vengry v strane levedii: novaia derzhava na granitsakh Vizantii i Khazarii ok. 836-889 g.," *Materialy po arkeologii, istorii i etnografii Tavrii* 6 (Semferopol', 1998), 659-665; Romashov, *Istoricheskaia geografiia Khazarского kaganata* [AEMAE 12], 155-156; Kovalev, "What Does Historical Numismatics Suggest About the Monetary History of Khazaria," 124.

152 Kovalev, "What Does Historical Numismatics Suggest About the Monetary History of Khazaria," 124-125; Tsukerman, "Vengry v strane levedii," 659-665.

153 Kovalev, "What Does Historical Numismatics Suggest About the Monetary History of Khazaria," 125.

been then that a connection was made between the Northern Donets-Don stem of the Silk Road and the new east-west route running along the northern borders of Khazaria. The western sector of this east-west route probably passed through the relative safety of the forest-steppe zone of Khazar-held territories, on the one hand, and the southern region of the forest belt inhabited by their Slavic tributaries, on the other. Thus, its most likely trek ran from the middle Don-upper Northern Donets to the middle Dnepr via the Desna, Vorskla, Psel, and Seim river basins that interconnected the three larger river-systems. Then, it passed to the Ros' river from where it turned south towards Gnilaia Tikich and Siniukha rivers. From there, it continued to the Southern Bug and thence to the lower Dnepr via the Kodyma until it reached the territories of the Bulgar kingdom in the lower Danube.¹⁵⁴ Having presented this hypothetical east-west route, let us examine the evidence that may support its operations in the ninth century.

The existence of an east-west trade route connecting central Europe with the East via the middle Dnepr and Kiev during the ninth century has been argued in scholarly literature for quite some time. Primary accounts relate that the route's operation can be tied to the trading activities of Jewish merchants (known in the ninth century as the Rādānīya/Rāhdānīya), who, in the High Middle Ages, played a very prominent role in trade relations between the East and central Europe via Kiev and the Rus' lands.¹⁵⁵ Unfortunately, however, this argument has not always been very convincing, since it is based almost entirely on later sources, all of which are written documents. Furthermore, this argument presupposes that Kiev was already an important commercial center, if not a thriving depot of international trade, during the ninth century. The available evidence, however, does not support such a conclusion.

With all that said, it is not my intent to revise the connection made by others between the Rādānīya merchants and an east-west caravan route leading from Khazaria to central Europe via the middle Dnepr during the ninth century. To the contrary, I would like to introduce new and supporting evidence for its existence and show the key role the Rādānīya merchants played along its way. Indeed, circumstantial evidence coming from the written sources strongly suggests that such a road did exist in the ninth century and there is also evidence suggesting that this route was indeed used by the Rādānīya merchants and that among the items they traded was eastern silk.

While there is considerable debate concerning the time when Kiev was founded and when it came to play an important role in cross-continental commerce, it does appear to have been a Khazar outpost by the first half of the ninth century and may

154 Romashov, *Istoricheskaia geografiia Khazarского kaganata* [AEMAE 12], 151.

155 J. Brutzkus, "Trade With Eastern Europe, 800-1200," *Economic History Review* 13 (1942), 31-41; A.P. Novosel'tev, V.T. Pashuto, "Vneshniaia torgovlia drevnei Rusi (do serediny XIII v.)," *Istoriia SSSR* 3 (1967), 81.

well have been established by the Khazars themselves.¹⁵⁶ It would be amiss not to note the *Russian Primary Chronicle*'s report of a legend that a ferryman established Kiev and that a ferry crossing the Dnepr lay near the city.¹⁵⁷ Although this story is largely mythical and cannot be tied to a specific period, it is quite possible that there is a kernel of historical truth to the commercial origins of the city and the existence of a crossing point through it along a larger east-west network of a caravan road operating through Khazaria by the mid-ninth century at the latest.

Accounts of several Muslim authors shed greater light on the question at hand. Both Ibn Khurdādhbeh and Ibn al-Faqīh (writing in ca. 904) preserve significant information regarding the Rādānīya's commerce and report that they traded various commodities from western Eurasia and North Africa (cloth, furs, swords, and slaves) for spices and other goods with China across Eurasia by land and sea.¹⁵⁸ Among their many itineraries, Ibn Khurdādhbeh describes one route that began in the "hinterland of Rome" (Byzantium), then passed through the lands of the *Ṣaqāliba* (Slavs) to Khamlīkh (commercial sector of Ītil/Atīl), from where they sailed south across the Caspian/Sea of Gurjān (most probably to the port of Gurjān) and then traveled by land to Balkh, Transoxiana, Yurt, Toquz Oğuz, and then reached China.¹⁵⁹

In addition to the above route, Ibn Khurdādhbeh mentions another trek taken by the Rādānīya that passed from Khurāsān to Khazaria via Armīniyah.¹⁶⁰ Ibn al-Faqīh also speaks of a Rādānīya route from Khurāsān to Khazaria via the Caucasus, albeit not in any geographic order: Armīniyah, Ādharbayjān, Khurāsān, land of the Khazars, and Jurjān.¹⁶¹ However, it is clear from Ibn al-Faqīh's account that the route began in Khazaria, then stretched south through the Caucasus and its provinces of Armīniyah and Ādharbayjān, then turned east and followed along the southern coast of the Caspian Sea through its southeastern provinces of Ṭabaristān and Jurjān and passed to Khurāsān, and then presumably went on to China via the route laid out by Ibn Khurdādhbeh. Subsequently, the two authors preserved two different Rādānīya routes passing via Khazaria – one by land and sea and the other only by land. Both routes are of great interest to us presently, particularly their western sectors.

156 For a good and rather recent synopsis on the origins of Kiev, see S. Franklin, J. Shepard, *The Emergence of Rus, 750-1200* (London-New York), 93-95.

157 *Povest' vremennykh let*, ed. and tr. D.S. Likhachev (St. Petersburg, 1996), 9-10; *The Russian Primary Chronicle*, ed. & tr. S.H. Cross & O.P. Sherbowitz-Wetzor (Cambridge, Mass., reprint, 1973), 54.

158 For the regions they visited, goods traded, their likely place of origin, and other related issues, see Gil, "The Rādhānite Merchants and the Land of Rādhān," 299-328.

159 Ibn Khurdādhbih, *Kitāb al-Masālik wa'l-Mamālik/Liber viarum et regnorum*, tr., M. J. de Goeje [Bibliotheca Geographorum Arabicorum, IV], 2nd ed. (Leiden, 1967), 116.

160 Ibn Khurdādhbih, *Kitāb al-Masālik wa'l-Mamālik*, 117.

161 Gil, "The Rādhānite Merchants and the Land of Rādhān," 307.

Ibn Khurdādhbeh's account of the west-east route ("hinterland of Rome"/ Byzantium-lands of the *Ṣaqāliba*/Slavs-Khamlīkh at the mouth of the Volga) seems to describe the caravan road partially reconstructed above. Thus, Ibn Khurdādhbeh's description of the route begins with an area somewhere to the north of Byzantium, which was probably the Danube region.¹⁶² Indeed, operations of Jewish merchants involved in the sale of slaves and other goods along the Danube are attested to in the *Inquisitio de Theloneis Reffelsttensis* dating to ca. 904-907, but reflecting the norms established under "earlier kings" of the early to mid-ninth century.¹⁶³ There are also good reasons to believe that Jews were in a position of prominence and influence at the Bulgarian court, which had developed close contacts with them by the early 860s.¹⁶⁴ This detail confirms the presence of Jews in the western Black Sea region and draws a closer connection of the Rādānīya's trade route between Khazaria and the lower Danube. Perhaps, commercial activities of the Rādānīya in the lower Danube also brought the furs Bulgarian khan Michael Boris gave the Serbs in ca. 860.¹⁶⁵ Further west, Jewish communities and traders can also be traced in the Bavarian town of Regensburg, where Jewish settlement was escalated under Louis the Pious (814-840) and the ecclesiastical authority. Jews also had a prominent position, particularly in connection with commercial activities, in the eastern lands of the Carolingian Empire under Louis the German (843-876).¹⁶⁶

Of no little interest is that the *Inquisitio de Theloneis Reffelsttensis* mentions the Rūgi (Rus') operating along the same Danube route as the Jews – also trading slaves as well as horses.¹⁶⁷ Therefore, by the middle of the ninth century, Jewish as well as Rus' merchants had developed direct commercial contacts with the Danube region, which could have been maintained by way of the caravan route that began operating out of Khazaria at the time Sarkel and its caravansaries were constructed in ca. 840. Perhaps, it is thanks to the operations of this route and the Rādānīya and Rus' merchants that Bavarian sources from this period begin to record information about Khazar "towns." Hence, the *Geographus Bavarus*, written before 900, but containing information dating to ca. 840, reports that the *Caziri* or Khazars had 100

162 McCormick, *Origins of the European Economy*, 692.

163 *Inquisitio de Theloneis Reffelsttensis* (P. 250:VI) in *Nemetskie latinoiazychnye istochniki IX-XI vekov* (Moscow, 1993), 59-61 & 62-67.

164 B.S. Bachrach, *Early Medieval Jewish Policy in Western Europe* (Minneapolis, 1977), 126.

165 Constantine Porphyrogenitus, *De administrando imperio*, I, ch. 32, p. 155.

166 Bachrach, *Early Medieval Jewish Policy*, 123-124.

167 *Inquisitio de Theloneis Reffelsttensis* in Nazarenko, *Nemetskie latinoiazychnye istochniki*, pp. 62-67 & map on p. 66. For other evidence of Rus' presence and operations in the Danube region, see *Geographus Bavarus* (Fol. 149v) in Nazarenko, *Nemetskie latinoiazychnye istochniki*, 13-15 and 52-54.

towns (*civitates*) somewhere to the east of the Slavic lands in eastern Europe.¹⁶⁸ It is very tempting to connect these many *civitates* with the numerous forts situated along the Khazar northern limes of the middle Don-Oskol-Northern Donets basins discussed above.

Regrettably, the *Inquisitio de Theloneis Reffelstensis* only specifies slaves among the merchandise transported by the Jewish merchants across the Danube, adding only that they also carried "other goods."¹⁶⁹ What these other goods may have been is impossible to determine based on the written sources, but it can be argued with some certainty based on circumstantial evidence that among the items they traded were silks. This suggestion can be supported by evidence coming from the itinerary of the Rādānīya routes described by Ibn Khurdāhbeh and Ibn al-Faqīh, other written sources that speak of these merchants' trade of fine fabrics, and archaeological evidence.

To begin, there is no reason to think that only Sogdian and Chinese merchants were responsible for moving silks across Eurasia, especially since it is well known that the Rādānīya were active throughout this entire region. Furthermore, evidence of Sogdian and Chinese merchants operating west of the Northern Caucasus has not yet come to light. At the same time, there are many good reasons to believe that the Rādānīya were quite active in the trade of cloth, including silks, across Eurasia, and their presence in Khazaria and along the trade routes of the Caucasus is well documented in the itineraries outlined by Ibn Khurdāhbeh and Ibn al-Faqīh. Archaeological materials from the Northern Caucasus seem to confirm this connection. Thus, at Moshchevaia Balka and Khasaut, there are finds of woolen tapestries and carpets from Egypt-Syria dating from the seventh-eighth through the ninth centuries and a rather substantial collection of post-Byzantine Egyptian, Syrian, and Iranian silks dating to the same period.¹⁷⁰ Seeing that the Rādānīya trade routes also passed from Faramā in Egypt to Antioch, Ramla, and Damascus and branched out to Irāq, Khurāsān, and the Caucasus (via Armīniyah and Ādharbayjān), it would not at all be unreasonable to believe that the Egyptian-Syrian woolen items and the post-Byzantine Near Eastern and North African silks were brought to Moshchevaia Balka and Khasaut by these traders.¹⁷¹ From there, silks would have been carried to other destination within Khazaria, such as Ītil/Atīl, Tamatarkha on the Taman' Peninsula (where there was such a large Jewish population that Ibn al-Faqīh called it

168 *Geographus Bavarus* in Nazarenko, *Nemetskie latinoiazychnye istochniki*, pp. 13-15 & notes 47.

169 *Inquisitio de Theloneis Reffelstensis*, 64, 67.

170 Ierusalimskaja, *Kavkaz na Shelkovom puti*, №№55-59, 62-63; pp. 23-24 (woolen item) & №№1, 4, 11, 20-21, 32?, 38?, 43, 45-46, 47? 49-53, 54?, 76?, 92, 93?; pp. 14-15, 17-18, 20-23, 26, 28 (silks).

171 For the Rādānīya trade routes in North Africa and the Near East, see Ibn Khurdāhbeh, *Kitāb al-Masālik wa'l-Mamālik*, 114-117.

Samkarč al-Yahūd¹⁷²), and Sarkel. Perhaps, it is in connection to this trade that the tenth-century authors Iṣṭakhrī and Ibn Ḥawqal note that cloth was brought to Khazaria from Jurjān, Ṭabaristān, Armīniyah, Ādharbayjān, and Rūm (Byzantium), because, according to the authors, they do not produce cloth of their own.¹⁷³ The two sources do not specify the type of cloth the Khazars imported, but, based on archaeological materials, these would have included silks and woolens.

Incidentally, Ibn Khurdāhbeh specifically mentions that the Rādānīya traded woolen cloth (*khazz*), a statement supported by contemporary Gaonic sources, which also speak of their trade of other luxury fabrics.¹⁷⁴ Based on the finds of Hebrew-Persian business letters in Khotan in eastern Turkeṣtān dating to ca. 718¹⁷⁵ and al-Ṭabarī's mention of Jews in the Khurāsānian city of Marw in the early eighth century,¹⁷⁶ Rādānīya trade routes extending across central Asia to China may well have been in operation by the first decades of the eighth century. Thus, it would not be unreasonable to suggest that at least some of the Chinese, Sogdian, and eastern Turkeṣtāni silks found in the Northern Caucasus could have been brought there by these merchants. Indeed, all regions the Rādānīya passed through on their itinerary east of Khazaria (Gurjān, Transoxiana, lands of the Toquz Oğuz, and China) produced or had easy access to silks.¹⁷⁷ But, unquestionably the most interesting find

172 Brutzkus, "Trade With Eastern Europe," 39-40. Also see O. Pritsak, "The Role of the Bosphorus Kingdom and Late Hellenism as Basic for the Medieval Cultures of the Territories North of the Black Sea," *The Mutual Effects of the Islamic and Judeo-Christian Worlds: The East European Pattern*, ed. B.K. Király (New York, 1979), 3-21. The presence of Jews in the area of the Taman' Peninsula and Tamatarkha was noted in 679/80 by the chronicler Theophanes, see: *The Chronicle of Theophanes*, tr. H. Turtledove (Philadelphia, 1982), 55. In the late eighth century the city appears to have been not only one of the main commercial junctions along the Rādānīya trade routes, but was rapidly expanding in size and population along with other towns of the entire Taman' Peninsula throughout the eighth century. For the growth of building construction in the Taman' Peninsula in the eighth century, see: Ia.M. Paromov, "Obsledovanie arkheologicheskikh pamiatnikov Tamanskogo poluoostrova v 1981-1983 gg.," *Kratkie soobshcheniia Instituta arkheologii* 188 (1986), 72.

173 Zakhoder, *Kaspiiskii svod svedenii o Vostochnoi Evrope* 1, 169; D.M. Dunlop, *The History of the Jewish Khazars* (Princeton, 1954), 230-231. It should be noted that the two authors are a bit misleading, since archaeological evidence shows that the Khazars did produce cloth (probably spun from flax or hemp). See Th.S. Noonan, "The Khazar Economy," *AEAME* 9 (1995-1997), 285.

174 Gil, "The Rādhānite Merchants and the Land of Rādhān," 311-312, and notes 48-49 & 54.

175 Gil, "The Rādhānite Merchants and the Land of Rādhān," 313.

176 W.J. Fischel, "The Jews of Central Asia (Khorasan) in Medieval and Islamic Literature," *Historia Judaica*, vol. VII, no. 1 (1945), 35.

177 Jāhiz reports that "excellent" raw silks and cloaks of soft wool were exported from Gurjān. See Jāhiz in Lopez, Raymond, *Medieval Trade*, doc. 4, p. 29. For the development of silk production in Marw, Gurjān, and the southeastern Caspian Sea region, see M.E. Masson, "Fragment iz istorii rasprostraneniia v drevnosti shelkopriada Bolbux mori," "Belek" *Sbornik v chest' S.E. Malova* (Frunze, 1946), 47-51. Silks (including Chinese) were also widely available and worn even by the common folk in the lands of the Toquz Oğuz. See Gardīzi in Martinez, "Gardīzi's Two Chapters on the Turks," 135.

that may well link the Rādānīya merchants to the Northern Caucasus in the eighth-ninth centuries is the unique glass lamp discovered at Moshchevaia Balka. The lamp was preserved in several fragments, the walls of which contained four inscriptions "Iiśrā'ēl," molded into the glass in Hebrew block letters. It has been determined that this lamp was manufactured in Syria-Palestine in the eighth-ninth centuries and may have been used for observing Passover.¹⁷⁸ It can be suggested that this glass lamp, which has no analogies, was brought to the site from the Holy Lands by a Rādānīya merchant operating along the Khazar-controlled sector of the Northern Silk Road. In short, there are good reasons to believe that the Rādānīya merchants had access to silks and brought them to Khazaria.

Keeping the above in mind, we should now return to the large number of silk finds at the Netailov and Verkhnesaltovo cemeteries. As was already suggested, these silks may well have been brought to the region of the upper Northern Donets by way of the caravan route that passed through this area of the Khazar limes where merchants were taxed, and then moved further north up the Don river to Slavic Borshevo sites. Quite possibly, from that point onwards, merchants, like the Rādānīya who had access to silks and apparently brought them to Khazaria from the East, continued to transport them by way of an east-west caravan route to the Danube and thence to western Europe via the forest-steppe and the middle Dnepr river and Kiev.

Presently, the proposed east-west caravan road through the north Pontic forest-steppe zone has been much less documented by material remains than the other routes discussed in this study. First, bones of camels and mules or the pictorial depictions of these two animals dating to the pre-tenth century have not yet come to light west of the Northern Donets. This, of course, does not preclude the possibility that they will be found by archaeologists some time in the future. This is especially true for the monuments of the western Pontic steppe zone where archaeological work has been rather sparse for sites of the eighth-ninth centuries.¹⁷⁹ In addition, it should be noted that the osteological evidence that has already been unearthed at early East Slavic sites in the region in question has been inadequately studied and published.¹⁸⁰ It would be amiss though not to note that bones of camels have been discovered in Kiev, but regrettably their date of deposit is not clear from the published reports. Thus, they may date to the ninth century, but may also belong to the tenth and later centuries. The existence of camels in Kiev and their use in caravan trade with the steppe, Volga Bulgāria, as well as central Europe in the Kievan Rus' era is quite well documented by pictorial, textual, as well as archaeological evi-

178 Ierusalimskaia, *Kavkaz na Shelkovom puti*, №117, p. 30-31.

179 On this point it is easy to concur with Romashov (*Istoricheskaia geografiia Khazaraskogo kaganata* [AEMAe 12], 151).

180 I.I. Liapushkin, *Slaviane Vostochnoi Evropy nakanune obrazovaniia Drevnerusskogo gosudarstva (VIII-pervaia polovina IX v.)* [Materialy i issledovaniia po arkheologii SSSR, №152] (Leningrad, 1968), 138.

dence.¹⁸¹ Therefore, it would not be a large leap to suggest that they were known in the middle Dnepr region when the area was under Khazar control in the ninth century.

Outside of the middle Dnepr region, to its southwest, finds of camel bones have come to light from the Byzantine-held city of Dinogetia (now Garvān, near Galați, southeastern Romania) on the lower Danube river, dating to the late tenth-eleventh centuries.¹⁸² Camel bones have also been discovered in region of the Danube (modern Hungary) dating to the Middle Ages.¹⁸³ Although all of these camel remains are dated to later periods, the use of camels for transport in southeastern Europe was known during the early Middle Ages. Again, it would not be unreasonable to suggest that these animals were used in caravan traffic connecting the central lands of Khazaria with the lower Danube in the ninth century. Of course, it should also be kept in mind that horses could well have been the more common animal used in the caravan traffic along the forest-steppe region.

Second, thus far, silks have not been found at Slavic sites dating to the seventh-ninth centuries between the Danube and the Northern Donets-upper Don rivers. Moreover, the absence of silks at Slavic sites may well be explained not by their unavailability to the Eastern Slavs, but to the fact that the primary form of Slavic burial at this period was "cremation on the side" (i.e., cremation of the body and the transfer of its remains for interment at a remote burial site). Therefore, all traces of cloth of any kind were destroyed by fire. Because of this, up until the tenth century, when burial ritual changed to cremation *in situ* and inhumation, there is no evidence of Slavic attire of any type.¹⁸⁴ Only Gardīzī sheds some revealing light on the issue by mentioning that the Slavs had access to brocade (*dībā*) and silk (*kālā*).¹⁸⁵ Whether this silk came from Byzantium or the East via the Northern Silk Road unfortunately remains unknown.

Third, numismatic evidence seems to provide a mixed picture. On the one hand, based on ninth-century dirham hoards, the east bank of the middle Dnepr came into the sphere of trade relations with the Islamic world beginning with the early 820s.¹⁸⁶ The discovery of only one dirham hoard (Novaia Lazarevka – dated by *tpq* to

181 Kovalev, "Camel Transport in Volga Bulgāria and Kievan Rus'."

182 S. Haimovici, "Studiul resturilor mamiferelor domestice descoperite în asezari din sec. VIII-XII situate în sud-estul României," *Studii și cercetări de istorie veche și arheologie* 35 (1984), 311-319. I should like to thank Florin Curta for kindly providing me with the information about this find.

183 László Bartosiewicz, "Camels in antiquity: the Hungarian connection," *Antiquity* 70: 268 (1996), 447-53. I should like to thank Tivadar Vida for kindly informing me of this study.

184 V.V. Sedov, "Odezhda slavian Vostochnoi Evropy," *Vostochnye slaviane v VI-XIII vv.* ed. B.A. Rybakov [Arkheologiia SSSR] (Moscow, 1982), 257.

185 Gardīzī in Martinez, "Gardīzī's Two Chapters on the Turks," 162-163.

186 Th.S. Noonan, "When Did Dirhams First Reach the Ukraine?" *Harvard Ukrainian Studies*, 2 (1978), 39.

893¹⁸⁷) in the lower Dnepr, from among 74 ninth-century hoards found in eastern Europe, strongly suggests that the flow of these coins to the middle section of the river occurred not by way of its lower course but via its east-central tributaries such as the Desna, Vorskla, Psel, and Seim – the headwaters of which lay near the upper Northern Donets river. Hence, the proposed route from the Don-Northern Donets rivers westwards to the middle Dnepr is traced rather accurately by numismatics.

On the other hand, Islamic silver does not occur in any notable quantities southwest of the Dnepr. To date, there is a report of only one ninth-century dirham hoard from all of southeastern and central Europe: the Răducăneni (Iasi County) mini-hoard from Rumania, containing only 7 dirhams, with a deposit date of 805/06.¹⁸⁸ In this way, it would appear that dirhams were not carried from the middle Dnepr to the Danube region during the ninth century. However, this conclusion does not preclude the existence of a trade route to the southwest of the middle Dnepr in the ninth century.¹⁸⁹ Numismatic evidence shows that the Black Sea basin and especially its western regions lay within a different monetary sphere – one that was largely based on gold (mostly Byzantine coins). To date, not only very few dirham hoards have been reported from the Black Sea basin but the ones that were discovered contained a mixture of silver and gold coins or were fully composed of gold. Thus, the Arkhava hoard (*tpq* 811/12) from the Russian-Turkish border at the southeastern corner of the Black Sea was composed of ca. 250 dirhams and 10 gold coins (Byzantine *solidi* or Islamic *dīnārs*).¹⁹⁰ The Balka hoard from the Crimea (*tpq* 813/14-817/18) contained 36 dirhams and two gold *solidi*.¹⁹¹ The large Slaviank

187 Noonan, *Dirham Hoards from Medieval Western Eurasia, c. 700-c. 1100*. *Tpq* = *terminus post quem* or the year of the latest coin in a hoard, indicating the approximate date of the hoard's deposit. The reasoning behind dating hoards based on the latest coin is connected with the logic that the hoard could not have been deposited before the youngest coin was entered into it; on the other hand, if the hoard was deposited much later than the youngest coin, it would be expected that newer coins would have been added to it before its burial.

188 Noonan, *Dirham Hoards from Medieval Western Eurasia, c. 700-c. 1100*. It should be noted that even in Poland ninth-century dirham hoards until the last two decades of the ninth century all congregate around the Baltic Sea region, i.e., Warmia and Pomerania. It was only with the Czechów hoard (Lublin powiat and województwo/now part of Lublin, Małopolska region) of 766 dirhams dated by *tpq* to 882/83 and the Drohiczyn hoard (Siemiatycze powiat, Białystok województwo, Podlasia region) of 308 dirhams dated by *tpq* to 893/94 that dirham hoards began to appear within Poland's mainland.

189 Also see Florin Curta's remarks on the issue which also argue for the existence and intensification of trade between Bulgaria and the Danube in the ninth century in his review of McCormick, *Origins of the European Economy* in "East central Europe," *Early Medieval Europe* 12 (3) (2003), 284, 285, 286-287.

190 Noonan, *Dirham Hoards from Medieval Western Eurasia, c. 700-c. 1100*.

191 Noonan, *Dirham Hoards from Medieval Western Eurasia, c. 700-c. 1100*.

hoard (*tpq* 780-792) found in the Khazar-held Kuban' region contained many more coins than the 270 reported gold *solidi* and *dīnārs*.¹⁹²

Looking further to the southwest of the Black Sea to the Balkans, the Petrovichi (opšt. Ruma, Croatia) hoard of *tpq* 788/89 held 10 *dīnārs*.¹⁹³ Along the middle and lower Danube, stray finds of Byzantine gold and some silver coins have been reported from a number of sites.¹⁹⁴ Therefore, it is clear that dirham circulation was very low in the Black Sea basin during the ninth century, especially in its western regions. It is also evident that the area had a low level, but mixed Arab-Byzantine bimetallic (mostly gold), coin circulation, very much *unlike* the situation along the Silver Road where the silver dirham was almost exclusively the coin of choice. What all of this seems to suggest quite strongly is that the flow of dirhams from the Islamic Near East via the Caucasus and Khazaria was mainly channeled to north-western Russia and the Baltic where the balance of payment based on silver was apparently much higher. For this reason, Islamic silver was siphoned away from the lands of the Khazar qağanate almost as soon as it reached there and subsequently transported towards the silver-scarce Baltic basin by way of the Silver Road.¹⁹⁵

Despite the above difficulties with tracing the east-west route between the upper Northern Donets-Don region and the lower Danube via the forest-steppe region and the middle Dnepr, its existence in the ninth century is supported by additional circumstantial evidence. Very recently, McCormick has examined the early medieval western European written sources that mention silks and also the remains of silks themselves and determined that this fabric was becoming widely available in western Europe, north and south of the Alps, during the ninth century. Indeed, silks were the most commonly documented imports into the Carolingian Empire and they were available in greater quantities in the eighth and ninth centuries than in the seventh.¹⁹⁶ Of particular interest is McCormick's examination of the chronology of the silks found in western Europe dating to 600-900. It shows a dramatic increase in the availability of silks in the region beginning with the mid-ninth century.¹⁹⁷ While these results are preliminary, it is tempting to make the suggestion that this increase may well be connected to the building of Sarkel, the development of the caravan route through Khazaria which extended west, and the presence of the Rādāntya merchants along the Danube – all of these developments occurring roughly around the middle of the ninth century.

192 A.I. Semenov, "New Evidence of the Slavynsk (Anastasiyevka) Hoard of the 8th Century AD Byzantine and Arab Gold Coins," *New Archaeological Discoveries in Asiatic Russia and Central Asia* (St. Petersburg, 1994), 83-85.

193 Noonan, *Dirham Hoards from Medieval Western Eurasia, c. 700-c. 1100*.

194 Curta, "East central Europe," 284-285.

195 Kovalev, "What Does Historical Numismatics Suggest About the Monetary History of Khazaria," 116-126.

196 McCormick, *Origins of the European Economy*, 587, 727-728.

197 McCormick, *Origins of the European Economy*, Chart 21, p. 722.

No doubt, sources of these west European silks were many; but it appears that the Near East, Byzantium, and regions further east were the most likely suppliers, as opposed to Spain.¹⁹⁸ However, contrary to McCormick's suggestion that it was principally the Venetians and their routes that were responsible for transmitting these silks from the eastern Mediterranean to western Europe,¹⁹⁹ it will be suggested that it was the Rādāntya who brought a sizable part, if not most, of the central Asian and T'ang silks west from Khazaria via the northern edge of the north Pontic steppe zone. In this regard, most interesting to us is that notable quantities of surviving silks in western Europe are of central Asian and Chinese origins,²⁰⁰ the same ones that dominate the fabric finds in the Northern Caucasus. Interestingly, one silk that was used to wrap relics at Huy on the Meuse holds a Sog̃dian merchant's inscription written in ink which reads "Long 61 spans, *zandanijī*." The inscription dates to the seventh-eighth centuries and notes Zandanah – a town just north of Bukhārā where the famous *zandanijī* silks were produced.²⁰¹ Of no little significance is that about two thirds of the silk remains (but just less than half of the total area of silks) found in Moshchevaia Balka and just less than a quarter (but more than half of the total area of silks) discovered at Khasaut in the Northern Caucasus were precisely these same types of *zandanijī* silks.²⁰² Quite possibly, this piece of silk was imported to Huy on the Meuse via the same North Caucasus sector of the Northern Silk Road and then by way of its stems along the Northern Donets-Don-middle Dnepr-lower Danube route.

The suggestion that many, if not most, of the Sog̃dian and Chinese silks were transported to western Europe via a caravan route through Khazaria is made even more attractive by the finds of these silks in ninth-century graves near the Viking-age town of Birka, Sweden²⁰³ and the seventh-eighth-century bronze sculpture of Buddha (perhaps of Kashmiri origins) in nearby Helgö alongside 'Abbasid dirhams dating to the early ninth century.²⁰⁴ Birka, like Helgö, lay directly along the Silver Road that ran from Khazaria up the Don-Northern Donets, where it intersected with the caravan route in Sarkel, and continued northwestward through Russia into the Baltic. Therefore, some of the silks and other eastern commodities, like the ones found at Birka and Helgö, apparently joined the flow of silver moving north and

198 McCormick, *Origins of the European Economy*, 723.

199 McCormick, *Origins of the European Economy*, 724-728.

200 A. Muthesius, *Byzantine Silk Weaving, AD 400 to AD 1200*, ed. E. Kislinger, J. Koder (Vienna, 1997), 94-100; McCormick, *Origins of the European Economy*, p. 689 & n. 75 and p. 723.

201 Muthesius, *Byzantine Silk Weaving*, 94; McCormick, *Origins of the European Economy*, 723-724.

202 Noonan, "Why Dirhams First Reached Russia," pp. 252-253 & Table VI.

203 R. Hodges, D. Whitehouse, *Mohammed, Charlemagne and the Origins of Europe* (Ithaca, 1983), Fig. 47; McCormick, *Origins of the European Economy*, p. 689, n. 75.

204 V.A. Zav'ialov, "K voprosu o protiskhozhenii statuetki Buddy iz Khel'go," *Arkheologicheskie vesti* 4 (1995), 138-140.

landed in Sweden alongside hundreds of thousands of dirhams deposited in hundreds of ninth-century coin hoards.

In short, written sources are few and laconic on the existence of a caravan route leading from northwestern Khazaria to the lower Danube region during the ninth century. Nonetheless, the available archaeological and circumstantial evidence strongly suggests that such a route functioned and brought silks not only to the distant Northern Donets region of the Khazar northern limes, but to central and western Europe. Like the tax station located near Moshchevaia Balka at the southern borders of Khazaria in the Caucasus where tariffs were imposed on the incoming traffic, the sites of Netailov and Verkhnesaltovo probably also lay near a toll-collection point where tariffs were charged from the outgoing traffic crossing Khazaria's northwestern borders. It can be hoped that the Verkhnesaltovo and Netailov cemeteries will continue to be excavated and the silks discovered at the sites studied and published. Only then will it be possible to determine with greater certainty whether the caravan route passing through the northern regions of Khazaria transported silks manufactured in Sog̃dia, eastern Turkestan, and China via a direct caravan route to central and western Europe.

Lastly, a few words need to be said about the middle Volga and its likely connection to the east-west Northern Donets-Don-middle Dnepr-lower Danube stem of the Northern Silk Road. As discussed above, there are many reasons to believe that the middle Volga maintained commercial relations with central Asia and Khwārazm, in particular via the old west Urals Fur Road during the course of the eighth and ninth centuries. It may be recalled that among the commodities traded along this route were Sog̃dian and Chinese silks. It was also mentioned that the Khazars managed to dominate the middle Volga region sometime in the late seventh-early eighth centuries, thereby tapping into commerce with central Asia via the southern Ural steppe. What is more, with the Khazar loss of the northeastern Caspian steppe and subsequently the eastern Caspian-Aral sector of the Northern Silk Road sometime between 828-844, the middle Volga's route and commerce with central Asia may have become even more critical for the qaḡanate.

Commercial relations between Khazaria and the middle Volga region is well illustrated by the finds of dirham hoards that began to appear in the latter area as early as 821/22 (perhaps even 802/03²⁰⁵). Since Khazaria was the primary, if not the sole, distributor of dirhams from the Near East to northern Europe during the ninth century, these coins most likely came directly from the qaḡanate to the lands of the

205 Sometimes the Leleki (Viatka) hoard is considered to be the earliest dirham deposit from the middle Volga. However, since only one dirham from this hoard was preserved and identified (dated to 802/03), this coin can hardly be seen as representative of the entire coin deposit. For this reason, the Elmed (Kazan' province) hoard of 150 dirhams that were reportedly all preserved (in reality the Hermitage has 147), with the *tpq* date of 820/21, has to be considered the earliest verifiable dirham hoard from the middle Volga. See Noonan, *Dirham Hoards from Medieval Western Eurasia, c. 700-c. 1100*.

early Volga Bulgārs.²⁰⁶ For this reason, it would not be unreasonable to suggest that some, if not a sizable number, of the Sogdian and Chinese silks transported to central and western Europe were first carried from central Asia to the middle Volga via Khwārazm and then dispatched either south to Khazaria and then transmitted west by way of the Don-Donets-middle Dnepr-lower Danube stems. Alternatively, these silks may have been sent by way of a more direct road: from the middle Volga to the middle Dnepr via the east-west caravan road transecting the southern forest and forest-steppe zones of the north Pontic to as far as the lower Danube. This latter route would, indeed, have been more direct and, most importantly for the early Volga Bulgārs, would have circumvented the Khazar middlemen. In other words, such a direct route would have been economically advantageous for a number of reasons for the inhabitants of the middle Volga. Unfortunately, as discussed earlier, traces of caravan traffic in the middle Volga region have not yet come to light, despite the significant evidence of commerce with central Eurasia. In large part, this is due to the paucity of permanent settlements where bones of camels and mules are most commonly found by archaeologists. But, the suggestion that such a route could have existed as early as the ninth century is not too great a leap of faith. Above, it has been mentioned on several occasions that such a caravan road was fully functioning by the tenth century. Therefore, it can be argued with some certitude that the foundation of this route had its roots in the previous century.

* * *

By way of conclusion to this part of the study, let us look towards the turn of the tenth century. After their foundation in 840-841, the caravansaries at Sarkel continued to function for the next 60-65 years, after which they were abandoned. Sarkel, however, continued to function as a Khazar fortress until it was taken by the Rus' in ca. 964.²⁰⁷ The demise of Sarkel caravansaries in ca. 900 strongly suggests a major rift in trade along the Northern Donets-Don stem of the Northern Silk Road. This breach in commercial relations was undoubtedly caused by the migration of the Pečenegs west of the Volga into the north Pontic steppe in ca. 900 and causing major destruction on their arrival in the qağanate.²⁰⁸ Even after the initial devastation, the Pečenegs were unable to reconstruct a working commercial infrastructure along the old Northern Donets-Don route. Gardīzī quite clearly describes the hardship merchants had while trading through the lands of the Pečenegs. He specifically notes that the roads of the Pečeneg lands were "desolate," "disagreeable," and abandoned, but that the Pečenegs demanded that travelers visiting their lands had to

206 Th.S. Noonan, "What Does Historical Numismatics Suggest About the History of Khazaria in the Ninth Century?" *AEMAE* 3 (1983), 279.

207 Pletneva, *Sarkel i «shelkovyi» put'*, 55. Also see below.

208 Romashov, *Istoricheskaia geografiia Khazarского kaganata* [*AEMAE* 13], 219-223.

purchase horses, not camels that would have been much more conducive for travel via such roads.²⁰⁹ Consequently, the Northern Donets-Don north-south route became obsolete. However, the old east-west caravan route through the forest-steppe and southern forest zones flourished in the tenth and later centuries, as the volume of commercial traffic passing along its way expanded to unprecedented heights. On the one hand, this increase in commerce was connected with the rise of Kiev – situated along the western sector of this old route – as a major hub of cross-continental trade. On the other hand, the escalation and further development of this old east-west caravan road can be attributed to the huge expansion of commerce along its eastern sector – the boom in commerce between Volga Bulgāria and Sāmānid central Asia which brought millions of dirhams and other eastern goods to European Russia and further west. This topic, however, deserves a separate, detailed study.

To be continued.

209 Gardīzī in Martinez, "Gardīzī's Two Chapters on the Turks," 152.