



## Geographical Distribution of the Lazurite Road

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**Abstract:** *This article provides an overview of the geographic distribution and main directions of the Lazurite Path.*

**Key words:** *Lazurite, Central Asia, Urals, Aratta, Caucasus, Stone Age, Bronze Age, communication routes, ancient routes.*

Without denying all these assumptions, it seems possible to localize this mountainous country in northern Afghanistan, in the region of modern Badakhshan<sup>1</sup>. Indeed, if we compare expressions such as "pieces of lapis lazuli", "lapis lazuli from rocks", "and lapis lazuli from its mines", it becomes clear that we are talking about an area already famous for the development of lapis. The lazuli mines at that time. Also, judging by the text of the poem, it seems to have been the main mine of lapis lazuli in the Ancient Near East five thousand years ago. Thus, the earliest written records agree very well with the modern mineralogical data on Badakhshan, as the only known source of lapis lazuli so far. True, the Sumerian texts describe for us an extremely developed social structure of the people of Aratta, which is difficult to apply literally to the mountain tribes. However, the Sumerian authors may have been mechanically copied far away.

Unfortunately, the primitive monuments of Northern Afghanistan have so far been little studied by archaeologists, but a number of indirect data indicate that it was located in the 4th-3rd millennium BC<sup>2</sup>. It is true that the ancient settlements located in the mountains or near them, as a result of intense deflation processes, are much worse preserved than the monuments of the valleys and plains, and it is much more difficult to identify them. But no matter where the Aratta country is located, the fact of the existence of mountain tribes is important. Taking into account the above information from the Sumerian tablets, we have the right to question the existence of mountain tribes, whose economy was based not only on agriculture, but also on animal husbandry and mining of precious metals, decorative minerals and building materials. In fact, the poem "Enmerkar and the High Priest of Aratta" clearly indicates the existence of mountain tribes in the Ancient East who lacked agricultural products, but had enough of all kinds of minerals and rare metals in their mountains.

How could the lapis lazuli trade continue between the northern Afghan tribes and the inhabitants of the fertile plains of the Ancient Near East? Most likely, these connections are mediated. Multi-stage trade routes with distant Mesopotamia could have passed through the areas located in the southeast of the Hindu Kush, Baluchistan and Seistan, and along the coast of the Persian Gulf to Sumer.

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<sup>1</sup> Aslini olganda, bunday identifikatsiya, garchi o'ta ehtiyotkor shaklda bo'lsa-da, birinchi marta S.M. Batsieva (qarang: S.M. Batsieva. Kitobni ko'rib chiqish: SN Kramer. Shumer tabletkalaridan. VDI, 1958, No 2, 209-bet).

<sup>2</sup> V.M. Masson, V.A. Romodin. Farmon. sh., 34-bet; V.M. Masson. Qadimgi Afg'oniston. SA, 1962 yil, 2-son, 354-356-betlar. Biz shuni ta'kidlaymizki, hozirgi kungacha, aftidan, qadimda Badaxshonning tog'li hududlarida dehqonlar va chorvadorlar zich joylashgan.



A chain of small ancient agricultural settlements, which may have served as intermediate links on the lapis lazuli trade route, stretched along almost all of this route<sup>3</sup>. From here, from Mesopotamia, lapis lazuli could reach Syria and Egypt, where there were no difficulties on the way due to the presence of densely populated cities and towns.

Manuscript documents reveal an extremely extensive and well-organized trade in Mesopotamia in the 2nd millennium BC. The mention of lapis lazuli on the tablets found in Ur is especially important for us. In Anatolia, lapis lazuli may have come from Mesopotamia, as northern Syria and northern Mesopotamia are known to have had close trade relations with Anatolia in the early 2nd millennium BC.

The documented fact of the existence of an international trade association in Anatolia<sup>4</sup>, Kanish (Kul-tepa), may indicate that there were traditional trade routes between these countries in ancient times. The direction of the route of lapis lazuli to Iran can be estimated with the settlement of Mundigak in the south of Afghanistan (where lapis lazuli beads are the most among other ornaments), which, according to the excavation materials, has undoubted connections with Iranian monuments, especially Hissar Reveals<sup>5</sup>.

However, in addition to this route, there is every reason to believe that there is another, shorter route that could have reached the foothills of Badakhshan lapis lazuli, through the regions of Khorasan, Iran.

The relative territorial proximity, most importantly, the cultural-historical community identified during the Amri culture and strengthened during the Harappan period, allows us to solve the problem of the ways of the penetration of lapis lazuli into Pakistan, Baluchistan and other countries. Indus Valley. The territory of southern Turkmenistan is separated from Afghanistan by rugged mountains, so the most convenient transportation route is through the river valley. Harirud (on the territory of the USSR - Tedjen River). It is possible that this was one of the main routes leading to Central Asia. Trade relations existed between Mesopotamia and distant countries such as Egypt<sup>6</sup>, and especially India<sup>7</sup>. The discovery of an ancient seaport at Lothal indicates not only land but also the busyness of sea communications<sup>8</sup>.

Another Sumerian poem suggests that there were waterways between Mesopotamia and Aratta. The text of this poem, unfortunately still unpublished in its entirety, recounts the dispute between Uruk and Aratta, but now the ruler of Aratta is the initiator of the quarrel<sup>9</sup>. The people of Aratta refuse to support their ruler's claims against Uruk, and only the priest of Aratta, Mashmash, promises to help him. In his speech, he boasts of crossing the "River of Uruk" (i.e., the Euphrates River), conquering all the countries "from the sea to the mountains" (the whole of Mesopotamia) and returning to Aratta in heavily laden boats.<sup>10</sup>

<sup>3</sup> A. Stein. Eng ichki Osiyo, jild. I-II. Oksford, 1928 yil; W. Fairservis. Janubi-g'arbiy Afg'oniston va Sharqiy Eronning Seystun havzasidagi arxeologik tadqiqotlar. Nyu-York, 1961 yil.

<sup>4</sup> H.B. Yankovskaya. Kanish xalqaro savdo uyushmasi. VDI, 1965, No 3, 192-bet. Kassitlar davrida Bobil, Ossuriya va Mesopotamiya qirollari Misr shohiga katta miqdorda lapis lazuli yuborgan (WF Leemans, op. cit., p. 124)

<sup>5</sup> I.M. Casal. Farmon. cit., s. 103, 106-108, 240. Mundigak manzilgohi aynan lapis lazuli almashinuvi bilan bog'liq holda paydo bo'lgan bo'lishi mumkin degan taxmin mavjud (V.M. Masson. Kitob sharhi: IM Casal. Fouilles de Mundigak. SA, 1964, 4-son, 241-bet).

<sup>6</sup> N. Frankfort. Tsilindr qistirmalari. London, 1939, p. 197, 293; G. Bala. Nashr., 131, 132-betlar.

<sup>7</sup> E. Makkay. Nashr., 131, 132-betlar

<sup>8</sup> S.R.Rao. Hindu xalqining yuk tashish va dengiz savdosi. Ekspeditsiya, jild. 7, № 3. 1965, p. 30, 36.

<sup>9</sup> S. N. Kramer. Yozning planshetlaridan, p. 231-233.

<sup>10</sup> S. Kramer "qayiq" atamasiga alohida urg'u beradi (qarang: S.N. Kramer. Shumerlarning lavhalaridan, 232-bet).



Thus, archaeological and historical data indicate very busy land and water connections between Mesopotamia and Aratta<sup>11</sup>.

If we refer to the map, it is not difficult to see that Badakhshan is connected with other countries of the East through a dense network of river systems. It is enough to note that the Kokcha (in Badakhshan), Kunduz, and Balkh rivers flow into Amudarya from Afghanistan. The largest river Helmand almost touches the river basin at its sources.

Amudarya, Murgob and Harirud (Tejen) rivers connect the north of Afghanistan with the ancient regions of Central Asia. Undoubtedly, earlier trade of lapis lazuli, partly by land and partly by water, passed through many, sometimes distant countries of the Ancient East. As for the ways of lapis lazuli entering the settlements of southern Turkmenistan, lapis lazuli jewelry was found in the Geoksyur oasis of the Eneolithic settlements, in the ancient river delta<sup>12</sup>.

Tejen once again points to Harirud-Tejen as the main route for the exchange of lapis lazuli to ancient agricultural countries. A real confirmation of this is provided by the special descriptions of lapis lazuli jewelry from Geoksyur settlements, which were made from Badakhshan lapis lazuli.

From ancient agricultural oases of the beginning of III-II millennia BC. lapis lazuli is much more common in the north, which is clearly confirmed by the findings of lapis lazuli jewelry in the lower reaches of Zarafshan (Zamon-Bobo)<sup>13</sup>.

In conclusion, we have the right to question the existence of mountain tribes specializing in the mining of lapis lazuli minerals in the ancient East from the IV millennium BC. One of the largest deposits of lapis lazuli (more precisely, the only one) is located in the north of Afghanistan, in the province of Badakhshan, from where this raw material was indirectly distributed (partly by land, partly by water) to other countries of ancient times. East. Lazuli-mining tribes bartered precious metals, ornamental stones, and building materials for agricultural products. As a result of these economic relations, cultural movements entered each other: a part of the mountain tribes moved to the foothills and switched to the farming method of farming. In turn, the inhabitants of the plains could receive certain technical advances from the mountain tribes, such as metal processing skills, etc. In the III millennium BC. the volume of lapis lazuli trade increased so much that some of the agricultural tribes found new settlements (Mundigak, etc.) or even forcibly occupied old settlements located on the main highways of lapis lazuli trade (Sialk).

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