ROUTES BETWEEN THE SEAS: BALTIC-BUG-BOH-PONT FROM THE 3RD TO THE MIDDLE OF THE 1ST MILLENNIUM BC

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## CONTENTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>EDITORS’ FOREWORD</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>INTRODUCTION</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aleksander Kośko, Viktor I. Klochko, TRANSIT ROUTES BETWEEN</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>THE BALTIC AND BLACK SEAS: EARLY DEVELOPMENT STAGES</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>– FROM THE 3RD TO THE MIDDLE OF THE 1ST MILLENNIUM BC.</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AN OUTLINE OF RESEARCH PROJECT</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PART I – ‘NATURAL ROUTES’ OF THE BORDERLAND BETWEEN THE EAST</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AND WEST OF EUROPE - PROGRAMMES OF ENVIRONMENT (FIELD)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IDENTIFICATION</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mirosław Makohonienko, NATURAL SCIENTIFIC ASPECTS OF PREHISTORIC</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AND EARLY HISTORIC TRANSIT ROUTES IN THE BALTIC-PONTIC CULTURAL AREA</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jarosław Rola, CONSTRUCTION ISSUES IN THE NORTH-WEST</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(CENTRAL EUROPEAN) SECTION OF BALTIC-PONTIC INTER-REGIONAL ROUTES:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>THE NOTEĆ RIVER CROSSING IN ZUŁAWKA MAŁA</td>
<td>72</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>– MUCH ADO ABOUT NOTHING?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PART II – RAW MATERIAL RESOURCES OF THE BALTIC-PONTIC AREA</td>
<td>87</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Janusz Czebreszuk, WAYS OF AMBER IN THE NORTHERN PONTIC AREA.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AN OUTLINE OF ISSUES</td>
<td>87</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yuriy M. Brovender, COPPER ORES OF THE NORTHERN PONTIC REGION</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AS RAW MATERIALS FOR PRODUCTION ACTIVITY IN THE PALEOMETAL AGE</td>
<td>103</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(BASED ON THE STUDY OF THE KARTAMYSH ORE MINING AND METALLURGY COMPLEX)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PART III – STRATEGIES OF LONG-DISTANCE TRANSPORT AND CHOROGRAPHIES OF</td>
<td>124</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>THE NORTHERN PONTIC AREA SHARED BY THE SOCIETIES OF ANCIENT CIVILIZATIONS IN ANATOLIA, MESOPOTAMIA AND MAINLAND GREECE</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Witold Tyborowski, COMMUNICATION ROUTES AND OVERLAND TRANSPORT MEANS IN WESTERN ASIA IN THE BRONZE AGE (4TH TO 2ND MILLENNIUM BC)</td>
<td>124</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Paulina Suchowska, COMMUNICATION SPACE OF THE NORTHERN PONTIC AREA AS VIEWD BY AEGEANS</td>
<td>156</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Justyna Cieszkewska, GREEK CHOROGRAPHY OF LAND ROUTES IN NORTH-WESTERN PONTIC AREA ............................................. 176

PART IV – SHORT AND LONG MIGRATIONS BY PEOPLES OF THE LANDS BETWEEN THE SEAS IN THE 4TH TO THE TURN OF THE 3RD MILLENNIUM BC: FROM FORAYS TO MAPS OF ITINERARIES .............................. 191

Aleksander Kośko, Marzena Szmyt, CENTRAL EUROPEAN LOWLAND SOCIETIES AND THE PONTIC AREA IN THE 4TH-4TH/3RD MILLENIUM BC .................................................. 191

Jan Machnić, SHORT AND LONG-DISTANCE PASTORAL JOURNEYS ALONG ANCIENT UPLAND ROUTES IN EUROPE IN THE 3RD MILLENNIUM BC ...... 214

Jerzy Libera, Jarosław Sobieraj, Vitaliy Konopla, SOME LATE NEOLITHIC STONE AXES AS POTENTIAL MARKERS OF CULTURAL EXCHANGE IN BALTIC-PONTIC INTER-REGIONAL ROUTES ....................... 223


Katerina P. Bunyatyan, Valery Samolyuk, MANIFESTATIONS OF MIDDLE DNIEPER CULTURE IN THE VOLYN TERRITORY AND THE ISSUE OF ANCIENT ROUTES ........................................ 252

Viktor I. Klochko, Aleksander Kośko, THE SOCIETIES OF CORDEDWARE CULTURES AND THOSE OF BLACK SEA STEPPES (YAMNAYA AND CATACOMB GRAVE CULTURES) IN THE ROUTE NETWORK BETWEEN THE BALTIC AND BLACK SEAS ......................... 269

Przemysław Makarowicz, BALTIC-PONTIC INTERREGIONAL ROUTES AT THE START OF THE BRONZE AGE ...................................................... 302

Sergey D. Lysenko, Svetlana S. Lysenko, GROUND COMMUNICATIONS OF THE EASTERN AREA OF THE TRZCINIEC CULTURE CIRCLE ............ 338

Katarzyna Ślusarska, HORDEEVKA – IMPLICATIONS OF ARCHEOLOGICAL RESEARCH ON EXTRA-REGIONAL RELATIONS (CULTURES OF THE BOH-BUG RIVERS BASIN) ........................ 368

Kirill V. Gorbenko, Yuriy S. Grebennikov, THE ‘DYKyi SAD’ FORTIFIED SETTLEMENT AS A UNITING LINK IN THE CONTEXT OF ECONOMIC,

Marcin Ignaczak, THE ROLE OF BALTIC-BLACK SEA ROUTES IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF LUSATIAN CULTURE SOCIETIES IN THE DECLINE BRONZE AND EARLY IRON AGES ..................... 391

Yuriy Boltryk, PONTIC TRADE ROUTES – BALTIC SEA AREA AS A MAP OF SCYTHIAN EXPANSION .................................. 402

Lubov S. Klochko, AMBER IN GARMENTS OF POPULATIONS OF SCYTHIA (WAYS AND FORMS OF RECEPTION) ............................... 415

PART VI – ROUTES BETWEEN THE SEAS - RESEARCH PERSPECTIVES ....... 439


Vitaliy V. Otroshchenko, THE BRONZE AGE COMMUNICATION ROUTE SYSTEM IN THE NORTHERN PONTIC AREA .................. 462

Sylwester Czopek, THE ROLE OF THE DNIEPER ROUTE – THE SAN RIVER IN THE BRONZE AND EARLY IRON AGES ............... 475

References ................................................................................. 490

List of Authors ........................................................................... 566
Editor’s Foreword

As regards the identification of the early forms of Europe’s long-distance routes, the area lying between the Baltic and Black seas can be said to be one of relative neglect. Specifically, little research has been devoted to the development stages of the area’s socio-cultural map, i.e. to neighbourly forays, itineraries, routes (of varied continuity, range and transport technique), stable segments of roads leading to water crossings, networks of fords and the communication channels running along watersheds. The foremost issue, at present one of great difficulty with respect to a study embracing the whole region in question, is the cultural context of these innovations and the related mechanisms that saw their creation in regard to the socio-economic basis and ritual-epistemological nature of ancient peoples in these regions.

The study by Marija Gimbutas [Gimbutas 1965] of ‘amber routes’, joining the west and east of Europe, may be considered the first attempt to tackle the issue of the region’s early communication channels and was accordingly referred to in the analyses of the distribution of stone ‘fluted maces’, regarded as hypothetical markers of Baltic-Pontic routes [Koško 2001; 2002]. Generally, this conceptual leaven can be said to have provided broader intellectual stimuli for the international academic community of ‘Archaeology Bimaris’. The turning point in the nascent study of ancient routes has been thus given a clear framework: an inter-university and interdisciplinary discussion (see the Poznań-Obrzycko symposium Routes Between the Seas: Baltic-Bug-Boh (Southern Bug)-Pont held in October 2008).

The papers included in this volume are a partial record of the discussion. The intentional selectiveness here is seen therefore in the conscious limitation of the scope of papers (‘piecemeal’ treatment of linguistic or ethnological and anthropological analyses). Moreover, there is a special focus on one of the inter-regional routes, namely the Baltic-Bug-Boh (Southern Bug)-Pont, or more specifically, its early evidence (generally speaking, prior to – widely known to the academia – its use in the times of Goth migrations).
Editorial comment

1. All dates in the B-PS are calibrated [BC; see: Radiocarbon vol. 28, 1986, and the next volumes]. Deviations from this rule will be pointed out in notes [bc].

2. The names of the archaeological cultures and sites are standardized to the English literature on the subject (e.g. M. Gimbutas, J. P. Mallory). In the case of a new term, the author's original name has been retained.

3. The spelling of names of localities having the rank of administrative centres follows official, state, English language cartographic publications (e.g. *Ukraine*, scale 1: 2 000 000, Kiev: Mapa LTD, edition of 1996; *Republika BELARUS*, *REVIEW-TOPOGRAPHIC MAP*, scale 1:1 000 000, Minsk: BYELORUSSIAN CARTOGRAPHIC AN GEODETIC ENTERPRISE, edition 1993).

4. As far as names of administrative units in Polish, Ukrainian, Belarusian and English are concerned, a convention has been adopted that województwo = oblast = region and powiat = raion = district.
COMMUNICATION ROUTES AND OVERLAND TRANSPORT MEANS IN WESTERN ASIA IN THE BRONZE AGE (4TH TO 2ND MILLENNIUM BC)

1. INTRODUCTION

The origins of communication routes reach back to the most distant past of the Near East and are related to the rise of trade, which was the most important factor in laying out the course of roads in antiquity. The routes connected areas rich in raw materials to populous lands, where receptive markets were. However, the buyers had to have a surplus of their products to be able to 'pay' for imported goods. Hence, stable trade relations are characteristic of the cultures that are sufficiently rich and developed. Both conditions were fully met by Mesopotamia and other regions of the Near East in the Copper and Bronze Ages.

Especially in the case of southern Mesopotamia, considered to be the cradle of state civilization, trade and import of basic raw materials was necessary for the development of local societies because the region did not have any deposits of ores or rocks, nor any timber resources of its own [Potts 1997]. To supply them there, there had to emerge a system of exchange, taking advantage of roads and communication routes. We can speak of stable trade in the Near East beginning at least with the middle of the 4th millennium BC when a state civilization rose there which needed a continuous supply of raw materials from outside to develop. It was then that the archaic state of Uruk emerged in the south and developed economic ties with many lands of central and western Asia, and Egypt. Thus, as early as the 4th
millennium BC, different regions of the Near East were joined by a network of communication routes, starting a vigorous exchange of goods, accompanied, certainly, by ideas, among peoples inhabiting the regions. In the archaeology of Mesopotamia, the Uruk period saw the beginning of the Bronze Age that engulfed then most of the ancient East. In many respects this is a watershed as many important developments in material and spiritual culture, including organized trade and writing, originated in this very period [Leick 2001: 40-48].

Vigorous trade, started in the 4th millennium BC, was typical of the region's economy until the modern times when the development of transport means and the flood of goods manufactured elsewhere disturbed it permanently. The present analysis covers the period of the Bronze Age, which continued in the Near East from the middle of the 4th almost until the end of the 2nd millennium BC. Its end falls on the 13th century BC or basically the decline of the age. It was then, in the so-called Amarna Period, that the political situation stabilized as an order that may be called an alliance of powers. It provided favourable conditions for the circulation of goods, which is characteristic of the penultimate phase of the Late Bronze Age in western Asia. The process is recorded in the Amarna Letters, archives of Boghazköy and other dispersed records [van Koppen et al. 2006: 134-181]. The basic source of data relied on here, at least until the middle of the 3rd millennium BC, is archaeological excavations as satisfactory written records appear rather late. Texts coming from the Early Bronze Age may only serve as a secondary source, supplementing archaeological data.

The major aim of the first part of this paper is to trace trade routes under changing political conditions and to show to what degree political developments influenced trade and the course of roads. This is important inasmuch as in the course of the two thousand years, the Near East witnessed continual ethnic, political and economic changes that had an impact on the course of trade routes and the circulation of goods. Another important question that shall be taken up here is overland transport means that were used in travelling along the routes. Taking up this question is important inasmuch as more recent archaeological discoveries and text publications cast doubt on the traditional picture where a dominant role was given to boats and, secondly, to beasts of burden, without allowing for any alternative to them. It appears that special attention is deserved by other means of overland transport next to donkeys. Until recently they have been marginalized by scholars studying trade and long-distance exchange [Klengel 1979]. The following analysis shall not include Egypt, which, admittedly, witnessed successive stages of intensive development in periods contemporaneous to those experienced by the lands of western Asia, but it prospered in a slightly different geographical and political context. A closer historical analysis shows that joining it to the axis of Mesopotamia, Syria, Anatolia – the major regions of the Orient – does not seem expedient.
2. THE COURSE OF ROUTES IN THE NEAR EAST IN THE BRONZE AGE

2.1. FROM THE URUK PERIOD TO THE FALL OF SUMERIAN CITY-STATES

The evidence of trade of the Uruk culture, whose major centres were located on the lower Euphrates and Tigris rivers, is quite spectacular. It points to the economic ties of Sumer both with the lands lying in its immediate vicinity – on the Persian Gulf, the middle Tigris and Elam in the east – as well as those further afield such as Syria and Turkey in the west. Still another group is formed by distant lands lying on the southern shores of the Persian Gulf and in central Asia such as Afghanistan, eastern Iran and India. These remote, almost mythical lands in the south and east appear as sources of raw materials for Sumer in the texts of the 3rd millennium BC and are called Dilmun (Bahrain), Makkān (Oman), Meluhha (Indus drainage), Aratta (Afghanistan) and Kimash (Fars Mts.). Roads running east from southern Mesopotamia are evidenced by the import of lapis lazuli, which was brought to Sumer from Afghanistan along two routes. A more important southern one ran crossing into India (Mohendjo-Daro, Harappa), across southern Iran (Sahr-i Socha, Tepe Yahya), towards Elam (Susa) and further on along the coast of the Persian Gulf to Mesopotamia. This course of the route is borne out by Uruk pottery found in the cities of southern Iran (Tepe Yahya) [Klengel 1979: 26; Postgate 2005: 208-209]. The other, northern route, crossed the plains of north-eastern Iran (Tepe Hissar) in the direction of the central Zagros Mountains and the Diyala Valley [Klengel 1979: 29; Astour 1995: 1403-1404; Postgate 2005: 208-209]. Next to the land routes, there was a very important seaway along the coast of the Indian Ocean and the Persian Gulf, via Bahrain (anc. Dilmun), to Uruk along which goods from the east and south were shipped to Sumer. The existence of the seaway is shown by many finds on Bahrain, which could have been an entrepôt used by this trade, and a strong presence of the land of Dilmun in royal inscriptions and mythological texts from the 3rd millennium BC [Klengel 1979: 36-40; Astour 1995: 1403; Bass 1995: 1421-1422; Reiter 1997: 155; Postgate 2005: 209]. Scholars agree that next to lapis lazuli also silver and copper were originally brought to Mesopotamia from Iran, from the Fars Mountains (Kimash), and Oman (Makkān) [Meissner 1920: 347-348; Leemans 1960: 117; Astour 1995: 1405; Yoffee 1995: 1391; Reiter 1997: 78, 152, 209; Postgate 2005: 218]. The goods shipped east in return for these metals included mostly grain, oil and pottery. There is no doubt that thanks to huge surpluses of agricultural crops, especially corn, they were among chief exports throughout the history of ancient Mesopotamia [Kramer 1977; Kapelus, Kropiwnicka 2003: 11-28]. It is possible that apart from these goods also textiles were shipped there. Southern Mesopotamia was famous for its textiles at that time and later as well [Larsen 1976: 87-88; Postgate 2005: 212-213]. Archa-
ecological finds and a clear trace in the literary tradition testify to the fact that the trade was quite vigorous and long-lasting [Postgate 2005: 211; Kramer 1977: 62-64].

For a long time a shroud of mystery covered the share of northern Mesopotamia in the development and trade of the Uruk culture. On the one hand, the geographical unity of the north with Sumer, in particular navigable rivers, suggested that the country called Subartu by the Sumerians, must have played a significant role in trade already at that time. On the other hand, no evidence of this was found in the texts of the 3rd millennium BC, which are usually considered reliable for an earlier period as well [Reiter 1997]. In principle, they are silent on the point of trade with the north. The gap, however, was made up for by archaeological discoveries in the valley of the middle and upper Euphrates and Tigris rivers. The discoveries unearthed many settlements, displaying material culture very similar or even identical to that of the Uruk culture. The most important of them include Habuba Kabira, Qraya, Birecik, Jebel Aruda in the drainages of the Euphrates and Khabur rivers, Tell al-Hajj in the Taurus Mountains and Nineveh on the upper Tigris. Some scholars suggest that some of them can be simply considered colonies of the Uruk culture, which would testify to a direct penetration of the north by Sumer at so early a time [Bieliński 1991]. The reason for this, next to the access to a quite convenient waterway, supposedly was the abundance of raw materials in the Amman and Taurus mountains, and in the Transcaucasia. The goods imported from distant areas lying in present-day Syria and Turkey could have included gold, bronze, copper, timber, and some kinds of rocks. Among the last-mentioned category was obsidian, which is well documented [Kelly-Buccellati 1990: 120; Reiter 1997: 152; Postgate 2005: 207]. The most spectacular find testifying to such exports from the Transcaucasia and Taurus Mountains to southern Mesopotamia involves a deposit of quern stones in Yarim Tepe, northern Mesopotamia. In the opinion of the discoverers, the stones were exports shipped south and testify to vigorous trade in such goods in the 4th millennium BC [Postgate 2005: 207]. The northern centres named above lie for the most part in the drainage of the upper Euphrates and Tigris, which must have played the role of major communication arteries joining Uruk to Syria and Anatolia (Karanovo VI) [Thissen 1993: 220]. The goods that were shipped north from Sumer may have included grain, textiles and some luxury articles such as seals [Leemans 1960: 116; Yoffe 1995: 1392; Postgate 2005: 208]. Lying on the route running north from Sumer, Syria could have mediated an exchange between southern Mesopotamia and Egypt, where the impact of the Uruk culture is clearly observable in the 4th millennium BC. The route from Syria to Egypt could have crossed the sea via Byblos, staying in contact with Egypt since ca. 3000 BC, or via Palestine, where traces of trade with Uruk have also been found [Bard 2000: 62-64, different view by Grimal 2005: 38]. Hence, it can be seen that beginning as early as the 4th millen-
nium BC, southern Mesopotamia was crisscrossed by communication and trade routes. Forming a hub where routes from many distant lands converged and crossed one another, the cities of Sumer could have been a place where merchants from different parts of Asia exchanged their wares. As far as northern Mesopotamia is concerned, in the 4th millennium BC there are no traces of east-west roads which would join the upper Tigris drainage to Syria and bypass the south. Thus, southern Mesopotamia with the Uruk culture was a hub of these routes and trade.

Of course, outside southern Mesopotamia there were cities of local significance. Recent discoveries show that the development of urban civilization can be observed as early as the 4th millennium BC in Anatolia, too. It may have been propelled by metallurgy because, owing to rich ore deposits, in particular of copper, and timber resources, the cities of Asia Minor began to supply these raw materials to neighbouring countries already at that time. Speaking of metal, originally it was a natural alloy, the so-called arsenical bronze, which was delivered to Cyprus and the Cyclades [Muhly 1977: 75; Reiter 1997: 290; Śliwa 1997: 49-51; Sahoglu 2005: 340; Webb et al. 2006: 273; 276]. The inception of the process, however, is rather obscure and, except for Arslantepe and Kurban Hüyük, no significant evidence of it has been found [MeLaart 1982: 9; Śliwa 1997: 41]. This early stage of development of Anatolian cities did not last very long anyway as it was interrupted by the massive migrations of Proto-Hittite populations from the east. However, already ca. 2800/2700 BC, a network of new cities developed there which marked another stage in the history of Anatolia. From then on, it became an important partner in trade with adjoining countries.

The crisis of the Uruk culture that affected southern Mesopotamia ca. 3100/3000 BC must have had an adverse impact on trade contacts and exchange among the various lands of the whole Orient. It was then that Uruk colonies in Syria collapsed that had hitherto provided communication between southern Mesopotamia and Egypt; traces of Sumerian influence there break off abruptly then [Astour 1995: 1406; Bard 2000: 65-66]. A decline was suffered also by colonies and towns cooperating with Uruk on the upper Khabur and Tigris rivers. Obviously, a limited economic exchange must have continued because in the Jemdet Nasr period following Uruk and the Early Dynastic Period a slow development of many Sumerian cities is observed, leading to the emergence of city-states. Everything points to the fact that Syria avoided the crisis of the turn of the 4th millennium BC and entered the period of prosperity of local urban centres. The first stage of the process is evidenced chiefly by the pottery of the region which appeared in Palestine, western Mesopotamia, Cilicia, Anatolia and even as far as the Diyala River Valley, east of the Tigris [Ławecka 2006: 180; Koliński 2007a: 110]. In effect, this period of the Early Bronze Age in Syria is sometimes called 'the period of urban culture development' [Śliwa 1997: 142-143]. In time, the centre of the region shifted
to Ebla around which Syria’s all economy and politics had concentrated since the middle of the 3rd millennium BC [Milano 1995: 1223]. Ebla’s heyday is dated to 2500-2300 BC, the period from which come records of its international politics in northern Mesopotamia and rich tombs. The latter produced Egyptian vases bearing the names of Khedhren (4th Dynasty) and Teti I (6th Dynasty) [Klengel 1979: 62-63; Śliwa 1997: 280; Olbrzyś 2007: 100-101]. Next to Ebla, the period saw the rise of other cities such as Halab, Qatna, Hamat, Emar, Haçor as well as Byblos and Ugarit on the Mediterranean coast [Salles 2001: 212-215; Olbrzyś 2007: 100-101]. Slightly less intensive but clearly visible, a period of growth on the upper Khabur River in northern Mesopotamia was marked by the rise of important urban centres such as Tell Brak, Tell Leilan, and Tell Mozan [Milano 1995: 1220; Koliński 2007b: 358]. On the upper Tigris, Hamazi, known from the Sumerian King List, grew then as well as Nineveh and Tell Taya, which are documented by texts and archaeological data [Ławecka 2006: 84-87]. The rise of Syrian centres brought about a new trade route from the Diyala River Valley to Syria via Nineveh, the upper Khabur and Balikh rivers. It was an extension of the lapis lazuli route from Afghanistan along which the mineral and tin were imported now to Ebla and Qatna [Leemans 1960: 123; Klengel 1979: 63-64; Astour 1995: 1406]. An arm of the route extended from the Diyala Valley through Mari on the middle Euphrates, and joined the route from Mesopotamia to Syria. This contributed to the rise of urban centres on the middle Euphrates, in particular Mari [Klengel 1979: 75; Muhly 1985: 281-282]. Continuous exchange of goods led different centres of both regions to start political cooperation as well, which can be seen in the relations of Ebla with Emar, Mari, Nagar and Kish [Astour 1995: 1406; Ławecka 2006: 178-179; Koliński 2007b: 354-355]. With time, these states, likewise the cities in the south, began competing for political domination in both Syria and Subartu [Liverani 1993: 59; Milano 1995: 1226-1227].

With the lapse of time, after the crisis of the turn of the 4th millennium BC, trade in southern Mesopotamia again gained momentum as new city-states, likewise Uruk earlier, could develop to a large extent by importing basic raw materials. The sophistication of material culture and trade in the first half of the 3rd millennium BC is evidenced by the discoveries at Ur. Among many hoards found in the city’s so-called royal tombs are goods made of lapis lazuli imported from Afghanistan, metals (copper, bronze) from Anatolia, and gold and obsidian brought from the Transcaucasia [Leemans 1960: 116; Maxwell-Hyslop 1977: 85; Bieliński 1985: 365-366; De Ryck et al. 2005: 265; Ławecka 2006: 176-177]. In northern Mesopotamia, this is well illustrated by the discoveries at Tell Mozan of large amounts of ceramic and metal (bronze) vessels of local origin and dated to the same period. They suggest the existence there of advanced metallurgical centres which may have even been technologically ahead of those located in Anatolia [Kelly-Buccellati 1990: 122]. Slightly later texts from Lagash testify to contacts with Dilmun, Makkān
and Meluhha and speak of raids into Subartu, i.e. northern Mesopotamia [Leemans 1960: 116]. Therefore, it can be claimed that in the middle of the 3rd millennium BC trade in the Near East entered again a period of prosperity, which must have been a result of economic and political relations having stabilized throughout the region.

With regard to Anatolia, since the middle of the 3rd millennium BC its cities had to develop rapidly and established economic contacts with the Aegean, Transcaucasia and Mesopotamia. Among the leading ones were Hattusha, Kanesh, Tarsus, Arslantepe (Melid), Alaca Hüyük and Ikiztepe (Zalpa), some of which were at their heyday then [Klengel 1979: 103; Bryce 2005: 72; Zimmerman 2007: 29-30]. According to Sahoglu the development was propelled by advances in metallurgy following the discovery of large ore deposits in the Taurus Mountains already in the first half of the 3rd millennium BC [Reiter 1997: 288; Sahoglu 2005: 341]. The west of Asia Minor saw then the development of Troy, the second layer of which, falling on the period of 2500-2300 BC, represents a highly developed culture of a city-state. Its wealth is visible in multiple examples of jewellery and objects made of gold, silver and other precious metals found at the site. A study of pottery and other goods from Troy II indicates influence coming from northern Syria, the Transcaucasia, central Anatolia and the Balkans [Jansen 1995: 1224]. This means that the city could have lain at the crossroads of cultural influences radiating from the Balkans and Asia Minor. Communication routes, existing then in central and eastern Asia Minor, led from southern Anatolia across Cilicia (Tarsus) to Syria, and from eastern Anatolia (Alaca Hüyük, Kanesh) to the upper Euphrates Valley (Arslantepe) and south into Syria [Koliński 2007a: 112; Olbrzyś 2007: 101]. In the opposite direction, the routes stretched west from southern Anatolia and via İzmir and Troy reached Mainland Greece and the Balkans [Jansen 1995: 1224]. Among transported goods metal objects and pottery merit a mention. With regard to Anatolian influences in Thrace, Sahoglu claims that they were strong enough to speak of Anatolian settlements on the other side of the Dardanelles. The system of trade routes closely joining the two countries and enabling exchange that developed then Sahoglu calls ‘Anatolian Trade Network’ [Sahoglu 2005: 343-349]. Interestingly enough, the influences that were quite strong in the 3rd millennium BC weakened later as if ties between Europe and Asia had been broken off. The breaking off could have been caused by migrations induced by the Minoan culture, emerging in the Aegean Sea [Mee 1994: 139-141]. The instability of situation in the borderland between Asia Minor and the Balkans is seen in the frailty of successive development phases of Troy, specifically phases III-V, dated to 2300-1700 BC [Jansen 1995: 1125]. An important export commodity from Anatolia to the neighbouring countries, tin bronze superseded natural arsenical bronze in the middle of the 3rd millennium BC [Reiter 1997: 288].
A watershed in the development of communication routes and trade in the Near East is marked by the rise of the state of Sargon of Akkad at the turn of the 24th century BC. Already in the lifetime of its founder, it stretched from the Persian Gulf to Syria and possibly to the Anatolian frontier [Meissner 1920: 346; Michalowski 1993: 73; Kuhrt 1995: 48-50]. The founding of a uniform state occupying such a huge area must have intensified interregional exchange. What's more, the Akkadian Empire's sphere of influence encompassed some neighbouring countries such as Elam in western Iran and the coast of the Persian Gulf. This, in turn, gave access to the sources of raw materials, hence contributing to the development of economy and trade [Michalowski 1993: 75]. The empire was at its peak in terms of territory in the reign of Sargon's grandson, Naram-Sin, who not only expanded the empire's frontiers but also founded the second capital at Nagar (Tell Brak) in the north [Olbrzys 2007: 102]. This must have intensified trade, especially in so-called Subartu. Archaeological excavations in the region showed that urban centres located there had surpassed Syria in development, which naturally shifted the economic centre of gravity in this direction [Milano 1995: 1226-1227]. For the stimulation of trade, it was important that Naram-Sin incorporated urban centres in northern Syria (Ebla, Armanum) and on the upper Tigris (Amida, present-day Diyarbakir, north of the Tur Abdin Mts.) into his empire. Thereby the Akkadian Empire overcame the region of Elazig rich in raw materials, gaining access to many natural resources [Astour 1995: 1405; Ławecka 2006: 176-177]. It could have been then that a trade route was blazed from the middle Tigris to Anatolia, which played an important role in trade in the early 2nd millennium BC [Klengel 1979: 103-104]. In the records from this period there is a clear tendency to stress contacts with and imports from the lands lying in the south and east such as Dilmun, Makkān and Meluhha known from the oldest texts. The inscriptions of Akkadian rulers mention goods and merchants from these lands coming to the port at Akkad by water [Leemans 1960: 116; Michalowski 1993: 73]. Unfortunately, the period was on the whole rather short and an attempt to maintain Akkad's control over northern Mesopotamia ended in a fiasco several decades after Naram-Sin's death, although his successors tried hard to keep these areas under control [Koliński 2007a: 104]. Generally speaking, it must be admitted that in the times of the Akkadian dynasty, communication routes in Mesopotamia returned to their north-south course. It was a result of the domination of the south and the decline of Syria's cities, in particular Ebla, which was destroyed several decades before the invasion of Akkadians [Postgate 2005: 59, for different opinion see Milano 1995: 1228].

Still unsettled, the question of Sargon's empire's contacts with Anatolia continues to vex the researchers who disagree how far could the empire's influence reach.
The well-known Babylonian epic Sargon, the King of Battle, discovered in the archive at Tell el-Amarna, tells of the ruler’s militarily punishing the Anatolian city of Purushanda for not showing respect to his envoys (merchants?). Scholars often thought this legend to be of little value as in their belief Sargon’s empire could not reach that far with its influence [Michalowski 1993: 77-82; Oguichi 1999: 96; Postgate 2005: 216]. However, excavations in south-eastern Anatolia have shown that Purushanda and other urban centres of the region were rich and important enough to attract Sargon’s or Naram-Sin’s interest. The latter certainly crossed the border of present-day Turkey [Klengel 1979: 62; Bryce 2005: 6; Sahoglu 2005: 341-345]. The trade route from Akkad to Anatolia may have followed the Euphrates, deviating from it to call at Ebla and Halab (Armanum). Its other arm, since the times of Naram-Sin (latter half of the 23rd century BC), who laid waste to Syrian cities, may have passed through Nagar and Urkesh on the upper Khabur River and continued further north across the Mardin Pass [Koliński 2007b: 346].

After the collapse of the Akkadian empire towards the end of the 22nd century BC, a short dark period occurred related to the rule of the Gutians in the south. Then, both written records and archaeological evidence became poorer. A traditional belief held that the downturn that occurred then was caused by the migration of the Hurrians in the north and the Amorites in the west [Ławeczka 2006: 33]. In more recent studies, a major cause is believed to have been a natural one, specifically, a huge volcano eruption that supposedly took place in the Aegean Sea ca. 2300 BC [Weiss, Courty 1993: 143-145; Koliński 2007b: 347-350]. Mass ethnic migrations and an economic downturn were unfavourable to trade, although it must have continued to a limited extent. This is borne out by the texts of Gudea of Lagash, dated to the 21st century BC, who mentions trade expeditions to Mari, lands on the upper Khabur, Elam and Dilmun [Leemans 1960: 124; Klengel 1979: 71; Astour 1995: 1402-1408]. The Lagash texts show that in the Khabur triangle there were many Hurrian kingdoms, which, in turn, indicates gradual stabilization. The information is significant inasmuch as Lagash did not combine economic penetration with political expansion, hence its trade ties may reflect real mechanisms operating in trade then [Klengel 1979: 67]. Once the Gutians, ca. 2050 BC, had been removed, Mesopotamia was dominated by the Monarchy of the III Dynasty of Ur. In many respects, the kingdom strove to continue the traditions of the Akkadian empire. The economic conditions, however, under which Ur rulers had to operate, were not as favourable as under the rule of the Akkadian dynasty. The reason was the failure of Ur rulers to subdue the areas on the middle and upper Euphrates and Khabur as well as Syria, which is being debated by scholars [Limet 1977: 55; Steinkeller 1987: 37-40; Stepien 2006: 44-46; Szelag 2007: 8]. There is no doubt, though, that these lands were joined to the south by a communication route following the Euphrates and featured prominently in Ur trade, ranging as far as Byblos, which appeared then for the first time in Mesopotamian texts. Economic ties between Mesopotamia
and Anatolia were maintained through the use of routes following the Tigris and crossing the Khabur triangle, which is evidenced by the development of the region's urban centres [Koliński 2007b: 354-355].

The records of Ur's trade show that it was completely under the control of state administration and was tied to the kingdom's foreign policy. The kingdom of Ur was surrounded by allied and dependent states that supplied it with some goods as a tribute and certainly were open to trade [Stepień 2006: 64-68, 76-77]. What is also worth mentioning is a considerable internal integration of the kingdom's economic system, which is called a centralized or bureaucratic economy [Steinkeller 1987: 25-29; Szelag 2007: 8-10]. The economic structure of the kingdom of Ur allows us to understand general mechanisms governing the then trade. It is known that the kingdom's regions paid different tributes to the monarchy; the south paid tax in grain or craft products whereas the north paid a levy of live animals [Steinkeller 1987: 31-37; Stepień 2006: 73-76; Szelag 2007: 8]. This form of taxation can be explained by the fact that the animal tax imposed on the northern regions was cheaper to service as it did not require any means of transport; theoretically, however, goods from the north could be sent down the Tigris. The fact that it was not done could indicate that the waterway from the north was considered troublesome and was not used very often. This, in turn suggests, that still at the turn of the 3rd millennium BC, means of transport were too poor to support long-distance trade on a large scale. It must have been resorted to only for the purpose of importing the most necessary or valuable goods. The geographical shape of the kingdom of Ur made communication and trade routes run north-south and branch eastwards across the Zagros Mountains and westwards along the Euphrates. Economic texts from the times of the Ur III Dynasty concerning trade traditionally speak of merchants from Dilmun and Makan, and lands located in Iran [Szelag 2007: 3]. In this period Meluhha is not mentioned anymore in the context of trade and in the 2nd millennium BC Mesopotamian texts mention Dilmun only. This gives the impression of the shrinking of Sumerian and Akkadian merchants' trade horizons in the south. Some scholars suggest that this could have been a result of the growing importance of trade centres on Bahrain, which excavations on the island seem to suggest [Postgate 2005: 216-217].

As it has been said, the kingdom of Ur did not include western Mesopotamia nor Syria within its borders; the two countries were fragmented into independent political entities. Some of them were political satellites of the kingdom of Ur, which entailed economic cooperation as well. This age of Syrian history is poorly known because of the absence of any texts and paucity of data supplied by excavations. In the opinion of scholars, the region was going through a crisis then, known by the name of 'Amorite period', although some doubts are expressed whether the crisis was caused by the migration of this people as the infiltration by Amorites did not encompass urban areas [Olbrzy 2007: 101]. Nevertheless, there must have flourished local trade in Syria at that time, although it is little known to us. What
evidence we have is the growth of cities on the Syrian coast that had economic ties with the eastern Mediterranean, Egypt and Anatolia. One should also mention Ebla here that prospered again then and regained its economic significance [Milano 1995: 1228]. Unfortunately, this phase in the city's development did not yield any texts that could tell us more about its political standing. With regard to Anatolia, it also found itself in the period of absorbing another wave of migrants. They were Hittites who did not, however, do much damage to the then political and economic systems especially in the eastern part of the region [Śliwa 1997: 40-41; Bryce 2005: 8-9]. A wave of new settlers coming to Asia Minor destabilized briefly its economy and disturbed its politics, especially in the centre and west of the peninsula. Yet, the texts from Kanesh dating to an only slightly later period show that there existed stable political and economic systems focused on the 'great king' of Purushanda and rulers of smaller states dependent on him [Postgate 2005: 214]. The system attracted potential trade partners, and merchants from Ur could successfully do business there. Although texts are silent on this point, such trade contacts are borne out by both pottery and tools made of Anatolian bronze quite frequently found in the south [Koliński 2007a: 109-110].

23. COMMUNICATION ROUTES OF THE 1ST HALF OF THE 2ND MILLENNIUM BC

After the fall of the kingdom of Ur in the middle of the 20th century BC, Mesopotamia broke up into a number of kingdoms and the next two centuries witnessed continuous struggle for reunification under the rule of one of pretenders. The area's most important kingdoms in the Old Babylonian period in the south were Isin, Larsa and Elam, with the last-mentioned taking an active role in the events in Mesopotamia. On the middle Euphrates the leading centres included Mari, while on the Tigris the most important ones were Eshnunna, Elkallate and Assur. In Syria, a clear hegemony was maintained by Halab, together with Ebla subordinated to it; another political power to be reckoned with was Qatna. To sustain economic development, these kingdoms had to procure important raw materials through trade, hence, despite political fragmentation and mutual hostilities, trade clearly thrived. This is borne out by many texts, including letters and itineraries, which shall be discussed below. The role of trade and the importance of routes is visible in intense competition for control over important route sections, e.g. the estuary of the Tigris and Euphrates rivers and urban centres in the south itself [Charpin 2004: 57-127]. Further north, the control of the middle course of the Tigris and the Diyala Valley was an important prize of war as it allowed the winner to control the Tigris route and access to the pass across the Zagros Mountains in the
direction of Iran [Charpin 2004: 129-152]. Still further north, on the upper Tigris, a struggle for domination continued among the cities of Assyria proper. Next to Assur, one should mention Ekalatte, Eshnunna and Elam, as well as perhaps Mari, whose interests overlapped in this region [Yuhong 1994: 62-92]. Not less important, a section of the middle Euphrates and the Khabur emptying into it served as routes leading north and west. The kingdoms that participated in the power struggle for control over the region were Mari, Terqa and other lesser kingdoms existing there as well as external powers such Halab, the Kingdom of Subartu under Shamshi-Adad or even Eshnunna and Elam [Yuhong 1994: 93-109]. As far as Syria is concerned, it was dominated by the kings of Jamhad (Halab), with Qatna and Urshum being powers to be reckoned with. Syria's road routes were well connected to northern Mesopotamia via Emir, Karkemish and to Anatolia via Urshum and Hahhum [Kelly-Bucellati 1990: 123; Astour 1995; 1415; Ollryš 2007: 100-101]. Extending south from Amman and Alalah, they reached western Palestine via Kadesh, Haçor and the Beqa'a Valley and continued towards the Egyptian border. In classic antiquity the route was called via maris [Klengel 1979: 80; Astour 1995: 1416].

The great importance of trade can be clearly seen in records and law collections from the period in question. The Code of Hammurabi, sections 100-107, and sections 5-6 of the Hittite Laws contain provisions aimed at facilitating trade and ensuring security of trade operations and people involved in it [Driver, Miles 1956: 187-202; Klengel 1979: 89-91; Stepień 1996: 100-101; Hoffner 1997: 217-218]. However, some letters show that rulers did not hesitate to strike at the economy, including enemy's trade, to reach specific political aims. A perfect example is letter AAhB 11 193, sent by Sin-muballit, Hammurabi's father, to one of his commanders in which he orders the commander to attack caravans approaching enemy cities to strike fear into their hearts [Leemans 1968: 211-212]. The fact that trade persisted despite such obstacles proves that it was profitable enough to attract people ready to take the risks under any political circumstances. In addition, one should also take into account other factors, which have been left out so far, like nomads and bands of robbers on steppes, which could have made trade difficult [Klengel 1977: 68-70]. Relying on letters from that period, of which from Babylonia alone 3,000 have been published to date, one can get the impression that despite the political situation trade was universal and took on ever more complex organizational forms. A new development in this respect, both in the south and north, was private commercial companies. The capital invested in them varied greatly from rather small amounts of a few shekels of silver to substantial ones, especially in the north, of several dozen minas of gold [Larsen 1977: 124-126].

The first half of the 2nd millennium BC yielded the most interesting archives of commercial documents in the whole history of the ancient East. The texts were discovered in a district of Kanesh, eastern Anatolia, which as early as the 1st half of the 3rd millennium BC played an important role in the local economy as well
as in trade extending over a broader area. In the early 2nd millennium BC, these activities unexpectedly intensified greatly thus allowing us to build a model facilitating the understanding of trade throughout the Near East. The most extensive monograph devoted to the trade settlement at Kanesh and business done by merchants residing there is G. Dercksen’s The Old Assyrian Copper Trade in Anatolia published in Istanbul in 1996 [also Larsen 1976; Veenhof 1995]. The Old Assyrian trade flourished between the upper Tigris drainage and eastern Anatolia. Kanesh is situated on the plain that in this east forms a kind of a gate to the Konya plain, interspersed with interrelated urban centres, including Purushanda and Hattusha. In the east, Kanesh had access to a route leading to the upper Euphrates valley, i.e. to northern Syria and Mesopotamia. Hence, the city was ideally located to be an intermediary in trade between the lands in the east and west [Postgate 2005: 214; Koliński 2007a: 110-111]. On the opposite side, Kanesh’s partner was Assur, located in the eastern portion of northern Mesopotamia, on the route from the Persian Gulf, along the Tigris. The route was joined by another from the east, crossing Eshnunna or Nuri. The commodities shipped to Assur, next to locally produced goods, included, for the most part, others originating in countries located in the south and east. Of vital importance was the import of tin from Central Asia, from the south of Iran (Fars). The commodity was the chief export to Kanesh [Leemans 1960: 123; Astour 1995: 1404; Yoffee 1995: 1393; Postgate 2005: 212-213]. Actually, it is hard to tell when exactly Assyrians began to settle in Kanesh as the material culture of the incoming populations did not differ much from the indigenous ones. Therefore, for a more accurate date one can rely only on texts, and the historical and political context. As the monarchy of the III dynasty of Ur fell ca. 1939 BC, it is believed that the cooperation between Assur and Kanesh started soon afterwards, still before the end of the 20th century BC. However, the hill on which the settlement was located had been inhabited earlier [Sliwa 1997: 55]. Hence, it cannot be ruled out that the contacts between northern Mesopotamia and eastern Anatolia, occasioned by the trading colony, were established earlier as well [Klengel 1979: 104-105]. The greatest collection, numbering 20,000 texts on the life in the colony in its heyday, so-called Kanesh II layer, is dated to the latter half of the 19th century BC. Soon later, the decline of the outpost began after a short revival in the period of Kanesh I1b2. Hence, the Kanesh texts illustrate the growth, prime and decline of the settlement.

The texts from the prime time of the trading colony at Kanesh present a rather comprehensive picture of its life. We know that it had its self-governing body (bit karrim), its internal rules and regulations, settled relations with a local ruler and even its own tax system [Larsen 1976: 283-288; Klengel 1979: 104-105; Veenhof 1995: 861-863; Bryce 2005: 22-24]. What is of particular interest to us, the settlement was the end of a very long trade route, extending from Assyria to Anatolia for about 1,600 kilometres. It ran from Assur first to centres located in Djebel Sinjar (Qatara, Razama), continued north-west to Shekhna (present-day Tell Leilan) and
the Mardin pass, where the important economic and political centre of Urkesh (modern Tell Mozan) lay [Ritsvet 2008: 589]. There, the route could have turned north towards Amida (Diyarbakir) and then west as far as the Upper Euphrates Valley extending north. This is shown by the presence there of Khabur pottery and another, having clear south Mesopotamian traits [Parker, Dodd 2003: 35-36]. Another branch of the route crossed Shekha, the Khabur triangle and continued due west until the crossing of the Euphrates. It turned in the direction of Anatolia in northern Syria, passing through Urshum.

What's important about the course of the route from Assur to Kanesh is its great diversification and division into several crucial sections that were marked by successive Assyrian outposts such as Eluhhut, Nihriya, Burudum, Urshum, Zalpa (in Syria), Timilka and Hahlum, which merchants from Assur liked to call at. Along the trail, three kinds of trading colonies were located: next to karum, we know of smaller posts called wabartum and išertum [Dercksen 1996: 64; Veenhof 2008: 165]. It must be stressed that the trade involved exchange of very large quantities of goods and used caravans of as many as 200 beasts of burden. What was shipped westward included primarily metals (tin and copper) and textiles originating mainly from Babylonia. In the opposite direction, caravans carried mainly silver, gold and bronze goods. Thus, it was actually one-way trade and scholars agree that from the west to Assur, merchants carried mostly if not exclusively profits that they later invested in the next expedition to Anatolia [Veenhof 1995: 864]. In the case of the major commodities, i.e. tin and textiles, Assyrian merchants were intermediaries in a long-distance commercial exchange, reaching distant lands. As it has already been mentioned, tin in all probability came from the Fars Mountains in southern Iran, while textiles were manufactured at Assur and Babylonia [Reiter 1997: 209; Postgate 2005: 213]. Neither commodity ended its journey in Kanesh, but was transported further to western Anatolia where more colonies of Assur merchants were located. Next to the karum at Kanesh, we know of Assyrian trading colonies in Purushanda, Wahshushana, Hattusha and Zalpa at the mouth of the Kizilirmak river on the Black Sea coast. The fact that even the last-mentioned one contained an Assyrian trading colony (wabartum) may mean that it was an important commercial centre, having ties to the cities on the Black Sea coast [Astour 1995: 1410; Oguchi 1999: 98]. A more important of the Anatolian routes, followed by Assyrian merchants, extended from Kanesh via Purushanda in the south-west to western Asia Minor and then north-east to the Black Sea coast [Astour 1995: 1410; Dercksen 1996: 63; Veenhof 2008: 165]. The other route continued from Hattusha and Amkuwa to Zalpa. It is possible that Assyrian and Anatolian goods went further north, to cities on the Black Sea coast. Hence, it seems quite certain that Assyrian merchants made themselves at home in Anatolia and took advantage of the local economic situation, although they were not allowed to trade in goods of local origin. It must be added that such Assyrian trading colonies were set up not
only in the west and north but also south of Assur, for instance, at Nuzi and Sippar in Babylon [Postgate 2005: 212-213].

In conclusion, the trading colony at Kanesh, because of its size, was certainly exceptional. However, we know of many other karum type outposts in the Near East that were attached to urban centres in both southern and northern Mesopotamia. The term karum itself originally meant a harbour or a pier where a commercial district of a city developed – a frequent element of Mesopotamia’s cityscapes [CAD K: 231-232; Stol 2004: 939; Postgate 2005: 213-215]. It follows from the Kanesh archives that despite its great significance for the economy of a given region, trade in a karum did little to bring the two communities closer together. Merchants from Assur kept apart from the indigenous population, used their own calendar, language and even for the most part Assyrian servants [Postgate 2005: 215]. The indigenous inhabitants of Kanesh did not absorb cultural novelties from the strangers, either, despite the fact that Assyrian merchants used the Akkadian language and cuneiform script. However, the dialect and script that were later adopted in Anatolia originated from Babylon and arrived there from Syria [Klengel 1979: 110; Postgate 2005: 215]. To the significance of Assyrian trade with Anatolia testifies the fact that Assur rulers took special care of it. Specifically, they took much effort to remove any problems merchants might encounter in their profitable endeavours. Towards the end of the colony’s existence, a royal official even appeared there, called waqil tamkari or merchant overseer. This, however, may indicate a desire to bring trade under the control of the royal palace [Postgate 2005: 214-215].

In addition, the significance of the karum at Kanesh is underlined by the rivalry between Assur, and Mari and Syrian cities reflected in late texts and pottery from Kanesh [Klengel 1979: 79; Kohlski 2007a: 113]. Apparently, the competitors lay in wait for a crisis in trade with Assur in order take over this profitable activity. The penetration of Anatolia by trade agents from Mari and Syrian cities was possible also because the tin from Iran reached the middle and upper Euphrates from whence some of it was shipped to western and southern Syria and Palestine [Leemans 1968: 209; Klengel 1979: 78-80; Muhly 1985: 282; Reiter 1997: 213-214]. In this connection, it is worth mentioning that the ‘tin route’ from the east through the Diyala Valley turned also in the direction of southern Mesopotamia, Larsa and Ur on the Persian Gulf, although it is hard to tell whether tin reached these destinations through the Diyala Valley or through Assur [Leemans 1968: 193, 206; Reiter 1997: 213-214]. All these branches of the ‘tin route’ from the east, from behind the Zagros Mountains, were a continuation of a single route beginning at the Iranian Mountains of Fars. Movement of goods along this eastern portion of the route spanned even greater distances and must have been even more intensive than that we know from Old Assyrian trade. Unfortunately, due to the absence of any written records, we know few details of this fascinating development in its Iranian part.
Another watershed in the political and economic history of the ancient East, hence in the course and operation of trade routes as well, took place in the latter half of the 18th and early 17th centuries BC. It coincided with the reign of three rulers, namely, Shamshi-Adad I, king of northern Mesopotamia, Rim-Sin, king of Larsa and the whole south, and Hammurabi, king of Babylon. Shamshi-Adad I, next to northern Mesopotamia and the Khabur triangle, subdued the middle course of the Euphrates with Mari. It was his kingdom that was crossed by communication routes used by merchants from Assur on their way to Kanesh. Due to wars waged by Shamshi-Adad, roads leading west and north from Mesopotamia were often unsafe or even blocked for some time, which had an adverse effect on Anatolian trade. It is possible that because of wars fought by Shamshi-Adad with Yamhad in Syria, merchants from Assur had to follow the route crossing the Mardin Pass and passing through Amida and Hahhum to avoid crossing the border between the warring countries. Because of the route towards Iran, crossing the Zagros Mountains, the king of Subartu, as this was the name used by Shamshi-Adad in respect of his kingdom, attempted to impose his control on Eshnunna in the Diyala Valley, but failed in his efforts. This must have been the reason for charting a new route to Iran along the Little Zab Valley, which bypassed Eshnunna. In the opinion of Oguchi, the Great Zab River in the north could have been used for that purpose, which finds from Shemshara seem to suggest. However, if this had been so, tin from the east would have reached Nineveh, which certainly did not participate in this trade [Oguchi 1999: 98-100]. This route, too, was blocked by Turukku peoples, pressing on Assyria from the east. Hence, the supply of tin to Assur from the east finally ceased, which brought about an end to Old Assyrian trade in the late 18th century BC [Larsen 1976: 88-89; Oguchi 1999: 95].

Around this time, southern Mesopotamia was dominated by Larsa that gained control of the mouth of the Tigris and Euphrates rivers in the south, including the region's largest urban centres such as Ur, Larsa, Nippur and Uruk. In terms of economy, the kingdom's role was highly significant as the most important routes crossed it on their way to the Persian Gulf and Elam. Also, the population of the kingdom formed a major market and had a considerable production potential. In the buffer zone between Larsa and Subartu, there lay a number of smaller kingdoms of which more important ones were Babylon and Eshnunna mentioned earlier. This period of relative stability lasted for about 20 years and ended with wars that engulfed the region soon after 1700 BC. From the chaos, Babylon emerged victorious and its ruler, Hammurabi, after five years of fighting was able to bring the whole southern Mesopotamia, Diyala Valley and Mari under his control and incorporate into his kingdom. Northern Mesopotamia with Assur and Ekalatium became Babylon's client for a short time [Kuhrt 1995: 113]. In this way, this young kingdom whose centre lay in the area formerly occupied by Akkad became a power on the scale of the whole Near East. The kingdom of Babylon exploited economically
its geographical location, but faced serious limitations as well. Hammurabi did not conquer Syria which could still obstruct routes going north and west. Additionally, Babylon was in conflict with Elam, which made eastern trade difficult despite having control of the Diyala Valley. The latter caused problems as well since the king of Babylon is known to have put down rebellions there and his son, Samsuiluna, fortified the region because of a new threat posed by Kassites [Kuhrt 1995: 115-116]. Samsuiluna, however, lost control over the estuary of the Tigris and Euphrates rivers in the south, allowing his country to shrink considerably whereby it lost favourable conditions for economic development. Hammurabi’s achievements, nevertheless, inspired awe in his contemporaries and descendants, making Babylon the cultural capital of the then world. As regards trade and communication routes at that time, it follows from letters and other texts that merchants were very active then. This is true for both private ones and those working for institutions. They were active throughout Mesopotamia but the directions particularly preferred in their expeditions included the east (Elam), north (Arrapkha, Ekallatum, Assur) and north-west (Mari, Tutul and Emar) [Leemans 1960: 89-109].

As regards economy and trade in northern Mesopotamia and Syria in the latter half of the 17th century and in the 16th century, i.e. in the times when they were not satellites of Babylonia, the situation is hard to describe with any certainty as no uniform political organism existed then in this area. Archives from Nuzi, one of the kingdoms located in the area, show that Hurrian kingdoms prospered there. Soon after the fall of Babylon in 1531 BC, they formed Mitanni federation, extending from the upper Tigris River as far as western Syria. Its centre was located at Washshukanni on the upper Khabur River. It is very probable that still before the rise of the federation, these petty kingdoms were interconnected by trade and east-west routes [Oguchi 1999: 95]. To a rather uniform character of these kingdoms and their economic prosperity testify texts from Nuzi, Emar and Alalah and the spreading of the so-called Khabur pottery indicates a rather uniform character of their material culture [Oguchi 1999: 96; 2006: 54]. The course of the then communication routes is not known to us but we can only suspect that still before the rise of the Mitanni federation they ran east-west with a deviation to the south in the east and branches running north and south in the west.

As far as the history of Anatolia is concerned, a single development of utmost importance for the region and the whole Near East in the first half of the 2nd millennium BC, was the emergence of the Hittite state. At least since the end of the 18th century or so near the collapse of Assyrian colonies at Kanesh and other Anatolian cities, aspirations to achieve unity by the urban centres of Konya Plain. It is possible that these cities had manifested themselves. As it has already been mentioned, in the light of the Kanesh texts, the most important city in terms of politics was Purushanda, situated in south-central Anatolia. However, it was not this city that played a crucial role in the integration of the region as the earliest records point to Zalpa and
Kushar, located in the northern and north-eastern parts of Anatolia, respectively. Zalpa controlled the mouth of the Kizilirmak River on the Black Sea coast, which might mean that it was well-poised to develop into a political power. The role of this city in Anatolia's contacts with the Northern Pontic Area is manifested by the fact that the Black Sea was called the Sea of Zalpa by Hittites and the location of the furthest trading colony of Assur merchants [Bryce 2005: 90]. Kushar, in turn, was located further east in the foothills of the Pontic Mountains. Sources show that Zalpa's rulers first and Kushar's later succeeded in bringing under their control all the major urban centres of Konya Plain, including Purushanda, Kanesh and Hattusha, building thus Anatolia's first vast kingdom. In Bryce's opinion, the reason behind the struggle and rivalry for dominance over eastern Anatolia could have been the desire to control the trade route to Assyria [Bryce 2005: 34]. These first attempts at statehood disintegrated soon and a lasting unification of central Asia Minor succeeded only at the third attempt. This happened in the early 16th century BC and was the work of successive rulers of Kushar [Kuhrt 1995: 225-228]

The first rulers of united Anatolia immediately undertook outside expansion, the economic grounds for which are quite obvious as it was directed westwards at Arzawa and the kingdom of Wilusa, identified with Troy. The kingdom had started on the second period of rapid expansion around that time (Troy VI). The city took on even more monumental appearance than in the 3rd millennium BC and its material culture shows links to the centres of central Anatolia, Transcaucasia and Mycenaean Greece while Troy's ships may have penetrated the Black Sea. The important position of Troy in western Turkey is borne out by the Hittite texts that often mention strenuous efforts by Hatti kings to maintain control over it [Bryce 2005: 245-246, 340-342, 359-361]. The other direction of expansion by early Hittite rulers was Syria. There, local political and economic power was wielded by the kingdom of Yamhad with its capital at Halab [Bryce 2005: 75-77]. Murshili I, the third ruler of the united Hittite kingdom, conquered Halab ca. 1536 BC whereby, after mere one hundred years of existence, the Hittite monarchy acquired a solid base for economic and political stabilization, extending from the frontier with northern Mesopotamia, Syria and the upper Euphrates to the Dardanelles. The kingdom of Hittites not only controlled important trade routes but also rich deposits of raw materials, making other Near East countries reckon with it. A good example is the kingdom's relations with the Hurrian monarchy that extended over northern Mesopotamia and Syria. The latter was conquered by the rulers of Mitanni at the time of the first crisis suffered by the Hittite kingdom at the turn of the 16th century BC. The reason for the rivalry between the two powers was their shared desire for controlling Syria and south-eastern Anatolia, which were crossed by very important trade routes of the Orient. Consequently, any stabilization in this area was possible only with one of the monarchies having the upper hand. And so, in the 15th century BC, the Hurrian federation gained the upper hand, while in the 14th and 13th
centuries BC the Hittite empire enjoyed supremacy. In fact, in over 200 years of co-existence, the two kingdoms virtually never had peaceful relations, instead there was always fierce rivalry between them [Kuhrt 1995: 289-295, Bryce 2005: 189-193].

2.4. COMMUNICATION ROUTES OF THE AMARNA PERIOD

The fall of the Old Babylonian kingdom, which occurred in the latter half of the 16th century BC following the Hittite invasion, and the rise of the Mitanni federation meant a beginning of a new period in the political and economic history of the whole Orient. A new order taking shape in the Near East was brought about by the territorial expansion of Mittani. However, before this came to pass fierce conflicts between kingdoms raged. In the 15th century, for over half a century, the Hurrian monarchy fought with Egypt over the control of Syria in the south-east and engaged in conflicts with the Hittite kingdom in the north-west time and time again. Possibly, hostile relations may have existed too between Mitanni and Babylonia, ruled then by the Kassites who had come to power there after the Hittite invasion [Kuhrt 1995: 339-341]. In the long run, a conflict with Mitanni was not in the interest of Egypt or Babylonia, hence ca. 1420 BC a peace agreement was concluded with Mitanni, stabilizing the economic and political situation throughout the region for half a century. The Tell el-Amarna archive shows that it was a kind of Near Eastern belle époque which for the first time in the region's history saw a free exchange of missions and goods in the area from the Persian Gulf and the Zagros Mountains to Egypt and Anatolia. The letters speak of vigorous exchange of diverse goods, especially ready-made luxury items, ornaments, clothes, chariots and horses. The last mentioned commodity was greatly valued especially by Egyptian monarchs. The Amarna letters show only the Egyptian perspective of the exchange, thus in principle we do not know what pharaohs offered in return to their Asian trade partners apart from gold; curiously enough it was cheaper than silver in Egypt [Avruch 2000: 160-163]. What is intriguing about the exchange is the course of the longest caravan route, joining Babylonia to Egypt. The unresolved question is whether it took a shorter way along the Euphrates, across south-eastern Syria, or on its way it reached the upper Khabur and the Mitanni capital. Looking on slightly earlier Old Babylonian itineraries, one thinks that the latter course seems more probable.

In the 15th century BC, no profits from the international commercial exchange were made by Assyria and the Hittite kingdom, which found themselves under a strong influence of Mitanni. After almost 70 years, as a result of fierce fighting in the middle of the 14th century BC, it was them that prevailed over their oppres-
sor and replaced it in the political system and commercial exchange [Bryce 2005: 174-177, 189-193]. A new order, which emerged in the latter half of the 14th century BC, differed considerably from the previous one as Syria, overrun by Hittites, was closely tied to Anatolia, while northern Mesopotamia, after a short domination of Hittites in the early 13th century BC, found itself within the orbit of Assyria. Having hostile relations with the Hittites, Assyria attempted to find a recompense for being denied access to Anatolian raw materials in expanding into the Transcaucasia (Na-iri) [Leemans 1968: 209, Bryce 2005: 347-351]. Finally, a conflict ensued between the two kingdoms, with the Hittite state suffering a defeat. On the opposite end, Assyria attempted to take control over the Diyala Valley and the road to Iran, causing wars with Babylonia. The fighting brought destruction to an important trade centre at Nuzi [Kuhrt 1995: 356-357]. Assyria’s hostile relations with the Hittite state in the west and Babylonia in the south, as well as an economic blockade on both sides, prevented the country from taking advantage of its favourable geographic location until the end of the 13th century BC. It must have made do with its own resources to be found between the Zagros Mountains in the east and the upper Euphrates in the west as well as in the Transcaucasia.

The new situation that took shape in the Amarna period exerted an especially strong impact on Syria that was divided into two spheres of influences. First, in the 15th century BC, the division was made by Egypt, which annexed southern and western Syria including the Mediterranean coast, and Mitanni, which controlled northern and eastern Syria. The division actually followed a natural distinction between the coastal zone and the farming-steppe one, which was very clear already earlier. For the Mitanni kingdom, the possessing of Syria was vital and we know that petty Hurrian states existing there, such as Alalah, Halab, Karkemish or Emar, played a very important role in the geopolitics of great kings from Washshukanni. In effect, eastern and northern Syria integrated even more with northern Mesopotamia while western and southern Syria, together with the Levantine coast and Palestine, associated themselves with the eastern Mediterranean and Egypt. As regards the trading routes of central Syria at that time, the role of the route running from the Orontes Valley south, in the direction of Palestine and Egypt, was strengthened likewise the route from the Euphrates to the Mediterranean via Halab and Alalah, which served as Mitanni’s gateway to the sea.

In the latter half of the Amarna period, from the middle of the 14th century BC until the invasion of the Sea Peoples, as a result of Egyptian-Hittite wars, eastern and northern Syria came under Hittite rule. The new masters set out to integrate it into Anatolia. This was an important novelty for the region, the more so as this involved severing it from northern Mesopotamia ruled by Assyria since the early 13th century BC. Hittite rulers attached great importance to sovereignty over Syria and founded there two Hittite kingdoms, at Karkemish and Halab, ruled by the sons of the great king from Hattusa [Bryce 2005: 190-192]. Due to hostile economic policies
and a blockade in the east, the Hittite part of Syria more and more succumbed to
Anatolian influences, reinforced even more by a Luvian colonization. As a result,
Syria was considered part of the land of Hatti until the end of the first half of the
1st millennium BC. To the lasting character of the Hittite or Luvian impact on Syria
testify the post-Hittite kingdoms that emerged there in the late 2nd millennium BC
and greatly affected the region’s history in the 1st millennium BC.

3. MEANS OF TRANSPORT AND CONDITIONS OF TRAVEL

It is a common belief that owing to an easy access to rivers, the most important
means of transport almost throughout the Near East in the Bronze Age were boats.
Indeed, the major civilization centres were located on great rivers or their tributaries.
Their waters over long sections are quite calm and navigable. As key evidence
of the role of navigation in the early history of the Orient serves the example of the
Euphrates in the trade contacts of southern Mesopotamia and Syria. The example
seems to be borne out by the location of the so-called Uruk colonies in the 4th
millennium BC that were indeed founded on the middle and upper courses of both
waterways. In this way they had direct communications with the metropolis [Astour
1995: 1407-1408]. Also later, merchants from the cities of Sumer and still later from
Sumer and Akkad often imported different raw materials and goods from the north
using boats. In the light of inscriptions of Gudea, king of Lagash, from the 21st
century BC, boats could serve trade of the south with lands on the middle or even
upper courses of the Tigris and Euphrates rivers [Limet 1977: 57; Astour 1995:
1408; Postgate 2005: 208].

However, the opinion that boats were commonly used for trade in the Orient
must be reviewed because, next to some weak points in the theoretical aspect, it
cannot be defended anymore in the face of recent research results, especially in the
field of archaeology. First and foremost, even in the case of centres located on the
same river, commercial exchange over longer distances in both ways could not rely
solely on boats. It is easy to imagine a trip by boat downstream, but for travel in the
opposite direction other means of transport were used. Texts from the 3rd and 2nd
millennia BC, including private letters (e.g. AbB 2 83, 87, 177), show that for travel
upstream merchants from the south used donkeys for carrying goods north [Klengel
1979: 87]. Theoretically, they could sell the beasts of burden at their destination
and buy boats with the money to carry them downstream [Dercksen 1996: 61]. This
solution seems rather doubtful as donkeys sold in large numbers at the destination
of an expedition would fetch a low price for animals of the highest quality that they
Map 1. Trade routes in the ancient East from the 4th to the 2nd millennium BC
were [Stol 2004: 871]. In the case of northern Mesopotamia and Syria, the situation was made even worse by a strongly developed breeding of donkeys there, which would have made any such transaction even less feasible [Klengel 1979: 97]. Also, the buying of boats in the north would have been rather expensive if merchants from the south had purchased them there often. Theoretically, these could have been simple rafts using inflated animal hides, built on the spot [Bass 1995: 1421-1423]. One can doubt, however, whether such makeshift 'boats' could carry heavy loads for many days it took to sail downstream hundreds of kilometres. Another inconvenience related to the use of boats for the transport of goods over long distances was the need to control the whole waterway or at least ensure safety to the expedition. For having to keep to the stream meant that no obstacles posed by the political situation could be avoided. All these inconveniences would be tolerable only in the case of commercial exchange managed by large institutions, royal palaces or temples, having at their disposal substantial material and human resources. Such institutions did not have to take care to make such expeditions highly profitable. Both early literary texts and later records, mentioning the import of precious materials for the court, show that such imports were not part of regular trade but were brought in fulfilment of royal orders. It is possible that in such cases boats or rafts were bought or built on the spot and used to transport such raw materials [Kramer 1977]. It was for such institutions that goods were initially brought from the north by boat. The water transport, however, was too expensive for private trade, which can be seen in 2nd millennium BC texts, and thus it ceased to be widely used [Postgate 2005: 218].

The opinion that boats were a common means of transport could be true for southern and central Mesopotamia. Sumer and Akkad are in principle a single country crisscrossed by many canals and branches of the Tigris and Euphrates rivers. The rivers flow calmly in their lower courses, which makes navigation easy. Therefore, the use of boats for transport in the south could be widespread since the earliest times. With the passing of centuries, information on the use of boats for transport is ever more frequent to reach a peak during the reign of the III dynasty of Ur. It follows from these records that boats had a very high cargo carrying capacity of as much as 90,000 litres of grain (approx. 70 tonnes) and sailed on the two rivers and their branches from the Persian Gulf to the cities of northern Babylonia and the Diyala Valley in the north and Mari on the middle Euphrates [Bass 1995: 1422-1423]. At least in part, Sumerian cities maintained contacts using boats and ships with the outer world, in the first place with seaside countries such as Elam, Dilmun (Bahrain), Makkān (Oman) and Meluhha (India). For this purpose, the largest and strongest ships were built so that they would withstand undulation of the sea [Postgate 2005: 218]. A certain drop in the use of large-tonnage boats is observed in the first half of the 2nd millennium BC when Mesopotamia, and the valleys of major rivers too, were cut by borders of many countries, frequently at odds with one another. The partitioning of the region prevented inland navigation
from developing. Yet, boats remained the chief means of transport in southern Mesopotamia until the end of the Bronze Age, which is evidenced by the provisions on navigation laid down in Hammurabi's Code of Laws (Sec. 236-240) [Driver, Miles 1956: 429-432, 473-475].

The use of other means of transport, apart from boats, was necessary from the earliest times to maintain contact between southern Mesopotamia and the lands that were not joined to it by waterways: eastern Iran and Afghanistan [Oates 1991: 24-25; Selz 1991: 32-34; Astour 1995: 1405]. Here, certainly caravan transport was used as described in literary works devoted to the early rulers of Ur [Kramer 1977]. Organization of such transport was rather troublesome as caravans had to make regular stopovers, replace injured animals, find water to drink by people and animals, etc. Additionally, it was necessary to hire right people to handle goods and animals, and defend a caravan against possible assailants. On long routes, stretching for over a thousand kilometres, there could always happen something out of the ordinary which called for special precautions [Leemans 1968: 212]. As regards the use of wagons in the earliest periods of trade, we do have evidence of their existence, but their use for the transport of goods is rather improbable. The earliest wagons that we know from mock-ups clearly served ritual-ceremonial purposes [Bollweg 1999: 187-191]. There is no doubt, however, that they were soon adapted to more practical tasks.

The situation in northern Mesopotamia and Syria looked similar: merchants frequently had to resort there to land transport. Apparently, for transport purposes could be used the valleys of four major rivers: the Tigris, Khabur, Euphrates and Orontes; however, their north-south course did not ensure in many instances any connection between countries rich in raw materials and those which needed them. Hence, the use of other means of transport then the boat in the north resulted from the domination there of east-west roads connecting the Zagros Mountains to Syria and Anatolia in one direction and the west to Assyria, the Diyala Valley and Babylonia in the opposite direction. The roads, however, did not coincide with the river courses in the area. Even in the kingdom of Mari, located on the middle Euphrates, which thus had access via the river and the Khabur to neighbouring countries, the dominating means of transport were donkeys and wagons. This can be seen in Hammurabi's letter to Zimmu-Lim, king of Mari, in which the ruler of Babylon, meaning means of transport, writes straightforwardly to his ally: "Your country is donkeys and wagons, mine is boats" [Limet 1977: 54; Astour 1995: 1403; Stol 2004: 872]. This short sentence, deprived of any justification, gives the impression of referring to some well-known fact. Hence, the letter suggests that the means of transport most widely used in the north were beasts of burden and wagons. Since the former are a gift of nature which can be easily adapted to carry goods, it was them who served as the most important means of transport. In effect, a classic view related to long-distance trade throughout western Asia, from India to the coast of
the Mediterranean Sea, from the 4th millennium BC until the construction of the railways, was caravans of pack animals, initially donkeys and later camels.

Pack animals, however, were not a sufficient means of transport as not infrequently such goods had to be carried which could not be loaded onto animals, e.g. logs of wood or blocks of stone. For such loads another means of transport had to be found. It was, of course, the wagon, mentioned in letters, business texts and codes of laws. However, until the end of the 3rd millennium BC relatively few of them had been used. The oldest references to transport wagons date back to the middle of the 3rd millennium BC in Ebla. They mention two- three- and four-wheel wagons, including a four-wheel wagon of the queen [Astour 1995: 1402]. The representations of the early wagons from the so-called Standard of Ur and the Stele of the Vultures show the vehicles to be rather simple structures unable to carry goods over longer distances at least initially. To the use of wagons in transport point texts from Kanesh. It follows from them that in the early 2nd millennium BC, wagons were an important means of transport in the north next to the donkey. What's more, Old Assyrian texts suggest that wagons were used in trade often enough to make the expression ‘wagonload’ a measure of the amount of goods [Gökçek 2006: 196]. What else can be seen is the fact that it was a standard practice to rent wagons together with oxen and drivers. Although this was quite expensive but allowed merchants to cut down considerably on the number of animals and personnel. As it has already been mentioned, it follows from records that a single caravan could have up to 200 donkeys, loaded with 12 tonnes of goods in total. This required hiring several dozen men to handle goods and animals and to protect them. The task was made simple by the use of wagons that could carry over 1.5 tonnes of goods i.e. as much as was carried by 25 pack donkeys. This could have greatly improved trade and contributed to its growing in size so much. The data we have from the period of Kanesh II allow us to estimate the aggregate amounts of goods transported. It turns out that in the course of 50 years of the most intensive trade between Assur and Kanesh about 100,000 bales of canvas and 80 tonnes of tin were transported. This amount of tin was enough to produce 2,000 tonnes of bronze, taking the average content of tin in bronze to be 10-11 per cent [Mühl 1985: 279; Reiter 1997: 289]. Admittedly, the use of wagons in caravans could have slowed down the journey but the savings were very clear. It follows from the texts that under normal conditions a one-way journey took about six weeks to complete, which might not be long enough for a caravan using wagons [Dereksen 1986: 61-67; Astour 1995: 1408-1409; Veenhof 1995: 864].

A broader use of wagons both in the south and north is borne out by the Old Babylonian and Elamite texts which until the end of the Bronze Age supply many examples of renting wagons and comments concerning such vehicles (Riftin 113, MDP 10 103, MDP 22 131). And so, a text from Ur tells about the requesting of 30 transport wagons (UET V 24). Also, in the Nuzi archives we find an archival note
which mentions 16 tablets concerning wagons of this type (eriqum) (PBS 2/2 140, RA 36 170, CAD E: 296). As can be seen from excavations, individual countries had their characteristic wagons, which is confirmed, as it seems, by a letter from Mari in which we read about requesting a ‘Mari type’ wagon (ARM 4 12, CAD E: 296). In turn, the use of wagons for transport in the south is evidenced by the provisions of the Laws of Hammurabi and Laws of Eshnunna that set rates for the renting of vehicles with draught animals (LH para. 271 & 272, LE para. 3). The rates were very high: in Babylonia it cost 180 litres of grain to rent a wagon with oxen and a driver per day and 40 litres to rent a wagon only. The Laws of Eshnunna provided for a slightly smaller charge for the renting of a wagon with oxen and a man to handle it of 100 litres of grain [Roth 1997: 131, 217; Gökçek 2006: 188-196].

A lot of information on the use of wagons in the economy, especially in trade, comes from the Mari archives. A letter was found there which mentions a transport of timber on wagons from Qatna to Ekalatum. These must have been particularly sturdy wagons because the load was transported over a distance of 500 km [Charpin 2004: 163-165]. From the times of Zimri-Lim, there are records of the use of wagons during war expeditions, in the first place for carrying siege machines and troops as well [Astour 1995: 1402]. Details concerning capacity and teams of draught animals show that there were two types of transport wagons in use in northern Mesopotamia: heavy ones for the carriage of bulky loads, drawn by oxen, and lighter ones, for the carriage of lighter goods and people, drawn by donkeys. What may be misleading is the fact that both types were referred to as eri(qum) [Astour 1995: 1402, Gökçek 2006: 185]. The Mari texts speak of a quite dense network of land routes, especially in Syria, that joined numerous urban centres of the region. Interestingly enough, the roads in Syria only rarely coincided with the local waterways, hence a dominant role must have been played there by land transport, relying on pack animals and wagons. This is borne out by the finds of several models of such wagons in the region. Topographic studies show that Syria’s communication routes were used in this way until the invasions by the Sea Peoples in the 13/12th century BC, when many local trade centres were destroyed [Astour 1995: 1415].

The most spectacular source providing evidence of the use of wagons in transport and trade in the Orient is terracotta models of wagons published by J. Bollweg in her extensive work Vorderasiatische Wagentypen im Spiegel der Terracotta-plastik bis zur Altbabylonischen Zeit. This is a surprisingly large collection including almost 200 wagon models of which a clear majority were designed for other purposes than economic ones. Their number and variety show that they must have played an important role in the transport of goods, starting from as early as the middle of the 3rd millennium BC. The oldest of those that may have been used for transport are dated to the first half of the 3rd millennium BC. They were found in Tell Chuera and Tell Brak in northern Mesopotamia [Littauer, Crouwel 1979: 19; Bollweg 1999: 29]. These were sturdy vehicles with a side planking and, which is important, a covering
supported on bows. The covering was certainly designed to protect goods against
rain not infrequently encountered on the uplands of northern Mesopotamia, Syria
and Anatolia. The introduction of this improvement indicates a permanent adap-
tation of wagons to land transport already since the middle of the 3rd millennium
BC. From the latter half of this millennium we have a rich collection of wagons in
the so-called Akkadian style. They come from both the east of the region (Nuzi,
Tepe Gawra) and Syria (Tell Bī'ah, Hamah, Gaziantep, Tell el-Hamman), where, as
it has been already observed, the course of communication routes made traders use
pack animals and wagons [Bollweg 1999: Fig. 122 – Tell Bī'ah, 124 – Hamah, 125
– Terqa, 126 – Tepe Gawra, 133 – Tell el-Hamman]. Also, from the north, come
more rare models of wagons designed for religious purposes, which testifies to the
wide use of the invention [Bollweg 1999: 42-43, 141-144 and Figs. 156, 161, 165
and others]. Syrian and northern Mesopotamian wagons are presented by Bollweg
in Figs. 94 (Tell Mašin), 95, 122 (Tell Bī'ah), 124 (Hamah), 126 (Tepe Gawra), 130
(Gaziantep?), 133 (Tell al-Hamman?), 134 (Syria), 135 (Syria), 136 (Syria).

Highly interesting observations on the way merchants travelled in the Old Ba-
belonian period are supplied by few itineraries dated to this period. The texts were
published by A. Goetze [Goetze 1953] and W.W. Hallo [Hallo 1964]. There, we
can find a brief description of the routes covered by merchants over long distances. The best known of them is a short description of a journey from Larsa to Emar. According to the itinerary, travelling to their destination, the merchants chose to visit Asyria and the Khabur triangle, making the journey considerably longer. Consequently, they first travelled on ships to the Diyala Valley and continued along the middle Tigris River as far as Assur and Ekallatum, where they turned west. The next centres visited by the merchants were Aquem in Djebel Sinjar, Shubat-Enlil and the cities of the Khabur triangle. There they visited Urkesh and Ashnakum, where the route from the east to the west crossed the north-south route [Klengel 1979: 104; Astour 1995: 1414; Stol 2004: 889-891]. Travelling further west, the Larsa merchants reached Harran where they turned south on the Balikh to reach Tutul and moving along the Euphrates, they reached their destination [Astour 1995: 1410-1414]. It is hard to tell what the reason was for taking such a roundabout way if one remembers that from Larsa to Emar there ran a direct north-western route. Most probably, likewise Assyrian merchants, the traders from Larsa visited more attractive economic centres to buy more goods. Possibly, they traded them on their way to raise their profits. On the other hand, it is possible that the shortest way from Larsa to Emar, along the Euphrates, was simply too dangerous for political reasons [Leemans 1968: 212]. In sum, their round trip took slightly over half a year. The text itself seems to bear out Leemans's thesis on the Old Assyrian trade, holding that on successive legs of their journey, Old Babylonian merchants used different means of transport. Among them were boats and donkeys, and, possibly, in Subartu wagons were used as this scholar suggests that this type of transport could have existed between Assur and Shubat-Enlil during the reign of Shamshi-Adad I [Leemans 1960: 134].

Another interesting itinerary dating back to the late 18th century BC is a brief report on the expedition of the king of Mari to Ugarit. It was a diplomatic and business trip in which merchants from Mari, and perhaps from Babylon and Elam as well, participated or at least goods from these two countries were transported [Muhly 1985: 281-283]. Interestingly enough, the trip began in the Khabur triangle and continued west, too, across the upper Balikh River and via the cities of Emar and Halab to reach its destination where merchants from Cyprus and Crete were encountered. The archive of Zimri-Lim from the 18th century BC shows a very broad economic horizon of the kingdom of Mari. Contemporaneous texts mention in different contexts countries and cities from Dilmun (Bahrain) in the south, Susa in the east, Hattusha in the north and Crete in the west [Klengel 1979: 76-80]. Besides, the contacts of Crete and Cyprus with the Levant are documented already in the latter half of the 3rd millennium BC [Knappett et al. 2005: 47; Webb et al. 2006: 282]. Although the texts do not mention this, the king of Mari's expedition must have used many wagons and pack animals because the monarch, according to custom, travelled with his wives and part of the court. Obviously, in such a case
wagons were necessary. Shamshi-Adad I's expedition in the direction of Qatna in southern Syria must have looked alike as he travelled to fetch a local king's daughter who was to marry his son. Also in this case, wagons must have been necessarily used. Although Shamshi-Adad himself travelled only as far as Terqa on the middle Euphrates where he was to wait for the arrival of his prospective daughter-in-law [Charpin 2004: 163-165].

One could expect that wagons becoming a more popular means of transport should bring about the adaptation of roads to the use by such vehicles. In principle, nothing of this kind can be observed except for one case, known as the 'wagon road' mentioned in the texts from Nuzi [Leemans 1960: 134; Astour 1995: 1403]. The city was located in the foothills of the Zagros Mountains and was a hub of routes from Iran to northern and western Mesopotamia, Syria and Anatolia. In addition, the area was crossed by the roads from the south to the north of Mesopotamia. Hence, it is possible that the commercial traffic there was so heavy as to make the construction of roads a sheer necessity. In Leemans's opinion, similar roads may have existed between Assur and Shubat Enlil in the reign of Shamshi-Adad and between the cities of the south and north, located close to one another, such as Assur and Ekallate, Babylon and Sippar, etc. [Leemans 1960: 118]. This may be also suggested by references to the renting of transport wagons in the texts from Elam, which is
an upland and mountainous country. From this area come models of as many as 13 wagons [Bollweg 1999: Figs. 19, 22, 24, 29, 42, 112, 127, 148, 149, 152, 153, 163] and although none of them was classified as a transport wagon, the existence of a road adapted to vehicular traffic seems to have been necessary. Likewise, texts from Kanesh suggest the existence of such a road between Kanesh and Purushanda, which is mentioned the most frequently as a destination of expeditions setting out from Kanesh into the interior of Anatolia [Dercksen 1996: 64]. The existence of permanent highways fitted even with some kind of traffic signs is suggested by literary works which mention enemies who remove signs to throw the country into chaos [Astour 1995: 1401].

As regards transport in Anatolia itself, its rivers are navigable only to a small extent and, therefore, merchants must have commonly used donkeys and other means of transport. The oldest wagon in Anatolia proper was found in Alaca Höyük, north-east of Hattusha, and was dated to the last phase of the Early Bronze Age (24th/23rd century BC). As it has already been said these were the times when Anatolian cities flourished and their trade network covered the whole of Asia Minor and neighbouring countries [Sahoglu 2005: 341-344]. The emergence of wagons in Anatolia could have been a result of Syrian influences, which were particularly strong at that time [Lawecka 2006: 177-178]. One can wonder whether, owing to the Anatolian trade network covering also the Transcaucasia and Thrace, the wagon as a very important improvement in trade, was borrowed for use in transport in these regions as well as in the Balkans or Ukraine. Perhaps, as evidence of this type of transfer of technological or rather civilization achievements from the Near East to Europe could be considered Northern Pontic four-wheel wagons documented by iconographic representations and remains, dated also to the late 3rd millennium BC [Koško, Szymt 2007]. As far as Anatolia is concerned, the wagon was since then a permanent element of economic and public life in this area, which is evidenced by the representations of wagons in ritual scenes [Littauer, Crouwel 1979: Figs. 38, 57, 58; Bollweg 1999: 19, 24-25, 28]. The Kanesh texts illustrate well the significance of wagons for the comparative study of different regions because they describe the borderland of three important countries of the Orient: Anatolia, northern Mesopotamia and Syria. Hence they suggest that the situation was shared by all three of them. The use of still another means of transport in Anatolia is suggested by Dercksen who claims that merchants from Kanesh sometimes hired large groups of porters to send their wares to other cities. It seems, however, that in the long run it was not a good solution as hiring porters was rather expensive [Dercksen 1996: 61-63].

The Amarna letters show that in the latter half of the 2nd millennium BC, the most popular means of transport, especially of envoys visiting the royal courts of the Orient, became the chariot, playing also a very important role on the battlefields of those times [Stillman, Tallis 1984: 136-148]. Then, missions set out for foreign
countries in several such vehicles, most often five, and this must have been the reason for keeping roads in good order at least close to capitals or other important places of a country. The letters often mention gifts sent for the other party; among the most valuable objects chariots are listed regularly, with their different categories and horses to draw them being sometimes given as well. In letter no. XV/XVI, a reference is made to a royal chariot, of a better quality, and two chariots not meant for the king, of a poorer quality [Moran 1992: 2, 7, 21-23, 37-41]. Chariots and teams of horses as royal gifts for allied rulers are mentioned in e.g. Amarna I, III (material for ten chariots and horses for ten teams), XI (a request for chariots from Egypt), etc. We can surmise that next to light chariots, in which envoys travelled, expeditions were equipped in light wagons to carry gifts. Sometimes, a mission included members of a royal family, in particular daughters about to be given in marriage. Then, such a mission could have up to several thousand people. On such occasions, a large number of vehicles must have been absolutely necessary [Moran 1992: 21-22, EA 11]. Finally, to a great significance and popularity of chariots in the then Near East testifies a greeting very often used in letters found in the archives. Among people and institutions who are wished happiness chariots are regularly mentioned: "All is well with me. May you, your household, your wives, your sons, your country, your chariots, your horses, your officers do very well" [Moran 1992: Introduction: 32]. Although the Amarna period ends in the 13th century BC, the situation was undeniably true for international relations in the Orient until the end of the Bronze Age in the 13th century BC.

4. CONCLUSIONS

It follows from the above analysis that from the dawn of history in the Near East through successive millennia the region witnessed continuous and intensive development of trade routes and commercial exchange. The development continued despite recurrent political upheavals and collapse of successive, ever more developed statehood structures, extending in stages to more and more distant lands. The spreading of trade was accompanied by ever more complex means of transport. The course of communication routes adjusted to the development of human societies, which needed specific raw materials and goods to be found in other countries. The intensity of trade, in turn, was proportional to the rate of development of individual cities and states. As a rule, the routes led from mountainous regions to lowlands where urban civilizations flourished. In the Near East this resulted in the east-west
or north-south arrangement of the road network. Also, routes often followed river valleys because it was there that important cities were located.

Among the means of transport, boats and pack animals dominated. They had been used since the beginning of permanent settlement in western Asia. Being the most advanced invention in the Near East trade, the transport wagon, when appeared in Iran, Mesopotamia and Anatolia already in the middle of the 3rd millennium BC, was an important breakthrough which showed that trade and communication were more intensive than appeared from written records. The two kinds of sources culminated in the early 2nd millennium BC to render a picture known as the Old Assyrian trade. Traditionally, it was viewed as an exceptional development but perhaps it should be treated as typical of the times and region. Undeniably, it shows how far commercial exchange advanced and how well trade was organized in the first half of the 2nd millennium BC. The extensive commercial exchange among different countries of the Orient resulted in the spreading of other inventions and novelties related to the economic and spiritual advancement of the region. It can be safely claimed that the spreading of writing in successive countries outside Mesopotamia was a side effect of the growth in commercial exchange.

Finally, it must be stressed that it is not known where the limits of the system of trade and routes, which developed in western Asia, were. What we know though is that it operated in the Orient, whence numerous written records come, but it is possible that it extended to other regions. We know that it covered parts of Iran and possibly the shores of the Black Sea. The strong positions of Zalpa and Wilusa (Troy), and numerous references to the kingdom of Ahhiyawa encountered in Hittite texts suggest that they were important points of contact between the civilizations of the Orient with the cultures of prehistoric Europe. Staying in close contact with the Hittite kingdom, such centres and Ahhiyawa could have contributed to the transfer of civilization achievements of the Orient in the direction of the Balkans and Ukraine. This is highly probable, although poorly documented as yet. Therefore, one can expect that next excavation seasons on the Black Sea will show the scope and consequences of such contacts in ever greater detail.

Translated by Piotr Żebrowski
### ABBREVIATIONS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Abbreviation</th>
<th>Description</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>AA</td>
<td>Archäologischer Anzeiger. Berlin</td>
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<tr>
<td>ActaArch</td>
<td>Acta Archaeologica. Copenhagen</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ActaArchHung</td>
<td>Acta Archeologica Academiae Scientiarum Hungaricae. Budapest</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AAS</td>
<td>Anatolian Archaeological Studies. Tokio</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AJA</td>
<td>American Journal of Archaeology. New York</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AoF</td>
<td>Altorientalische Forschungen. Berlin</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AnSt</td>
<td>Anatolian Studies. London</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>APŚ</td>
<td>Archeologia Polski Środkowowschodniej. Lublin</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AVL</td>
<td>Arkheologia Vostochno-Europeiskoi. Lesostepi. Voronezh</td>
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<tr>
<td>BICS</td>
<td>Bulletin of the Institute of Classical Studies of the University of London. London</td>
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<tr>
<td>BPS</td>
<td>Baltic-Pontic Studies. Poznań</td>
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<tr>
<td>BSA</td>
<td>The Annual of the British School at Athens. London</td>
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<tr>
<td>JBS</td>
<td>Journal of Baltic Studies. Abingdon</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>JCH</td>
<td>Journal of Cultural Heritage. Amsterdam</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>JCS</td>
<td>Journal of Cuneiform Studies. Chicago</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>JESHO</td>
<td>Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient. Leiden</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>JRGZM</td>
<td>Jahrbuch der Römisch-Germanischen Zentralmuseums Mainz. Mayence</td>
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<tr>
<td>KSIA</td>
<td>Kratkiye soobscheniya Instituta Arkheologii. Moskva</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>KSHIMK</td>
<td>Kratkiye soobscheniya Instituta Materialnaya Kultury. Moskva</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MIA</td>
<td>Materialy i issledovaniya po Arkheologii SSSR. Moskva-Leiningrad</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NA IA NANU</td>
<td>Nauchnyi Arkhiv Instytuta Arkheologii Natsionalnoy Akademii Nauk Ukrainy. Kiev</td>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Page</th>
<th>For</th>
<th>Read</th>
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<td>12</td>
<td>Fig. 3. ‘The router of the Argonauts’ journey according to S. Czarnowski [Czarnowski 1937/1956 – visualization by the present authors]</td>
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<td>153</td>
<td>Kośko, Szymt 2007</td>
<td>Marciniak 2004</td>
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<td>526</td>
<td>Kośko A., Szymt M.</td>
<td>Kośko A., Szymt M.</td>
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<td>Kośko A. Szymt M. (Eds.)</td>
<td>Marciniak A.</td>
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