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TRANSPORT FACTOR IN THE ERA OF ANCIENT CIVILIZATIONS

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ABSTRACT

Article is devoted to the socio-economic role of transport in the era of ancient civilizations (IV millennium BC – early I millennium BC).

Transition to settled life and producing economy in the so-called «Neolithic revolution» made exchange a prerequisite of human life and activity, and its further expansion caused a gradual transition of transport to an independent type of activity, the development of means of communication and transport facilities.

Intensive exchange is not possible without regular reliable transport and transport as a special kind of activity can exist only in a fairly heavy traffic of goods and people.

ENGLISH SUMMARY

Background.

Development of transport and exchange had far-reaching consequences in the form of an increasingly wide geographical spread of civilization and the creation of «the extended order of human cooperation.»

While in the East only the rudiments of such an order were forming due to the development of transport and trade, in the Greek and the Roman states was implemented its first version – antique market society.

Objective. *Description and study of different stages of human society development serve to prove author's opinion.*

Methods. *The author uses historical analysis based on the study of numerous oeuvres of historians.*

Results. *First, the transport activity did not exist as such. For primitive hunters movement was essential, not isolated element of existence, and exchange did not play a determining role in people's lives. Transition to settled life and producing economy in the so-called «Neolithic revolution» made exchange a prerequisite of life and human activity. Development of exchange led to appearance of means of communication and vehicles,*

and trade in ancient times led to the emergence of cities.

The emergence of the oldest cities in Western Asia was a milestone in motion to ancient civilizations. Formed in the Middle East, systems of goods exchange through caravan tracks and waterways were subsequently used by the ancient empires – Egyptian, Hittite, Assyrian, Babylonian and Persian to meet resource requirements. At the same time the scope of these pathways «extended far beyond the most distant political boundaries.»

Sumerian civilization originated in the lower course of the Tigris and Euphrates (Lower Mesopotamia) in the IV millennium BC. Cities emerging along the riverbanks became at the same time centers of crossing overland routes. Specialization and exchange in Mesopotamia made possible the unprecedented growth of population density and the formation of urban civilization with large amount of excess product.

The author emphasizes that the emergence and development of ancient civilizations has become firmly associated with the dominance of state. In ancient civilizations, exchange was often carried out on behalf of the state by its representatives. As a result, in ancient times appeared stable trade relations, which «extended to many hundreds of miles».

At the end of the IV millennium BC appeared the ancient Egyptian civilization, the hallmark of which was the unification of the country under one state at an early stage – about 3000 BC. Significant role in this process was played by the transport factor. Controlling navigation on the Nile, Egyptian pharaoh thus controlled the main movement of goods and people, provided effective domination over all territory.

The third ancient civilization was the civilization in the Indus Valley, which existed during the III – the first half of the II millennium BC and was ruined, probably due to the invasion of barbarian tribes. However, the archaeological data prove existence of trade contacts





of ancient Indian civilization with the Persian Gulf region, Mesopotamia, and perhaps with Egypt.

Thus, ancient civilizations in the III millennium BC due to the availability of water and overland routes performed the exchange of goods, as well as, obviously, knowledge with each other and their surrounding nations with the lower level of development.

This exchange was a necessary condition for economic existence and development of ancient civilizations, contributed to their mutual cultural enrichment, and also drew into the orbit of civilization new nations.

II.

In the II millennium BC extension of civilizations from the oldest centers to the Middle East formed a single cultural space that united Mesopotamia, Egypt, Syria and Palestine, Western Asia and the adjoining lands.

Trade routes extended far beyond the «civilized world». For example, so-called «amber» trade route crossed the whole Europe from north to south, linking the coasts of the North Sea and Baltic Sea to the Eastern Mediterranean.

In the middle of the second millennium BC a rise of international and intercontinental trade was reached. In this period, appeared a new character of exchange: the products were specifically made for exchange, i. e. as goods. At the same time the movement of goods was organized through chains of intermediaries or specially organized caravans and ships.

Thus the prerequisites for overcoming of autonomous development of individual nations and establishing a global system of interconnected and integrating civilizations were created.

The second millennium BC is prosperity of seafaring. The Minoan civilization was the first «sea» civilization in the Mediterranean, which was prosperous due to supremacy at sea (the so-called «Thalassocracy») and sea trade. There is a reason to believe that in this period the Cretans not only controlled the maritime trade in the Mediterranean, but also went beyond it, into the waters of the Atlantic. Thalassocracy apparently ensured the freedom of navigation and reliable delivery of goods, expanded opportunities for personal choices, business decisions and initiatives.

Culture of Crete had a significant impact on the lives of the tribes of continent Greece, contributed to their faster development. For example, in Mykonos combination of overland and sea routes made it possible to carry out an intensive economic exchange stimulated the development and distribution of Mycenaean culture.

After the destruction of the Minoan civilization intensive shipping with Phoenicians and then the Greeks restored only to I millennium BC. During sea expeditions Phoenicians not only traded, but also built new cities – colonies that became centers of advanced civilization and exchange.

As a Phoenician, so then Greek colonization promoted activation of the population of adjacent territories, allowing them to be included in international economic cooperation.

In the East, primarily handicraft production was of commercial nature, and the main source of agricultural products were rent and taxes, but at the same time in Greece there was the commercialization of agriculture.

Thus, if in the Middle East with the development of transport and trade only the rudiments of «extended order of human cooperation» were formed, its first version – antique market society was implemented in Greece.

III.

If the Mediterranean in the I millennium BC was the zone of dynamic development of navigation, especially Phoenician and Greek, in the waters of the Middle East around Arabia such a development was not observed. There was rather stagnation or even crisis. This is due to the appearance of camel caravans, allowed to cross the desert with less difficulty than along the long coastline of the Arabian Peninsula. Apparently, this was the first success of land transport in competition with the sea one.

At that period appeared prototypes of intermodal traffic, which combined the advantages of marine and caravan transportation.

The first millennium BC was time of overland routes development in the East. In Assyrian and then – Persian civilizations the progress of overland transport was associated with the implementation of the state's military-strategic tasks, but always contributed to the growth of goods movement.

Further development of means of communication had not only the military-strategic, but also economic character. For example, in the Persian Empire, which united almost all the Ancient East, was created a unique road network. Much attention should be paid also to Indian and Chinese civilizations. Its role in the development of the economy and culture of India played navigation on the Ganges and the Indus – the main river arteries of the country. Overland transport also developed, in particular the caravan conductors turned into a special professional group.

And in China after 500 BC particular importance acquired network of canals that allowed transporting large volumes of goods over long distances relatively cheap. Later, a unified system of roads was created, that was especially effective in combination with the system of channels: channels were preferred for slower transportation of heavy goods, and roads – for fast transportation of goods and people. Thus the foundations of a unified national transport system were laid, which allowed combining the advantages of different types of transport.

In the I millennium BC land communications obtained not just international, but and transcontinental character. Conquests of Alexander the Great and the formation of huge Hellenistic world at the end of IV–\$II BC led to an unprecedented development of transcontinental communications between Europe, North Africa and Asia.

In the Roman state (the successor to the Hellenistic world in the Mediterranean) a powerful road network was created, which had primarily military-strategic importance, but, of course, facilitated trade and travel.

Simultaneously seafaring was developing. But if the roads were built and maintained by the state, the shipping was sphere for private initiative, private equity and implementation of private business interests.

As for Rome itself, its existence literally depended on the stability of transport communications to ensure timely supply of food in the «Eternal City» as a region of Italy, and from the overseas provinces, including the main granary of the Roman Empire – Egypt.

At the turn of I BC and I AD the Great Silk Road gained special significance, which, in fact, connected the whole continent. An alternative road, that developed later, was located further north, across the open spaces of the heaths.

Thus, about two thousand years ago prototypes of trans-Eurasian transport corridors were formed, the geographical configuration of which, despite all the changes, in general survived to the present day.

In I. BC–\$5 AD actively developed sea trans-Eurasian communications.

The collapse of ancient civilizations in the I millennium AD due to a combination of internal factors and the barbarian invasions led to the decline of transport communications and trade. Movement of goods and people dropped dramatically, and many routes were interrupted.

Conclusions. Repeatability of historical development has such a character that once

reached achievements, even if lost for some time, on the new stage of development are reached again, and then transcended. Broken communications were restored to pre-existing and new routes over a thousand years, and in the Age of Discovery and the subsequent industrial revolution unprecedented development of transport provided closing not only Eurasia, but the whole globe.

The roots of this great process go back into centuries, when ancient shipbuilders and caravanners, moving farther and farther from home, year after year were forming means of communication network, which eventually united the whole world.

Keywords: history, means of communication, ancient civilization, transport, exchange, trade, specialization, development.

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