

## THE IMPORTANCE AND ROLE OF THE GREAT SILK ROAD IN HISTORY

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**Abstract:** The current article aims at providing general information about the Great Silk Road and its history. The role of the Great Silk Road in developing international relationships between the countries of the east and west as well as its importance in Central Asian countries is shown in the article by examples.

**Key Words:** Traders, missionaries, pilgrims, spiritual exchange, distribution, caravan routes, long journey, merchants, new millennium, expedition

The Great Silk Road, which connected North and South, East and West, played an important role in lives of many nations. For ten centuries, from the second B.C. to the eighth A.D., Central Asia was linked by conquest and commerce with the East. Substantial caravans passed between China and Central Asia, from the East to Roman Empire, to the West. Commercial activity along the Silk Road fluctuated according to the economic and political condition of the empires which it served. Caravans stuffed with exotic cloth, eastern goods, and spices followed these routes. Hence, the various centers of national crafts, art schools, palaces, mausoleums, madrassahs were also created. Traders, missionaries and pilgrims traveled together on those routes bringing new religions, customs, and goods such as glass, porcelain, soap, gunpowder, and most important different cultures. They collected medicinal herbs, created the methods of curing diseases and investigated stars. In many ways for more than thousand years, the Great Silk Road linked many countries by peaceful activities such as trade, culture and spiritual exchange that is unique to the whole mankind.

Many people assume that Silk Road first served as a route for exporting Chinese silk to Western countries, however many findings show that different goods produced in Rome, Byzantium, India, Iran, Arab Caliphate, later Russia and European countries were imported to China. Long list of exotic goods comprised: frankincense and myrrh, jasmine and amber, cardamom and nutmeg, ginseng and bile of a python, carpets and fabrics, dyes and minerals, diamonds, jade, amber, corals, ivory and "fish tusks", gold and silver bullions, fur and coins, bows, arrows, swords and spears. Highly pedigreed species of Fergana horses, Arab and Nissyan horses, camels and elephants, rhinoceros and lions, cheetahs and gazelles, hawks and falcons, peacocks, parrots and ostriches passed the routes of Silk Road to be sold for higher prices. Cultivated crops, such as grapes, peaches, melons, vegetables as well as spices and sugar enhanced their geographic distribution with the help of merchants. Aside from movement of goods and animal trade, Silk Road served as a channel for dissemination of fashion and artistic styles that became widespread once grounded in a new ethno-cultural environment.

Uzbekistan is a country which is in the heart of the Silk Road. In ancient days important caravan routes from China to Europe crossed through Uzbekistan, and several large cities grew up, such as Bukhara, Samarkand, Tashkent, Termez, the location of Termez on geographically advantageous Amu Darya river bank, the place where the river can be crossed by wading and where caravan routes crossed each other - made it one of the biggest cultural and political centers in Central Asia, to be more correct Bactria Toharistan. Specially constructed caravan routes were a link between cities even in ancient ages before the Bronze Age. So, in 6-4 BC there was a Shah's road' running though the Akhemenid's kingdom. Before that the interest of Middle East to Badakhshan's azure was trafficked to Mesopotamia and Egypt to decorate palaces and mosques, they were also used for production of jewelry for Madrid and Mashrik women in the Middle Ages, instead of going to China and the East by sea, as they do today, traders made long journey of many months overland, and the routes they went by had lovely names, such as the Great Silk Road or the Golden Road. The English writer J.E.Flecker wrote a play titled the "Goiden Journey to Samarkand". [1]

The cities along these routes became rich. The Great Silk Road, which was opened later, connected East and West. Initially it was called the East Meridian Road, its current name originated late in 1870 as a result of researches made by German scientist Ferdinand Fon Riikhtgofen. As it turned out, the Great Silk Road had its beginning from the ancient centre of China Seana, then it crossed Landja and then to Dunnhua

and divided into two parts. The south-east direction through Taklamakan desert went to Hutang, then to Yorkent, then through Pamir and Bahon to the first city of Bactria Zariastr (Balh). At this place the road was again divided: the western part run through Termez, Derbent and Nautak to Samarkand. Both Mediterranean ports acted as a junction between East and West. This East-West trail transplanted culture, customs and religions from one center to the next, and vise-versa. [2]

According to historical facts, there were some State Customs along the Great Silk Road. Trade road between Sogdiana and Bactria-Toharistan connecting two ancient regions of the Middle Asia was the most active segment of the Great Silk Road. In all likeness, Sogdiana merchants traveled by this road as far as Far East and Vietnam and Bactrian-Toharistan monks familiarized local people with Buddhist and Manikh religions. This road existed long before the Great Silk Road and was divided three ways. The western branch led to a steppe region and coincided with current railroad Kashkadarya and Turkmenistan.

There were many karavan-sarais and sardoba. The central part of the road was considered the closest and the most effortless. It ran through Iran Gates, between two mountain ridges. Today it is a 90-km stretch between Shahrisabz and Akrabad. There were Tales from ancient sources that Alexander Makedonsky's legion "after three-day march on mountain roads came to the canyon" This was a description of the very same road tough Kaltaminar Pass and Darvozakam Gorge, down the flow of Uradatya river, leading to Akrabad. And, finally, the main road leading to Balkh also went through Iran Gates Zagkhona Pass, modern town Sayrod, down the flow of Sherabad River and through Sherabad Smaller branches of this road led to modern kishlaks Angor, Karasuv and Termez.

There were many more secondary roads to other settlements and grazing lands. According to archeological research the road was used extensively since I century of the new millennium, playing an important role in trading and cultural exchanges between the cities Tavka Fortress, the ruins of which still could be found along the Great Silk Road (in the gorge of Sarakamish Ridge, on the left bank of the Sherabad River) was an important check-up point. It served as the Customs. Various written sources mentioned numerous locations of the kind, situated between Termez and the Iron Gates. [3]

To sum up, The Great Silk Road played an extremely great role in the development of economic, cultural and spiritual relationships between the nations of Europe and eastern countries. It was really important way crossing many countries of Asia and Europe. We should continue to research the history of the Great Silk Road and its importance between east and west.

In 1991 caravan of international expedition – UNESCO "The Great Silk Road" of 135 members from USA, England, Germany, Japan, Turkey, Iran, China, Poland, Switzerland, Korea, Mongolia, Afghanistan, Pakistan, Israel, Philippine made a trip studying the root monuments along the way, holding conferences. A special long-term program on reviving the historical heritage was put together with UNESCO. [4] This was one good example of this research and by this way we can save our historical heritage for our future generations.

As archeological findings show, trade routes coming from Europe to Asia and vice-or-versa crossed Middle age Central Asia: Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan and other countries in different places: they went through steppes, overcoming mountains, and going down to fertile valleys. The Great Silk Road, remaining as a main trade artery for many countries and people was at the same time the road of cooperation, mutual interpenetration and enrichment of different cultures. It is logical to conclude that the Great Silk Road is a phenomenon of human civilization.

## References

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