

THE SILK ROAD - ROAD OF DIALOGUE: THE PAST AND THE PRESENT

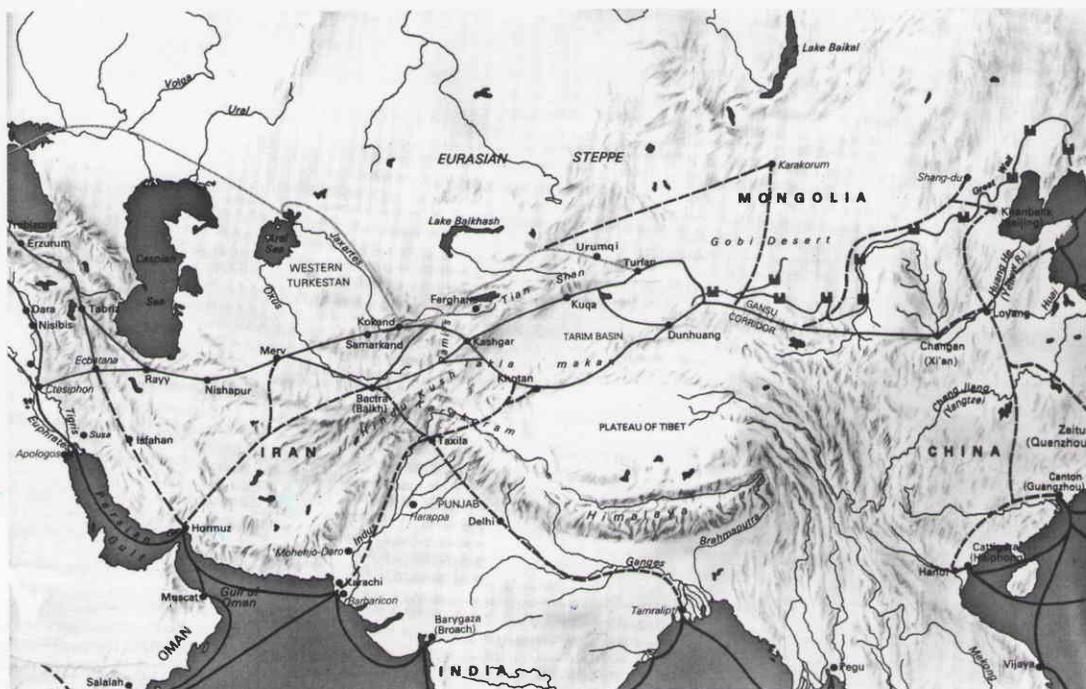
The world science's interest in the study of the Silk Road is, in its way, countdown, a glance deep into centuries; an attempt to retrace landmarks of history and "change of generations"... The International Project "The Silk Road - Road of Dialogue" was approved in 1987 at the 24th session of the UNESCO General Conference.

The Silk Road is a system of caravan roads that in the ancient times and the Middle Ages traversed Eurasia from the Mediterranean to China and did much to foster the establishment and development of trade and cultural relations between peoples and states involved. The implementation of the Project is expected to answer a question: how the mankind's maiden peace contacts between peoples of the East and the West were realized. Besides, the study aims to back the collaboration, both scientific and cultural, between scholars that had once been involved in the ancient route sphere of influence. It was UNESCO Director-General Federico Mayor who gave an all-embracing appraisal to researchers' mission: "The Silk Road that traversed steppes, seas and deserts provided every to establish contacts and dialogue, conduce to the mutual enrichment of outstanding civilizations. The objective of the complex research of the Silk Road is to make peoples realize the necessity of resuming the dialogue, seize the historical opportunity of develop mutual understanding, expand contacts and mutually enrich civilizations within the Silk Road framework".

In 1988, the UNESCO launched a project "Integral Study of the Silk Roads – Roads of Dialogue" as a part of the United Nations World Decade of Cultural Development. The purpose was to throw light on complex cultural interactions arising from contacts between the East and the West; to assist in shaping many-sided and rich cultural heritage of Eurasia. Five international scientific expeditions under the UNESCO aegis were carried out:

- Desert route from Xian to Kashgar (July-August 1990);
- Sea route from Venice to Osaka (October 1990 – March 1991);
- Steppe route in the Central Asia (April-June 1991);
- Nomadic route in Mongolia (July-August 1992);
- Buddhist route in Nepal (September 1995).

Historically, geographically and culturologically, the Silk Road is known to have become a subject of study as far back as in the second half of the 19 century. Greatly contributing to the subject were West European, Russian and Japanese scholars. In 1877, a classical scientific work "China" by German scholar von Richthofen presented the Silk Road as a system of routes that connected various parts of the vast Eurasian mainland. Later on, a term "Silk Road" became firmly established. Bibliography of scientific and popular-science works about the Silk Road numbers thousands of titles, including monographs; collected works; albums; booklets and articles. They provide the history of the Silk Road; description of main and subsidiary routes; ethnic composition of population; description of towns; enumeration of goods; architecture and



The Silk and Spice Routes

art; music and epos; religion. Over the past two decades, scientific and public interest in the history of transcontinental road has visibly increased.

It should be noted that international scientific conferences and seminars were held within the framework of the Project. These include: "Formation and Development of Silk Road Routes in the Central Asia: the Ancient and Medieval Periods" (Samarkand, October 1990); "Interaction of Nomadic and Settled Cultures on the Silk Road" (Alma-Ata, 15-16 June, 1992); "Epos of the States along the Silk Road" (Turku, Finland, 3-7 June, 1993); "Languages and Written Languages along the Silk Road" (Cyprus, 30 September – 1 October, 1994); "Revitalization of the Silk Road: Development of Cultural Tourism and Protection of Cultural Heritage in Uzbekistan" (Bukhara, 21-22 February, 1996).

Of interest is the fact that special research institutions were set up in some countries of the East (India, China, Sri Lanka) to study the Silk Road: Institute of Hirayama in Kamakura (Japan) issuing a yearbook "Archaeology and Art of the Silk Road"; International Institute for Central Asian Studies in Samarkand (IICAS); International Institute for Study of Nomadic Civilizations in Ulan-Bator.

An emphasis has to be laid on the publication of UNESCO works on universal and regional history. A special international scientific committee for the "History of civilizations of the Central Asia" has issued 6 volumes, the 4th of which appeared in two books. The history of civilizations deals with a vast expanse from the Caspian Sea to the Chinese borders. It was location of the region in the center of the Asian continent that made it the heart of great migration of peoples, dissemination of religions and ideas, culture and art, strengthening of original unity of the region. Nevertheless, reliable sources on the life and culture of the reviewed period remain to be very scanty. The UNESCO publications proved to be the quintessence of long-term explorations of archaeologists, orientalists, philosophers and culturologists and thus gave weight to the region's

potential, its ability to preserve centuries-long identity and take part in adopting geopolitical decisions.

In addition to scientific and cultural programs, transport and economic projects are underway to revive the Silk Road. Thus, the great transcontinental railway is intended to connect countries of Europe with the Far East. In May 1997, a section Meshed-Serahs was over to enable the countries of the Central Asia to get an access to the Persian



The Great Wall of China

Gulf, and the countries of Europe – to the Central Asia. The Silk Road in its “railway” version from the Atlantic to the Pacific Oceans is going to be revived. In 2009, construction of a highway Western China – Western Europe via Kazakhstan and the Russian Federation started.

Besides, it was interest caused by the project “Silk Road” that made it possible to put the whole or a part of the Project on the World Heritage List. In particular, several expert seminars were carried on in the Central Asia China. In November 2005, participants of the UNESCO “Regional seminar on periodical reportinf within the framework of the Convention on the World Cultural and Natural Heritage Protection” adopted a plan of actions to prioritize the serial nomination “China – Central Asian Silk Road”. This concept derived support from a seminar held in Turfan (China, August 2006). Attending the seminar were fifty participants from the Central Asian countries, China and the UNESCO. The China seminar results made it possible to nominate the Silk Road Project. In October 2006, a UNESCO regional seminar on the serial nomination (Samarkand, Uzbekistan) approved a strategy of the nomination of the Silk Road section “China – Central Asia”. The strategy provided for:

1. Elaborating a universal conceptual document on the entire Silk Road to substantiate its world significance. The document will be submitted to the World Heritage Committee.
2. Revising and agreeing preliminary lists of monuments – nominees of the Central Asian countries at a meeting to be held in one of these countries.
3. Agreeing approaches and terms of the first nomination of objects in the Central Asia and China.
4. Drawing up a package of documents to develop “a template” (standard format) for Silk Road nominations.



Chinese court ladies in the silk dress

5. Developing agreed approaches to management and strategy of management.
6. Drawing up a general plan of necessary resources.
7. Preparing a sponsorship application.
8. Identifying coordination between the Central Asian countries and China.

The concept was approved in April 2007 in Dushanbe, (Tajikistan) by five participating countries: Republics of Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan,



Caravan of merchants from the West

Tajikistan, Uzbekistan and the People's Republic of China.

It was universally admitted that the serial transnational nomination of the Silk Road is one of the most promising conceptions to give a correct assessment to the importance of the richest cultural heritage of the Central Asia. This document dealing with Silk Road objects in specific countries notwithstanding, it is, nevertheless, recognized that a network of roads that embraces the very definition

of the Silk Road had traversed borders of, at least, fifteen modern countries on the expanse between China and the Mediterranean. The document is expected to provide a paradigm for subsequent identification and nomination of cultural objects throughout the Silk Road. After the concept will be approved by the World Heritage Committee, it is suggested to nominate, in the first turn, monuments situated in the Central Asia and China; to examine serial monuments westwards, in the Mediterranean, as well as monuments of the Indian subcontinent, including Afghanistan, India and Pakistan. When nominating objects, experts are committed to recognize and respect the cultural diversity, interaction and integration of various cultures. The objects in question are expected to demonstrate mutual exchange and assistance in trade, science and technologies, as well as in art and cultural heritage. The Silk Road nomination has been initiated to urge countries and peoples to recognize common history, cultural interrelations; to propagandize common development of human civilizations to comply with diversity principles. The conception was discussed at international seminars in Xian (November 2007); Xian (May 2008); Almaty (May 2009). The first session of the coordination committee on putting the Silk Road serial nomination on the UNESCO World Heritage list was held in Xian, November 2009.

The Silk Road: History and Routes

Through the instrumentality of its branching network caravan roads, the Silk Road connected the West and the East of Eurasia. Caravan routes crossed China, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan. The roads led to Korea and Japan in the east; Eastern and Western Europe, Russia in the west; India in the south; Near and Middle East in the south-west. These were roads with two-way traffic to comply with achievements of scientific thought, cultural values and religions of the reviewed period. These were effective lines of information dissemination through the mediation of merchants, travelers and diplomats (Zuyev, 1960, p.87-89).

No definite answer has ever existed regarding the date of the Silk Road' putting into service. One can indicate separate sections of the road only that go back to the III-II millenniums BC. Ancient ties had been established thanks to the development of lazurite in the mountains of Badakhshan. The mineral was exported to Iran, Mesopotamia, Anatolia, Egypt and Syria. In the middle of the I millennium BC the Badakhshan lazurite came to China. Along with "the Lazurite route", there existed "The Nephrite route" that connected Eastern Turkestan with China. In the middle of the I millennium BC the so-called "Steppe route" started working; it set in a large

bend of Hwang Ho, traversed the eastern and northern spurs of Altai, steppes of Kazakhstan and Black Sea region reached lands of Greeks and Etruscans.

The Silk Road is believed to start operating as single diplomatic and trade artery. It was Zhang Qian who initiated the idea. In 138 BC, an ambassadorial caravan came out of the Han capital to accompany prince Zhang-Qian sent on a mission to the unknown countries of the West by Emperor Wudi. Thirteen years later, Zhang Qian came back. He reached provinces of modern Afghanistan and was the first to have arrived in the Central Asia directly from internal regions of China. He was followed by caravans with silk to the West; and caravans with goods from the Mediterranean, Near and Middle East and the Central Asia for China [Bichurin, 1950, p.147-168]. However, archaeological explorations in the Central Asia, Kazakhstan, Altai, Siberia and China provided incontestable evidence of spreading the Chinese silk, Iranian carpets on the territory of Eurasia long before the Tsan's mission. A silk horse cloth with Phoenix embroidered on it, and an Iranian carpet discovered in the course of excavations of "royal" burial mounds Pazyryk on Altai are dated to the 5 century BC Contributing to the spreading of precious silk were nomadic and semi-nomadic tribes of Saks and Scythians that helped silk into the Central Asia and Mediterranean, to Europe and India.

Thus, the Silk Road started in Changan, capital of China, to make for a crossing over Hwang Ho, region of Lanchjou and further along the northern spur of Nan Shan to the western outskirts of the Great Wall of China and "Outpost of Jasper Gates". In this place, the road forked to fringe the desert Taklimakan from the north and the south. The northern route crossed oases Hami, Turfan, Shiho and Beshbalyk to a valley of the river Ili; the middle route – from Goachan to Karasharu, Aksu and via a pass Bedel to the shore of Issyk Kul; the southern route – via Dunhuan, Hotan, Garkend and Kashgar to the Central Asia, Bactria, India and the Mediterranean, the so-called "southern road"; the northern route – from Hami and Turfan to Semirechye, south of Kazakhstan, Priaralye, Eastern Europe.

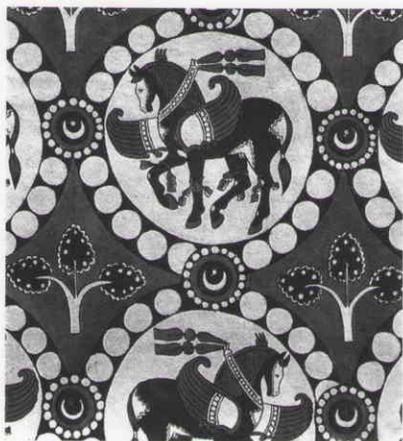
The northern route became particularly brisk in the 6-7 centuries which is explained as being due to the following. First, Turkic kagans were headquartered in Zhetysu – Semirechye to thus control trade routes; second, rich Turkic kagans and their entourage became large consumers of overseas commodities [Bartold, 1963, v.2, p.31]. This route was arterial, so a greater portion of ambassadorial and trade caravans traversed it in the 7-14 centuries.

From Zhetysu and Prijungarye from China, specifically from the western territories (modern Xinjiang), via the Jungar gates the caravans reached the Alakul shore and through piedmonts of Jungar Alatau to the valleys of Leps and Karatala, a pass in Ili, region Kapchagay. Then the road led to Zailiyskiy Alatau and then through KasteK or Kurday pass to the Chuy and Talas valleys, to the towns Suyab, Navaket, Taraz and, finally, to the largest town of Southern Kazakhstan – Ispidjab, or Sayram. From here the road led to Tashkent and further to Samarkand, Bukhara, Merv; to Iran, Afghanistan and India.

Let's come back to one of the starting points on the Kazakhstan section of the Silk Road – town Ispidjab, and then proceed to Europe on the way of Byzantine Ambassador Zemarch to Turkic kagan Dizabul. From Ispidjab the caravan



*Iranian carpet from
Pazyryk burial*



Silk fabric (detail)

road led to Arsubaniket on Arysi, to Otrar-Tarab and further downstream Syr Darya to Priaralye. Otrar was a focal point of many caravan routes. From here, one road led to Shavgar; another to a crossing over Syr Darya to the town Vesidju. The latter was known to be motherland of outstanding scholar of the Orient Abu Nasr al-Farabi. A route to Khorezm and Urgench was laid through Kyzyl Kum, and from there to Prikaspiy, Povolzhye and Europe.

Another section of this route skirted the Aral sea from the north and led to the southern Priuralye to towns and crossings over the river Ural (Jaik); further through Volga steppes to Volga, Don, Black Sea areas, Balkans and Constantinople. One could get to Zhetysu from Almalyk via Horgos; from here to Chuy and Talas valleys, Ispidjab; to shores of Issyk Kul from Kashgar via passes of Tien Shan. This section of the Silk Road was very brisk in the 13-earlier 14 centuries where towns of the Golden Horde sprang up in the lower reaches of Volga. The road traversed Saraychik, Saray-Batu to Kafu, then by sea to Constantinople. Roads went away from the main route of the Silk Way that traversed Southern Kazakhstan and Semirechye, then led to the regions of the Central and Eastern Kazakhstan, to steppe Desht-i Kypchak later known as Sary-Arka, to banks of Irtysh, Altai, Siberia and Mongolia.

Two stages are singled out in the Silk Road operation period. Initial period, or "Proto- Silk Road" is chronologically related to the formation of the first states in the Central Asia and Kazakhstan (Bactria, Khorezm, states of Saks – Zhetysu and Priaralye). The Chinese silk and Iranian carpets are known from excavation materials of the famous "royal" burial mounds of Altai: Pazaryk, Bashadar, Tuekty, Shibe, Katanda, Ulandryk, Uzuktala, Ak-Alah and Berel; sepulchers of Xinjiang: Subashi, Kyzyluyuk, Zathunluk; Semirechye: Issyk; Tuva: Arzhan. Thus, first, or initial stage of the Silk Road is dated to the 6 – first half of the 2 centuries BC Attached to this stage are towns-headquarters and "royal" sepulchers of Saks, Usuns, Hunnu, Savromat and Sarmats, ancient towns of the Central Asia.

The second stage of the Silk Road starts with Zhang Qian's travel in 138 BC and ends with the advent to power of the Ming dynasty in 1405 when a land segment of the Silk Road dilapidated due to China's self-isolation and rapid development of the sea route. Disputable is a date of cessation of the Silk Road. However, unreliability of land routes and the progress retained by the Chinese fleet since the 16 century mean that in the end of the said century the Silk Road as trade and cultural intermedium between the East and the West ceased to exist.

Silk and golden peaches of Samarkand

As has been noted above, the Silk Road initially served for export of Chinese silk to the European countries. It is also known that goods manufactured in Rome, Byzantine, India, Iran, Arab caliphate and later Russia and European countries were imported to China. A list of unusual, exotic goods is large: myrrh and labdanum; jasmine water and ambergris, cardamom and nutmeg, ginseng and bile of python, carpets and clothes, dyestuff and minerals, diamond and jasper, amber and corals, ivory and "fish tusks", gold and silver bars, furs and coins, bows and arrows, swords and spears. Transported over the Silk Road for sale were horses of Fergana,

Arab and Nisiya racers, camels and elephants, rhinoceros and lions, cheetahs and gazelles, hawks and falcons, peacocks, parrots and ostriches. Traders were engaged in selling cultural crops, including grape, peach, melon, vegetables and greens, as well as spice and sugar.

In an introduction to his "Golden Peaches of Samarkand" E.Schefer wrote: "The name of this book – "Golden Peaches of Samarkand" was chosen to resemble golden apples of Hesperidia and concurrently peaches of immortality that the Chinese legend localizes far in the West, as well as "Golden Travel to Samarkand" by J.E. Flacker, and a melody by F. Delew "Golden Road to Samarkand" to the play "Hasan" by Flacker. To set aside these vague associations with myths and music, the golden peaches has existed in reality. Twice in the 7 century, the unusual golden peaches were made a gift and sent to the Chinese court by the Samarkand Kingdom. "They were as large as goose eggs, and as their color looked like gold, they were called "golden peaches". Several young plants with these kingly fruits were brought by ambassadorial caravan via desert of Serindia and cultivated in the court gardens of Chanan. A species of these peaches remains unknown, likewise their taste. Tempting due to their inaccessibility, the golden peaches of Samarkand symbolized all exotic and longer-for, all mysterious and alluring" [Schefer, 1981, p.13-14].

Still, the Chinese silk remained to be major and permanent item that, together with gold, turned into an international currency. Silk as a gift was highly appreciated; kings and ambassadors were lavishly gifted with this product; free lances were rewarded with the silk as salary; state debts were cleared off. Sources cite numerous evidences of this sort. Thus, Shahinshah of Iran Khosrov I Anushirvan received a silk Chinese garment Ushari (together with other gifts) from a Chinese Emperor that depicted a king in crown and adornments. Silk was held in reverence, as was apparent on palace frescoes of the rulers of China, Central Asia and Eastern Turkestan. Silk clothes of nobility were beautified with all the attributes, details and even stitches.

It was natural that silk and a part of goods transported via the Silk Road remained in towns it traversed. Archaeological finds give weight to the fact. When excavating a sepulcher Mardan in Otrar oasis, archaeologists discovered seven Chinese coins "U-shu" going back to the 1-4 centuries indicating to ties between China and Kangyuy. A center of the state was located on Syr Darya, so it was no mere coincidence that Chinese sources refer to the following: "...pending communications with foreign proprietors and in an effort to value their fame in the remote outskirts, the Chinese court did not break off ties with Kangyuy' [Bichurin, 1950, p.186]. Worthy of note are silver jugs from the collection of precious utensils of Semirechye with a cross-shaped stamp: a master of the product sought to claim his work as the Byzantine one. Gold Byzantine solids were in use as foreign currency. Kuzma Indikoplav (6 cenruty) narrates about a dispute between a Byzantine and a Persian merchants on



Iranian gemmas 5-6 centuries

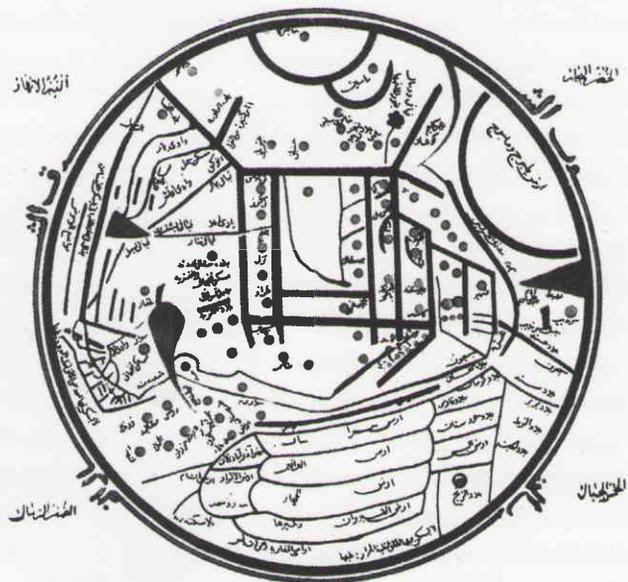
whose ruler was powerful. The Byzantine won after he showed a coin that was used worldwide while the Persian presented a silver coin only. [Mets, 1966, p. 367].

A unique find that matters most for the study of the international trade on the Silk Road is a silver treasure from Otrar. Compositionally, it is of cash and prize nature. Coins collection is unique to include mint-places of Eastern Turkestan towns – Almalyk, Pulad, Emil (Omyl) and Ordu al-Azam; of Crimean, Asian Minor and Azerbaijani towns – Sivas, Konya and Tabriz; of Kazakhstan – Otrar and Jend. The coin collection is believed to date to the second half of the 1260s; the mintage – 1240-60s. Of no less unique is silverware: nameplates of decorative belts with Uygur inscriptions: woven bracelets of Central Asian origin; wicker bracelets manufactured in Povolzhye; belt buckle manufactured by a handicraft workshop in Asia Minor. The treasure contains a sort of “visiting cards” of towns en route of the Silk Road of the Mongolian Empire [Baipakov, Nastich, 1981, p. 20-59]. The Otrar treasure included silver bars in the form of lenses and oval bars. The bars must have been used as money, as evidenced by written sources. Thus, Florentine merchant Francesco Balducci Pegolotti wrote that merchants making their way from Europe to the East should take linen fabric with them, sell them in Urgench and stock up with soms (silver bars) used in those countries [Bartold, 1965, v. 3, p.59].

Not only goods were transported through the Silk Road but also fashion for socially predetermined artistic styles within a certain ethno-cultural environment was spread along the route. An opinion is that it was the Silk Road that contributed to the wide spreading of Timurid style in ceramics notable for blue gamut against the white background. It sprang up at the imperial workshops of China during the dynasty of Yuan (1279-1368), then widely spread in Iran, Turkey, the Central Asia [Smagulov, 1986, p. 48]. Excellent specimens of ceramic bowls, vases in cobalt are exhibited in many museums.

Dialogue of cultures.

A concept of four “world kingdoms” that symbolized vast regions and countries were spread in the early Middle Ages. Each “kingdom” had its own distinctive advantages in the eyes of contemporaries. It was the establishment of mighty states, such as China under the power of Suy (589-618) and Tan (618-907), kingdoms of Indian rulers with a center in the town Kanaudja on Ganges, as well as a union of Turks from the Pacific to the Black sea, Persia and Byzantine – that formed a basis of the concept of “four world monarchies”. Under the concept, these monarchies were located along four cardinal points: empire of “king of elephants” (India) in the south; “king of jewelry” (Iran, Byzantine) in the west;



The map by Mahmud Kashgari. 11 century

“King of horses” (Turkic kaganates) in the north; “King of people” (China) in the east. Moslem adherents of this concept termed “King of elephants” as “King of wisdom” paying tribute to the importance of Indian philosophy and science; “King of people” as “King of state administration and industry” (bearing in mind famous Chinese inventions); “King of horses” as “King of predatory animals”...

They distinguished two kings in the West: one of them (“King of kings”) was king of Persia and then Arabs; another (“King of men” owing to population’s beauty) of Byzantine [Marshak, 1971, p.77]. This concept is manifest in wall paintings near Samarkand where one of them depicted Chinese emperors, others – Turkish khans and Indian Brahmins; third – Persian kings and Roman emperors [Bartold, 1966, v.6, p. 216].

It was the model nature of the Bagdad painting that explained carving on thick layer of plaster (carved stucco). Panels depicted grapevines with bunch of ripe grapes, tulips, rosettes, palmettos, belts of rhombs, borders of meanders, bunch of plants. Motifs of fretwork, separate elements of ornament, style – all these find the closest parallels in fretwork that decorates walls of palaces in Afrasiab and Varakhsha, Samarra and Fustat. In other words, artistic tastes of Bagdad masters and fashion for capital style of the caliphate spread all over the Silk Road to embrace outlying regions of the Moslem urban expanse.

Authors from different countries, contemporaries of the remote past, glorified not only achievements of a state but also eulogized adoption of values of other cultures by native people. The development of the world culture is based on interaction of cultures as evidenced by creative work of the famous Sufi poet-Jalaleddin Rumi (1207-1273) who had his say about mutual tolerance: “It is frequent that a Turk and an Indian get along with each other. And it is frequent that two Turks are like foreigners. Hence, the language of unanimity is quite another story: unanimity is dearer than unified language” [Literature of the Orient..., 1970, p. 154].

Along with merchandise, cultural samples and specimens of applied arts, architecture and wall painting, the Silk Road acted as a spreader of music and dance art, performances, a sort of medieval “variety”. Performances of musicians and dancers, animal tamers, acrobats and mimes, magicians – all these called for no interpretation; travelling troupes had no language barriers. “Those expressing themselves by bodily movements are all understood equally”, wrote Erasmus from Rotterdam [1969, p.447]. Similar numbers were shown to Greek basileus, Kiev prince, Turkic kagan, and Chinese emperor.

It has to be kept in mind that foreign orchestras made a part of court personnel. They did performances both in case of “official court ceremonies” and “unofficial court celebrations”. Of interest is a description of reception ceremony for ambassadors arranged by a Turkic kagan in his headquarters near Suyab. “Kagan, - noted witness of this ceremony, Buddhist pilgrim Xuan Zhuang, - ordered to bring wines and start music...Foreign music sounded to the accompaniment of metallic ringing. The music being of barbarians notwithstanding, it, nevertheless, fell soothingly on the ear, gladdened heart and thoughts” [Zuyev, 1960, p.88-89]. The music of the West, towns of Eastern Turkestan and the Central Asia, enjoyed particular popularity in Tan China. Musical traditions of Kucha and Kashgar, Bukhara and Samarkand blended with the Chinese musical traditions.

It should be noted that Iranian, Sogdian and Turkic actors made a great contribution to the choreographic culture of China. Enjoying the greatest popularity were dancers. “Western nonchalant dance’ was ordinarily performed by boys from Tashkent dressed in blouses of

Iranian type and high pointed caps sown in beads. They were girdled by long sashes with ends flapping during dance. "Dance of Chach" was performed by two young girls in transparent robes decorated with multi-color embroidery and silver belts. Their clothes were supplanted by chemises with narrow sleeves, pointed caps with golden bells and red brocade slippers. A dance "Maidens of the West whirling in vortex" was performed by Sogdian girls in vermilion gowns, green wide trousers and red suede boots [Sheffer, 1981,b p.82]. As is known, during a banquet of the Byzantine empress the Russian princess Olga was entertained by men of motley and equilibrists while during festivities of Manuil I arranged in honor of Seljuk Sultan Arslan II a Turkic acrobat played risky somersaults [Darkevich, 1976, p. 151]. Carnivals were a great success in all times; these traditions were durable in Moslem countries in later periods as well. It is known that during Novruz masquerades were arranged in Bagdad in the presence of the caliph.

Archaeological finds along the Silk Road routes testify to the development and mutual enrichment of cultures. Thus, significant is a collection of terracotta of the Tan period depicting dancers, actors in mask, and musical ensembles on camels identifiable with representatives of the Central Asian peoples.

Spreading of religions.

The Silk Road played a great role in disseminating religious ideas. Missionaries traversed it to disseminate faith across overseas countries. Buddhism came from India via the Central Asia and Eastern Turkestan; Christianity and later Islam came from Syria, Iran and Arabia.

As viewed by researchers, Buddhism penetrated from India to China via the Central Asia since the middle of the 1 century BC Greatly contributing to the spreading of this religion in Eastern Turkestan and China were Central Asian theologians and missionaries, particularly, Sogdians, Parthians and Kangyuys. Buddhist monuments were discovered on the route of the Silk Road that traversed the Central Asia. These include a Buddhist monastery of the 1 – 3 centuries that has for many years been excavated in Termez on Karatobe; a cult erection in the valley of Sanzar (Sogd); Buddhist monuments discovered on the site Gyaur-kala in Merv; a Buddhist monastery of the 7-8 centuries in Adjinatepe, valley of Vakhsh in the south of Tajikistan [Litvinskiy, Zeymal, 1971, p. 110-115]. Testifying to the strong impact of Buddhism on Turks since the 6 century is Suang Tsan. He writes about goodwill attitude of a kagan of the western Turks to this religion. Other researchers point out that in the first half of the 7 century some rulers of the western Turks adopted Buddhism or patronized this faith. A. Gabain associated this with Turks' transition to settled mode of life and urbanism [Gabain, 1961,p.506].

Fully excavated were ruins of the two Buddhist temples – Ak-Beshim and Suyab going back to later 7 – earlier 8 centuries [Kyzlasov, 1959; Zlobin, 1961].

Note that the Silk Road also contributed to the spreading of Christianity from the West to the East. The impetus was given in the first half of the 5 century in the Eastern Roman Empire (Syria) where "a heretic sect" of adherents of priest Nestorius sprang up. A teaching of Nestorius was denounced at Ephesus Council in 431, following which Nestorians were mercilessly persecuted, and had to escape to Iran. While at Iran, they established a school at bordering Nisibin and thus close ranks of the political opposition of Byzantine. Rich Syrian merchants and artisans have lost markets in Constantinople moved eastwards.

As a result, the remotest regions of Asia proved to be connected with Syrians. Their colonies and trading outposts stretched from the Mediterranean to the "Celestial Empire". Remarkable monuments of culture were discovered in oases of this route that crossed mountains and lowlands. In researcher N.V. Pigulevskaya's view, Syrians made a great contribution to the world science and culture. They gave the Orient access to antiquity-based trend of the world culture development" [1979, p.13-14].

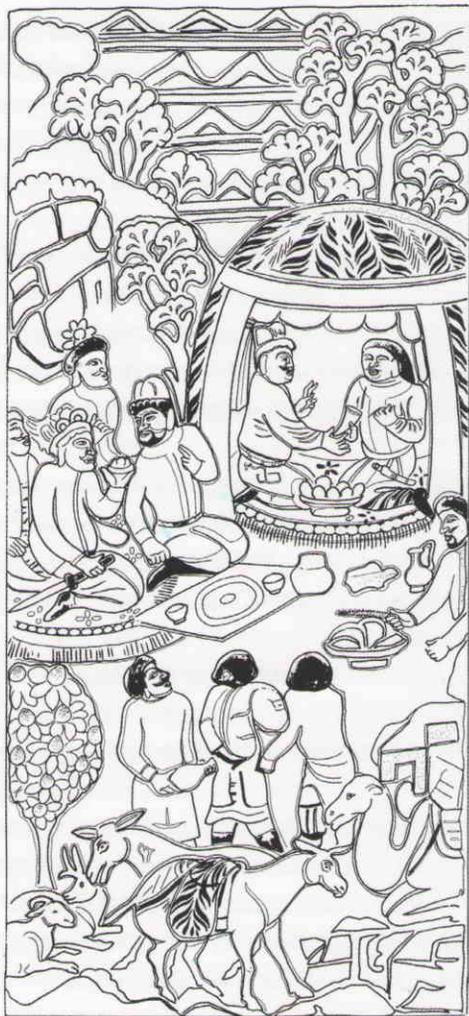
In the 7-8 centuries, Nestorianism was widely spread in towns of the Central Asia, South Kazakhstan and Semirechye; Christian churches came up and the christening performed. Under Patriarch Timothy (780-819), a king of Turks, perhaps, Karluk Jabgu adopted Christianity. At the turn of the 9-10 centuries, a special Karluk metropolis was established; hristian churches were active in Taraz and Merk; also, Christians resided in towns on Syr Darya [Bartold, 1964, v.2, p.285-287; 294].

Some sources say that in the 11 century Christians converted a Mongol tribe of Kereites into Christianity. In "The History of Mongolians» Rashid-ad-Din noted: "Faith of Christ – peace upon him! - came to them (Kereites), and they adopted it" [Works..., 1988, p. 94]

Nestorians played an important role in the-Chinghizkhan's Empire. Suffice it to say that a nephew of Kereit Van-khan, routed by the Emperor, Nestorian Sorgahtani-beki was a wife of Chinghizkhan's younger son Tuluy, mother of two great khans – Munke and Khubilay, and a conqueror of Iran Khulagu. According to reports, Christians of the Ili valley had their own church in Kayalyk, as well as their village and monastery of the 14 century on the shore of Issyk Kul where relic of Saint Matthew was kept.

Remains of an erection on the site Ak-Beshim were owned by Christian church. It was a structure, square in plan, ceiled by a dome and located in a rectangular courtyard. When excavating necropolises in the towns Jamukata and Navaket, archaeologists uncovered Christian burials with silver and bronze crosses. Also, a nephrite cross was found on the site Krasnaya Rechka. A stone mortar discovered on the site Tortkoltobe, identifiable with the town Sharab, is kept at the South Kazakhstan regional museum. It has symbols of Christianity – cross and dove. A ceramic mug with a Syrian inscription "Peter and Gabriel" was found in a layer of the 6-8 centuries. Pertaining to products of Nestorian artisans are two silver dishes famed as Anikovskoye and Grigorovskoye with plots from early Christian iconography. The Grigorovskoye silver dish-discos of the 9-10 centuries had pictures drawn as flat projection with additional engraving. Background and separate parts of the dish are gilded. Three interwoven medallions provide plots as follows: "Ascension", "Wives at the coffin" and "Crucifixion", and in spans – "Daniel in the lion's mouth", "Peter's renunciation" and "Guard at the Lord's coffin".

Pertaining to the outstanding monuments of religious art and religious symbols of Central Asian Christians, Turks by nationality (from Christianity in the area to the end of the 14 century) are Kayrakş – tombstones with Nestorian inscriptions and symbols [Kokovtsev, 1907, p. 428]. A main portion was discovered in Semirechye and Eastern Turkestan later 19-earlier 20 centuries; however, finds of this sort have continued to our days as well. Thus, excavations on a citadel of the Krasnorechenskiy site revealed two kayraks with Syrian inscriptions in the foundation of the 11-12 centuries. They were used twice. One of kayraks is dated to 789; another – to 909. On the first there is a name "maiden Yalanch". These are the earliest Syrian epitaphs on stones is an intermediate among finds of this sort, of which kayraks of the 5-6 centuries were found in Syria and kayraks of the 12-14 centuries in Semirechye and Eastern Turkestan.



Sogdian caravan in the rate of the Turkic noble. Tomb of Anji. China. 6 c.

A Christian community in Navaket is borne out by not only tombstone Syrian inscriptions but also by Sogdian inscriptions on ceramics and corollas of khums. One of them said: "This khum is intended for teacher Yaruk-Tegin Master Pastun. May it (khum) be filled, amen, amen!". A word "teacher" is identical to terms of Turkic-Sogdian epitaphs – "teacher, tutor". A concluding "amen!" meant, beyond any doubts, that Yaruk-Tegin was a leader of the Christian community. A shorter inscription was seen on another khum: Master of this khum is Pastun". Also, a two-line Sogdian inscription was discovered on a vessel excavated on the site Pokrovks to the west from Navaket that said: "This vessel is a gift of Pakap community. Drink this wine, sovereign... Sovereign Ali-Bilge, may you be happy and prospering!". An inscription was engraved on khum's wall in Taraz: Ruler Iltag"; on a corolla of khum discovered on the site Kysmychi there was written: "Bishop Shirfan" [Lifshits, 1989, p. 81-83]. By nature of paleography the inscription goes back to the 9-10 centuries or even earlier 11 century.

Followers of Manichaeism, a religious trend in Iran, 3 century, with a great number of worshippers from Italy to China, also used the ancient route. Manichaeism as a synthesis of Zoroastrianism and Christianity; it adopted an idea of messianism from Christianity; and an idea of the struggle between good and evil, light and darkness from Zoroastrianism. It

was Sogdians that played a crucial role in the spreading of this religion. In the beginning of the 8 century, a supreme leader of Manicheans had a residence in Samarkand. Note that Manichaeism had for a long time co-existed in the Central Asia equally with other religions; Buddhism had a strong influence on pantheon, terminology and even concept of Manichaeism.

It should be noted that Manichaeism had its followers in Semirechye and the south of Kazakhstan, first of all, among settled population. An ancient Uygur manuscript of Manichean work "Sacred Book of Two Principles" discovered in Turfan oasis says that this book was written in the town Argu-Talas (Altyn-Argu Talasi-ulushe, Talas-ulushe) in order to awaken a faith in the country of ten arrows". The point is about the well-known town Taraz [Klyashtorniy, 1964, p. 130-131]. Sources report that Manichean cloisters existed in other Semirechye towns as well, including Balasagun and Chigilbalyk. Among probable Manichean relics there is a bronze medallion in the form of moon (crescent) discovered in Taraz to symbolize a Manichean astral deity [Senigova, 1968, fig. 1.1].

Residents of medieval towns professed another world religion – Zoroastrianism that arose on the territory of ancient Iran in the 7-6 centuries BC. Ritually, it worshipped four elements in

the Universe: water, fire, earth and air. Zoroastrian monuments are found in the Central Asia, Sogd, Syr Darya towns and Semirechye to manifest themselves in the ruins of structures related to towers of fire. Finds of this type are retraced in burials inside ossuaries – clay boxes for bones; khum interments. Corpse postures in crypts-nauses, as well as heaps of bones testify to the deceased's affiliation to Zoroastrianism.

It was Sogdians that first brought Zoroastrianism to Kazakhstan towns in the 6-7 centuries. Recently discovered remarkable monuments in Syr Darya towns proved to be related to Sogd. Among Turks, particularly, Kangars (Kengers), there spread religious views of Sogd in the Middle Ages that had, most probably, been revised to be adjusted to local religious views. Many Zoroastrianism-related cults kept on existing in the towns of Kazakhstan even after Islam's advent in the region. Thus, archaeologists discovered altars-hearths of the 12 century dug on a floor in Otrar. Richly fretted, they served for kindling fire and thus echoed great fires of Mazdaism in homes of townspeople, even those who adopted Islam and wrote in Arabic script.

However, Islam that paved its way through the use of not only "fire and sword" but also due to "smooth-spoken speech" of Moslem merchants, gradually superseded Christianity, Buddhism, Zoroastrianism and local cults of the East. The new religion established itself in scores of Silk Road towns and in steppes. Testifying to the spreading of Islam are excavated burials. Note that in the second half of the 9-10 centuries funeral rituals changed to comply with canons typical for Moslems – in pits, crypts of raw brick. The deceased was put with a head north-westwards; face – southwards. No accessories were placed in burials. A large quantity of glazed crockery gives weight to the spreading Islam. Ceramics was based on the use of decorative elements of Arab script. A part of inscriptions is of decorative nature (cannot be read); however, some of them quote wishes, edifications, advises of religious nature. As for metal fabric, fashion for products of copper and bronze, also decorated with inscriptions of religious nature, was widely spread. The point is, in the first turn, about a large group of lamps and couplings for basic posts of yurts in the form of high cylinders on feet.

Archaeological excavations found that trade routes from Europe to Asia and back traversed medieval Central Asia in different places, including steppes, mountains, and fertile valleys. As main trade artery, the Silk Road concurrently contributed to the development of cooperation between many peoples. Routes of the Silk Road united ancient states from China to the Mediterranean and Eastern Europe, played a crucial role in integrating economies and cultures of the peoples of the East and the West. For thousands of years, trade and diplomatic caravans moved along the Silk Road to strictly comply with main routes East-West and North-South. Each country involved in the system of international trade and cultural contacts made its own contribution to the development and transfer of material and spiritual cultures. An eloquent testimony to this is outstanding archaeological monuments located on various sections of this ancient international route.

A unique role of the Silk Road in the history of peoples of Eurasia is universally recognized. Of no less importance is its contribution to the dialogue of cultures as evidenced by UNESCO ten year Project "Integral Study of the Silk Roads – Roads of Dialogue" that brought distant countries together and consolidated different peoples.

Karl Baipakov