

SILK ROAD GOODS

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In the history of human civilisation there are many examples of long-lasting mutually beneficial cultural and economic cooperation between countries and peoples with different political, religious and ethnic traditions.

The most significant, widely known in the world was the Great Silk Road, which stretched from the shores of the Atlantic Ocean to the shores of the Pacific Ocean, crossed the entire Asian continent and connected the Mediterranean countries with the Far East in antiquity and the early Middle Ages. It was not just a road or even a system of roads from ocean to ocean, it was a complex cultural and economic bridge between East and West, connecting peoples in their quest for peace and co-operation.

The history of the legendary Silk Road is full of riddles and mysteries. Here ancient civilisations emerged and disappeared, new ethnic groups were born and whole nations perished as a result of invaders' invasions, unknown masters created priceless cultural monuments, Buddhist preachers inexplicably maintained the atmosphere of high spirituality and religious correctness, famous travellers made amazing discoveries. For centuries the multilingual Oriental markets hummed, for hundreds of years traders followed the dusty caravan roads, bringing precious silks and stones, spices and dyes, gold and silver, exotic birds and animals to Europeans [1].

Thus, we can call the Silk Road a grandiose trade route that connected East and West, which were between the then world civilisations - the Roman (Byzantine) and Han (Chinese) empires, and caused the emergence of many unique cities, historical monuments, customs and even entire states.

It should be noted that long before the Great Silk Road was established, there were routes in Central Asia and the Ancient East that served the purposes of war and peace. Large armies and small groups travelled along them, bloody battles were fought, cities along them were attacked; in times of peace, these routes served as connecting threads of political, commercial and cultural life. It is this function that the peoples have always valued [2].

The early evidence tells of gifts sent from Central Asian countries to the imperial palace. From here, gifts were also sent if China wanted to attract any of the Central Asian rulers to its side. Of the Central Asian gifts, the famous Dawani horses, fast-footed horses that the Chinese called "heavenly" or "winged", were especially valued. Alfalfa and grape seeds were also delivered to China as fodder for horses. Soon alfalfa crops spread throughout China. For the Chinese, separated from another civilisation, grapes were a novelty. In addition, Chinese envoys were very surprised to find that it was possible to make wine not only from rice, but also from berries unknown to them. Later, the Chinese also discovered other crops like beans, onions, cucumbers, carrots, pomegranate, figs, etc. [3].

Gradually trade relations between the Middle Asia and China strengthened. Each year the imperial courtyard guide to the lesser of five missions to the west accompanied by a few hundred. They are lucky with themselves silk and metal products, which exchanged on horses, nephritis, coral and other goods from the Middle Asia [4].

Chinese products were not only intended for Central Asia. So II in the country's far country. Lightweight, compact and therefore especially comfortable at the transport it attracted attention of buyers all over the route of the caravan, despite the obvious costly. Shelkovye fabric unusual unusual softness, exquisite beauty and exotics. It was sought to be possessed and admired. Lubov ancient to silk caused by his exceptional natural and technical peculiarity. With the help of the silk buy the world, silk messenger with the embassies of the countries. Thus silk played a very important role as in antiquity, so and in medieval traveller. Significant need in the unique silk fabric was in Persia and in the state to the west of it.

In Europe, it was believed that silk grew on trees and that only the Chinese knew the secret of this culture. During the reign of Augustus, Rome paid for Chinese silk with woollen goods, spices and glassware.

The Chinese had not the slightest intention of disproving legends of this kind, and thus secured for themselves a monopoly and export of this costly fabric. The Parthians, through whose territory the trade was carried out, similarly saw no reason to disseminate anything about the technical aspects of silk production, but made considerable profits from the silk trade, as did many subsequent dynasties through whose lands the silk routes passed [5].

Various woollen goods, carpets, curtains, blankets were transported to China from Central Asia and the Eastern Mediterranean. They made a great impression on the

Chinese, who were not familiar with the methods of wool and linen making, carpet making and weaving. Parthian tapestries and carpets were highly valued in ancient China.

Camels, military equipment, gold and silver, semi-precious stones and glassware were exported from Central Asia. Samarkand glass was especially valued because of its high quality. It was considered a luxury item. Other goods such as hides, wool, cotton fabrics, gold embroidery, exotic fruits such as watermelons, melons and peaches, sheep and hunting dogs, leopards and cheetahs were also transported. From China caravans carried famous Chinese porcelain - snow-white vases, bowls, glasses, dishes with exquisite patterns. Only the Chinese possessed the secret of making fine and resonant porcelain, and therefore porcelain was very expensive in European markets. Bronze jewellery and other articles made of this metal, ornate bronze mirrors, umbrellas, articles of the famous Chinese lacquer, medicines, and perfumes were also popular. Chinese paper, one of the most remarkable inventions of Chinese technical genius, was very highly valued. Merchants also carried tea and rice, woollen and linen fabrics, coral, amber, and asbestos. Merchants' sacks were filled with ivory, rhinoceros horns, tortoise shells, spices, pottery and ironware, glaze and cinnamon, ginger, bronze weapons and mirrors [6].

India was famous for its fabrics, spices and semi-precious stones, dyes and ivory. Iran was famous for its silverware. Rome received spices, perfumes, jewellery, ivory, sugar and sent European paintings and luxury goods. Eastern Europe imported rice, cotton, woollen and silk fabrics from Central Asia and exported hides, furs, fur, bark for leather processing, cattle and slaves to Khorezm.

Caravan trade along the routes of the Great Silk Road was associated not only with high profits, but also with huge risks. That is why merchants tried to find companions to form large caravans consisting of hundreds and even thousands of armed men. But nothing could protect the merchants from arbitrary rules of governors and attacks by nomadic tribes. Thus, in an attempt to save their lives, merchants rarely travelled the Silk Road from one end to the other. More often they exchanged goods at some intermediate trading cities.

However, both states and nomads were interested in maintaining trade routes. Governors received revenues from collecting customs duties in towns along caravan routes. To avoid losses, Asian governors issued strict laws to protect merchants.

Merchants valued their goods in money and exchanged them for other goods with equivalent prices [7].

The caravans sometimes consisted of several dozens to several thousand pack animals. Servants and porters took care of the pack animals. Very often caravans hired interpreters. Throughout the Great Silk Road there were caravanserais (inns) in towns and villages through which the caravans passed. They had hudjras ("rest rooms") for merchants and staff serving the caravan, rooms for camels, horses, mules and donkeys, necessary forage and provisions.

Caravanserais were places where one could sell and buy wholesale goods of interest to a merchant, and, most importantly, learn the latest commercial news and, above all, the prices of goods.

Also separately there were special merchants and even companies that helped to transport goods. Nomadic herders played a significant role in the development of trade. They accompanied caravans, gave their livestock for food and transport [8].

The widely branched network of the Silk Road spread the world's religions, scripts and cultures. The Silk Road, which operated for 1,500 years, played a huge role in the rapprochement of the two continents and in the mutual cultural enrichment of many European and Asian peoples. Especially many Buddhist monks and Buddha's cult servants wandered along the caravan routes. Their movement was not aimless, in fact, they carried out the spread of religion. Gradually Buddhism from India penetrated into the countries along the Great Silk Road. Then on the caravan route Buddhism gradually spread to China, then moved to Japan, South-East Asia and Indochina. We now know how deeply Buddhism has been embedded in all these countries. It is especially firmly rooted in China and Japan. That is to say, the most active and most direct role in the spread of Buddhism belongs to the Great Silk Road.

Buddhism was not the only doctrine that came to Central Asia and China from the West. Along with Zoroastrianism, Nestorian Christianity and Manichaeism were also present. The warriors of the Arab Caliphate brought the Islamic doctrine in the 7th century. While Islam was initially spread by force by the army of the Arab Caliphate, later the spread along the Silk Road was conducted peacefully [9].

The silk road was not only a source of goods but also provided information about their manufacture, i.e. technology. In particular, ways of producing silk, coloured glass, paper, books, gunpowder and cannon. Silk-making and weaving, which had long been monopolised only in China, were first brought to Khotan and then to Central Asia, Iran

and Byzantium in the 5th and 6th centuries. Conversely, the art of glassmaking travelled from the Mediterranean countries to Iran and Central Asia, and it reached China in the 5th century. Under the influence of China, silk and paper production began to develop in Central Asia. Paper production outside China was first introduced by Chinese artisans in Samarkand in the 8th century. It then appeared in the West and took the former writing materials parchment and papyrus out of use.

The Silk Road movement had a huge impact on architecture and urban planning. Proof of this in Central Asia: Timur's buildings in Samarkand, Ak-Saray Palace in Shakhrisabz, Timur's tomb - Gur-Emir, and the Movkholei in the city of Yassy (Turkestan). They combine architectural styles, forms and construction techniques from different countries. They were built not only by Central Asian architects, but also by craftsmen from Iran, Azerbaijan, Armenia, Georgia, Iraq, Syria, Asia Minor and India. Throughout the centuries, caravan routes have often been used by scholars, explorers, the most famous of whom is the Venetian merchant Marco Polo. Along with the spread of goods, there was an equally active cultural interchange, including writing and music. It is a well-known fact that the music of East Turkestan and Central Asia was the most popular in China. The music traditions of Kashgar, Bukhara and Samarkand, India merged with the Chinese musical tradition. Iranian, Sogdian and Turkic actors made significant contributions to the choreographic culture of China. For example, actors from the East often performed in Constantinople.

On the threshold of the third millennium, humanity is faced with the need to seek new paths of co-operation, or to restore forgotten ones that have been buried by the sands of time. A comprehensive, integrated study and restoration of the Great Silk Road as a "path of dialogue" is well in line with such a need.

The Great Silk Road has served for many centuries to bring different peoples closer together, to exchange ideas and knowledge, to mutually enrich languages and cultures. Of course, even in those distant times there were political conflicts and wars, but the Silk Road was invariably revived. The inexorable craving for communication, for reasonable benefits and higher welfare constantly prevailed over political and religious confrontation. Therefore, it is necessary to use such a compelling example in creating a model for future people-to-people relations and co-operation. The history of the Silk Road is a history of extensive cultural interaction and interchange between the peoples of the East and the West. It proves that only close co-operation and mutual enrichment of cultures are the basis of peace and progress for all humankind [10].

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