

CIV 203: ancient world humanities

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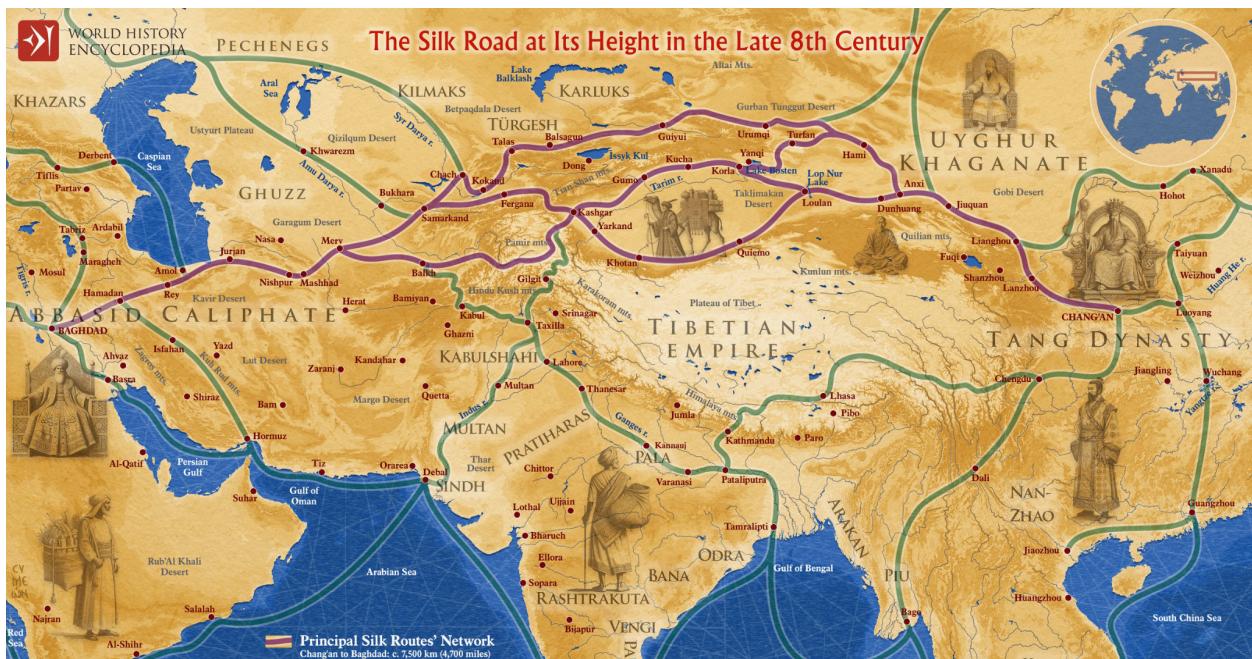
The history of Silk Road

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[INTRODUCTION]

The silk road was an event that began 2,000 years ago (2nd century BCE) during the Han dynasty, initially it began in china but then it expanded to other countries.

In this project, we mostly focus on the social influence, trading and the beginning of the religions on how it shaped our current world today.



<https://www.worldhistory.org/image/146/map-of-the-silk-road-at-its-height-in-the-late-8th/>

[OVERVIEW/BACKGROUND] section name:

pre-history of silk road

- In the fifth century BCE, 3 northern states- the Qin, Zhao and Yan- had to cope with frequent incursions of nomadic cavalry. The reason that the nomads from the steppe invaded villages and

towns was for major grains and silk. Although silk was common in China, it was considered as rare to the nomads.

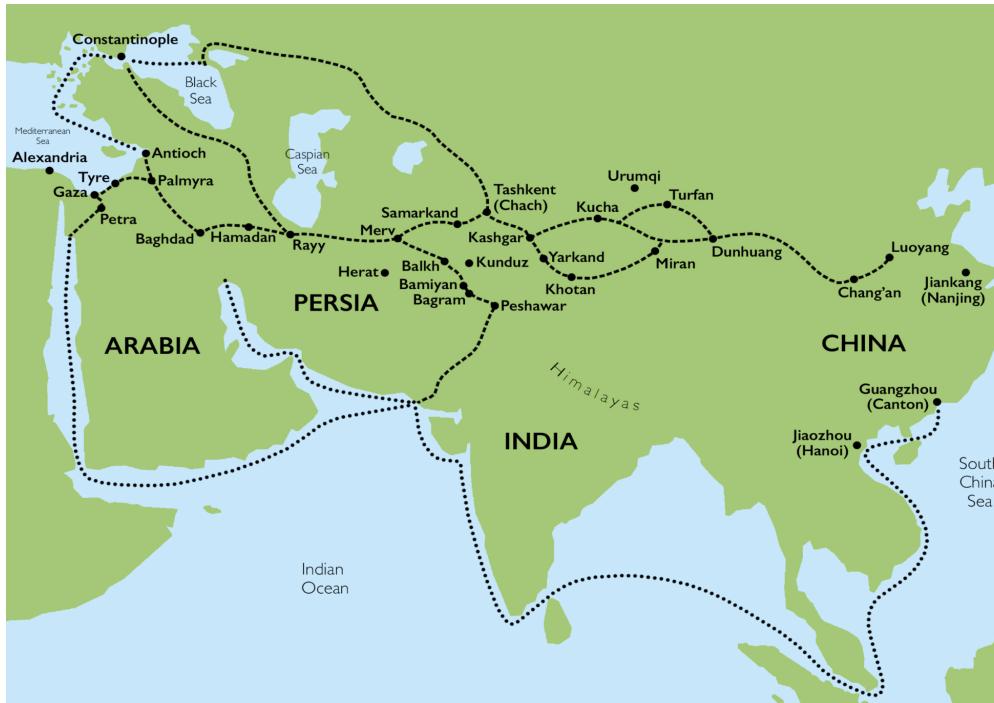
- the 3 northern states built walls along the mountain as a defense. In the state of Zhao, in the fourth century BCE, his troops began to master bow and arrow against the nomads. They continued the military process and improved defense, which led to other northern Chinese states to follow Zhao's defense.
- However, the improvement of defense increased the need of horses, and the agricultural societies did not have any knowledge to produce horses that are specified for military. During the 3rd century, the Yuezhi, who lived in the region relatively near China, has emerged a powerful confederacy on the steppe, they maintained a friendly trading relationship with China. As a result, the Chinese societies began to treasure jade more than gold for the desperate need of military horses. But, on the east, a powerful nomadic people known as "xiongnu" were always in a conflict with nearby Chinese states. When the first emperor of the Qin dynasty united the Chinese states, the xiongnu were the threat to his power,
- In order to stop the conflict that was happening between them, the emperors resorted to diplomacy to xiongnu by arranged marriages so that there would be peace between them. The han princesses brought them grains and silks, while the xiongnu chiefs in return brought them horses. This exchange caused periodic peace and trading around the gates of the great wall.
- After more than 60 years of recovery, the Han empire stopped sending princesses after gaining strength. However, the concept of diplomacy remained.

[MAIN BODY SEC.1] section name: cultural, social influence and trading:

- After the impact of islam was spread, Baghdad reached its peak with the vibrancy of the markets, the population was wealthy with goods and ideas. Meanwhile on the steppe, practices of worshipping animals such as snakes, birds, and fishes were continuous after the spread of religion. Although life on the steppe was a contrast of the developing society and visitors, there were interactions between nomads and the south as they would often utter phases despite having little to no faith.
- Other than that, religious beliefs on the steppes were complex even with influences from the other religions rapidly spreading and blending to create composite worldviews that are difficult to disentangle, for example; sufis, roamed the steppes, they played a crucial role in winning converts to Islam, fusing the shaman and animist beliefs that were widespread in Central Asia with the

tenets of Islam, although It was not just sufis who had an impact. Other visitors made interventions that were decisive in spreading ideas about religion.

- When it comes to trading, Horses were a vital part of the economy as they were beneficial for the economy. And in the eighth century, Farming also increasingly became an important part of the steppe economy, with crops being planted across the Lower Volga region, which included wheat, millet and rye. Hazelnuts, falcons and swords were some of the other products sold to the markets to the south. So too were wax and honey; the latter was thought to provide resistance to the cold. Amber was also brought to market in such quantities. Which was eye-catching to other merchants and buyers.
- However, the most highly valued trade was in animal pelts. They are highly prized for their warmth and protection against the extreme weather conditions. Muslim merchants distinguished the prices according to the type of fur, whether it was the fur of a fox, mink, beaver, or any wild animal.
- On the other hand, in the khazar territory, wood building was characterized and improved, specifically in samadar, it is crucial to know The Khazars themselves did not adopt Islam, but they did take on new religious beliefs: in the middle of the ninth century, they decided to become Jewish. While Judaism was rapidly increasing in the middle of the ninth century, it also attracted a major role in international trade— not only between the steppe and the Islamic world, but between east and west. Since jewish merchants were highly active in long-distance trade, playing much the same role that the Sogdians had played when connecting China and Persia around the time of the rise of Islam.
- Jewish merchants were also highly adept linguists, fluent in ‘Arabic, Persian, Latin, Frankish, Andalusian and Slavic.’ they appear to have travelled regularly to India and China, returning with musk, aloe wood, camphor, cinnamon which they traded along a chain of ports and towns that serviced markets in Mecca, Medina and Constantinople, as well as towns on the Tigris and the Euphrates. As a result, it brought Merchants from Scandinavia opportunities on offering, as well as slaves.
- From the start of the ninth century, men from Scandinavia began to come into contact with the steppe world and also with the caliphate of Baghdad. They were often involved in the trade of wax, amber and honey, as well as fine swords which were widely admired in the Arabic-speaking world.
- Despite goods being sold from one place to another, trading slaves was also a common part of society and economic development, where they were often transported through the rivers and prices distinguished depending on the appearance of the slaves.



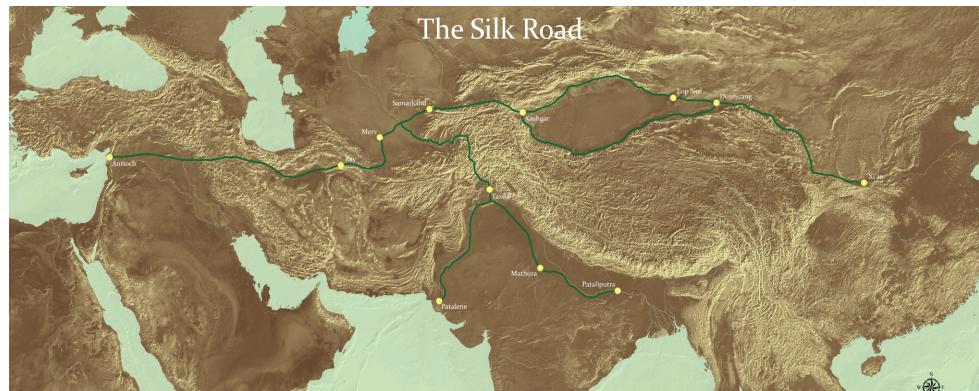
<https://smarthistory.org/reframing-art-history/the-silk-roads/>

[MAIN BODY SEC.2] section name: spread of religion– buddhism, christianity, and islam–

After Alexander the Great's campaigns had dragged Greek ideas, it was not long before ideas flowed in the other directions:

- Buddhist concepts made rapid headway across Asia, especially after they had been championed by the Emperor Ashoka, which stretched from northern India to embrace most of Central Asia in the first centuries AD, the spread of Buddhism from northern India along the trade routes taken by merchants, monks and travelers spread rapidly.
- In the first four centuries of the first millennium, Christianity exploded from a small base in Palestine. Christianity first spread east via the Jewish communities, They received reports of Jesus' life and death not in Greek translations, but rather in Aramaic,

- The rise of a new dynasty soon brought about a stiffening of attitudes, and the teachings of Zardusht were unambiguously promoted at the expense of other ideas: Ritual purification was a vital element of Zoroastrian worship, however the promotion of Zoroastrianism led to the suppression of local cults and violence, for example; Those who offered different beliefs were hunted down and killed.
- One of the reasons why Zoroastrianism became so embedded in the consciousness and identity of third-century Persia was as a reaction to the raids being made by Christianity, which had started to spread rapidly along the trade routes. It resulted in a hostile reaction. While Zoroastrianism became synonymous with Persia, It did not take much for this religion to be seen as a tool of occupation rather than a form of spirituality.
- Although Christianity was not made a state religion, it opened gates for the new faith. This was good news for Christians and Christianity in the west
- However, it led to disaster for Christianity in the east. In the 330s, rumours spread that Constantine was preparing an attack on Persia, though the Persians must have misunderstood that the letter that was received from Constantine was *initially* meant to be gentle advice, but it was seen as a threat: not long beforehand, Rome had immediately set a program of defense. As the Persians prepared to mount fierce resistance, they had a huge stroke of luck: before the expedition could get going, Constantine fell ill and died.
- The rise of Islam took place in a world going through a catastrophe. In 541, disasters were spreading along the communication and trade networks, devastating cities in Persian Mesopotamia and eventually reaching China. As hostilities continued, religion became increasingly important.
- The stiffening of religion during the confrontation with Persia had consequences – because the Christianity adopted by some of the tribes was not that of the formula agreed at Chalcedon in 451, which provided the Persians with a perfect opportunity to exploit. Control was gained over the ports and markets of southern and western Arabia, as a new overland trade route was opened up connecting Persia with Mecca and Ukā.
- As war raged to the north, a trader named Muhammad, a member of the Quraysh tribe, retreated to a cave not far from the city of Mecca to contemplate. In 610 he began to receive a series of revelations from God. A series of recitations followed over the coming years that were first written down around the middle of the seventh century in a single text – known as the Qurān.
- Since the appearance of Muhammad, the Sasanian society was collapsing between 628 and 632, it



had been a series of stunning successes. The opportunities that opened up with the collapse of Persia likewise came at the right moment, but two other important reasons also help explain the triumph of Islam in the early part of the seventh century: the support provided by Christians, and above all that given by Jews. In a world where religion seems to be the cause of conflict and bloodshed, it is easy to overlook the ways in which the great faiths learnt and borrowed from each other.



<https://guides.library.cornell.edu/IslamAsiaExhibit/SilkRoadIslam>

<https://middlewayeducation.org/resources/idp-silk-road-transmission-buddhism/>

[LEGACY AND HISTORICAL IMPACT]: section name: Legacy:

The impact of trading has been continuous and remained its network between the countries, although there have been countries where tension was rising. An example of that is the United states, initially it was doubted whether it wanted to spread its interest or take control of other rulers. In fact, it did not help with the oil production as the US had other opportunities and goals, oil importing was often brought from Iran but it stopped in the early 1950s when the world was going through a crisis.

[CONCLUSION]: conclusion:

The silk road is a network of trading which initially began from a trade between colonies to seize conflict, to a road of trading from one country to another. Even though trading between countries brought economic development, it resulted into a spread of diversity, cultural and social influence, religious beliefs, and control that developed the early civilizations of asia and europe.

[SOURCES] Sources:

- Liu, X. (2010). *The Silk Road in world history*. Oxford University Press.
- Frankopan, P. (2016). *The Silk Roads: A New History of the World*. Bloomsbury