

Restoring the Asian Silk Route: Its Transportation and Importance

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Abstract

The Silk Roads were an interconnected web of routes linking the ancient societies of East, South, Central, and Western Asia, and the Mediterranean. It contributed to the development of many of the world's great civilizations and enabled the exchange of technologies and ideas that reshaped the known world. This combination of routes represents one of the world's preeminent long-distance communication networks. There were a number of major impacts from this extensive network of interactions:

1. The development of cities along these routes, which gained power and wealth from the trade, providing the infrastructure of production and redistribution, and policing its routes. Many became major cultural and artistic centers, where peoples of different ethnic and cultural backgrounds intermingled.
2. The development of religious centers, which benefitted from the patronage of political systems and wealthy individuals.
3. The movement of technologies, artistic styles, languages, social practices and religious beliefs, transmitted by people moving along the Silk Roads.

An exception to this is short sea routes, for example between Korea and Japan and mainland China, or across the Caspian Sea between Turkmenistan and Azerbaijan. These were not about linking into the long seaborne journeys of the 'Spice routes' that were to be so important in the later periods, but rather about short sea crossings that enabled these areas to connect to the main land-based networks of the Silk Roads. In addition, the exploitation of water-borne transport in places was inter-linked with the 'land routes', as in the movement of people and goods along the Syr Darya in Central Asia. "Sri Lanka too played an active role in the ancient Silk route of the ocean. Situated strategically in the middle of the ancient Silk route of the ocean between East and West, Sri Lanka functioned as an entrepôt port of trade for exchanging commodities. Archaeological excavations in many parts of Sri Lanka have unearthed large hoards of Roman and Chinese coins, which indicate that merchants from West and East met in Sri Lanka and exchanged wares".

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